

Implementing Active Learning When Masked and Social Distancing

By Lafayette College-Center for the Integration of Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

GOAL

To provide strategies for implementing active learning exercises during COVID-19.

OVERVIEW

The precautions that will need to be taken for COVID-19 this fall present some new obstacles for face-to-face and remote instruction. This includes rethinking how to implement [active learning](#) which is well-known to support student learning. Specifically, given the necessity of masks and social distancing, [classroom discussions](#) and interactions will need to be reimaged. Below are a few strategies that faculty can utilize to still facilitate experiences where students actively engage in their learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Use Digital Tools During Class to Facilitate Active Learning

One approach is to utilize digital tools that facilitate student-content, student-instructor, and student-student engagement.

Interactive Polls, Surveys, or Gaming During Lecture

When delivering a lesson in class, engage students in their learning using tools such as Moodle Choice, Moodle Feedback, Google Web Forms, Poll Everywhere, or Kahoot.

Using these tools requires students to have a laptop, tablet or mobile phone and reliable WiFi. Therefore, prior to implementing any of the tools, it's best to ensure that all learners have access to the necessary technology.

polls

- [Poll Everywhere](#) allows instructors to ask a variety of questions such as multiple choice, open-ended (including a word cloud option), clickable images, and rank order, plus share results in real-time. Polls can be designed in advance of class and administered throughout the lesson. Links to the polls can be included in the presentation slides—these same polls can be embedded into the slides using integrations with both PowerPoint and Google Slides. Poll Everywhere offers a mobile app.
- [Moodle Choice](#) allows instructors to present a single question with multiple responses. Choice activities can be useful as a quick way to poll students to learn which readings they want to discuss further in class.

surveys

- [Google Web Forms](#) and [Qualtrics](#) are two survey platforms supported at Lafayette that allow instructors to quickly create surveys. Surveys include a variety of all question types, and can either collect results anonymously, or can require one to log into the survey to limit access to specific groups or individuals.
- [Moodle Feedback](#) allows instructors to create surveys within Moodle. Results can be collected anonymously and can be made viewable to students.

gaming

- [Kahoot](#) can be played either live or self-paced. Playing live is an option for hybrid-flexible classrooms with online, synchronous students. Asynchronous students can complete self-paced versions of the game. Questions can also be asked via Kahoot in a more gamified manner. Kahoot offers a mobile app.

Socially Distanced Group Work

Group work presents new challenges in a socially-distanced classroom, however there are possibilities.

- Directions for projects can be provided in class or on Moodle.
- Students (face-to-face and online) can communicate with group members using collaborative tools such as [Moodle Discussion Forums](#), [Google+](#), [Yammer](#), or [Slack](#), or hold video chats using [Zoom](#) or [Google Meet](#) with headphones for planning and discussions.
- G Suite apps like **Google Docs**, **Google Slides**, and **Google Sheets** enable students to work collaboratively while socially-distanced or participating remotely. Each of these Google apps allows students to edit documents in real time, suggest edits, add comments, and even chat within the app. For assignments where the faculty member desires to monitor group progress, they may consider creating the Google documents, or ensure the documents are saved in a shared folder in Google Drive, so they can see how student work is coming along and give feedback along the way.

Active Problem-Solving

Students can still engage in independent active problem-solving in a socially distanced classroom. Worksheets can be posted to Moodle or problems displayed in lecture presentations and students can work at their seats. Instructors can also to create live polls with PollEverywhere to check whether students came up with the correct answers.

Peer Review Workshop

In order for students to provide feedback on assignments in class such as through peer review of papers, students can use **Google Docs** for peer review. Google Docs provides the ability for a peer reviewer to add comments, suggest edits in real time, and even assign tasks to the author or other peer reviewers. Peer review with Google Docs can be performed during a class session

as well as outside of class. Students may also hold a video call with their partner after class using Zoom or Google Meet.

Employ Active Learning Exercises Mostly Online

A second approach is to emphasize active learning online and to devote face-to-face or live, synchronous class time to presenting new material and clarifying concepts. Viewing microlectures, engaging in readings through Moodle discussion forums or social annotation tools, completing problem-solving activities, and more may occur online within a reasonable class workload and the following done in class:

- Q&A to clarify concepts. Questions can be submitted via an anonymous Moodle Discussion Forum, Moodle Feedback, a Google Form, or software such as [Slido](#) in advance or during class. The instructor can answer these questions during the in-class session.
- Group projects. Students can work on group projects during the scheduled class time and obtain help as needed from their professor. This can be especially helpful for classes that involve students within different time zones.

Test Out Small Group Discussion in the Classroom

Here is a [document](#) shared through the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education with highlights from a trial run of using masks and face shields in the classroom while social distancing. They found that group discussion was still possible with some limitations.