

Designing Interactive Presentations

A Guide to Incorporating Active Learning in Lectures

December 2022

What is an Interactive Presentation?

An interactive presentation is one that blends periods of traditional lecture with opportunities for learners to actively engage with the material. Interactivity can be limited to a short segment of the presentation or incorporated systematically throughout. The key to interactive presentations is getting the learners to work with the material to foster greater understanding and application skills.

Key Elements of Effective Presentations

1. **Focus:** Maintain your learners' attention to the material. Avoid extraneous information or cluttered presentation of materials. Incorporate pauses or "cognitive breaks" to allow your learners to process the information.
2. **Succinctness:** Eliminate extraneous words and information to concentrate learners' attention on important concepts and avoid confusion.
3. **Visual Balance:** Use images effectively to augment your presentation and clarify or reinforce concepts.
4. **Anchoring:** Keep your learners grounded in the presentation by providing an outline at the start so they know where they are with the content.

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Why Should Presentations Be Interactive?

Creating interactive presentations allows instructors to provide instruction on key content areas while stimulating greater cognitive involvement and skill development in their learners. Learners need background information to make sense of new concepts. Interactive presentations provide information in a format that encourages critical thinking and application of concepts.



Interactive presentations help learners maintain focus, enable better recall, and are generally more engaging than passive learning experiences. Interactivity allows learners to stay engaged and even participate in the presentation itself.

How Do I Make Presentations Interactive?

STARTING THE SESSION

Start your presentation with an icebreaker, question, or reflection prompt.

VIDEO AND GRAPHICS.

Incorporate video clips and stimulating graphics to emphasize or clarify information.



QUESTIONING

Ask questions to foster critical thinking, reinforce concepts, and encourage real-world application. Technologies such as [TopHat](#) can aid in this process.

ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Incorporate active learning strategies into your presentation, such as Think-Pair-Share or a Gallery Walk. For more ideas, see the Active Learning Strategies quick guide.

STORYTELLING

Tell a story to provide real-world context to important concepts. Incorporate examples, personal experiences, and clinical cases into your presentation.

PAUSING

Include pauses or cognitive breaks. After a “chunk” of information, pause to ask questions, allow for note review, and encourage reflection. This is also an opportunity to incorporate an active learning strategy.

WRAPPING UP

Summarize key points to reinforce concepts and take advantage of the [recency effect](#).

How Do I Make Asynchronous Presentations Interactive?

Some presentations are recorded or otherwise delivered to learners asynchronously. This type of presentation has its own challenges and opportunities. In addition to the above suggestions, consider these when creating asynchronous presentations.

ESTABLISH CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Write clear, concrete learning objectives so learners understand what is expected of them. Establish ground rules for asynchronous discussions and interactions.

ONLINE DISCUSSION

Consider using Brightspace discussion threads or another means of engaging learners in discussion on key concepts. Encourage students to share their thoughts and experiences.

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Consider using software such as Adobe Captivate or Articulate Storyline to create presentations with built-in interaction such as branched logic and quizzing.