

Energy

Lecturer Explaining an Idea

Ok, we're not kidding anyone. This is never likely to be a very high energy activity. But there might be options to draw students in:

- Socratic questions
- Explaining it from somewhere other than the front
- Use students as props

Activity level

☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Reading in the Classroom

Clearly, one needs to avoid creating the impression that pre-reading isn't important, but short bursts of reading activity as a preparation for a discussion can be effective. Use reading to prepare for:

- A discussion
- Comparison with pre-reading
- Free writing

Activity level

☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Brainstorms (small group)

Set a question, ask the students to work in small groups. Check understanding by hovering around each group, prompt further discussion, keep time quite short, call out when half way through and when nearly finished. Move quickly to get 2 ideas per group at the end.

Activity level

☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Questionnaire (individual)

Can silence add something to your workshop? Can an individual questionnaire be used as a focussing activity followed by paired or small group discussion? If yes, probably use infrequently and keep short, some students might struggle to stay focussed.

Activity level

☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Questionnaire (Paired)

Instead of asking students to work in silence, ask them to work in pairs and interview one another. **Insist** that one plays the role of interviewer, asking questions and then noting down answers. Otherwise students can write down their own answers without discussion. Check time and swap roles half way through.

Activity level

☞ ☞ ☞

Energy

Brainstorms (Whole Group)

The Holy Grail of classroom activity. Often tried, rarely completely successful. For it to work, you need all the conditions right: affinity and trust in the group, enthusiastic facilitation, good questions, and probably placing in the right slot in the session. If you ever hit whole group participation, be sure to tell your peers.

Activity level

☞ ☞ ☞

Energy

Paired Discussion

Can be a nice quick activity to encourage students to reflect on their own learning and thinking. Facilitate quickly and encourage discussion around:

- Previous classroom activity (as a review)
- Students' own experiences
- Pre-classroom reading
- The last lecture

Elicit and discuss feedback.

Activity level

☞ ☞ ☞

Energy

Student Presentations (Presenter's POV)

A well-used staple of seminars, inspires fear, but can be an effective way of balancing assessment across the year. V high energy for presenters. What can be done to reduce stress levels?

- More presentations by students will help to normalise (although time consuming)
- Do little & often and develop by asking opinions a lot

Activity level

☞ ☞ ☞

Energy

Student Presentations (Audience POV)

For the presenter – terror, for the audience - tedium. So what leads to more engagement for the audience?

- A formal role in giving feedback (including a self-reflective piece about doing so)?
- Having to produce a written summary of one presentation as part of a portfolio?

Activity level

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Energy

Ice breakers/ energisers

Done to death in the first week. Vocally hated by the extroverts, but genuinely useful to their shyer peers, particularly if built upon. Need to be delivered with enthusiasm. Work with the course team to avoid repetition, use more subtle icebreakers later in the term/ at the start of subsequent years

Activity level

☞ ☞ ☞

Energy

Incomplete models/ diagrams

Can give a useful focal point for a group to discuss. As this is HE, will need to be part of broader discussion about principles/ theories, not just filling in the blanks.

Activity level

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Energy

One minute paper

We love these.

At the end (or in fact anywhere in the session) get the group to spend 1 minute writing about the subject. Purists argue that this is a private activity; others feel it's a great activity to check student understanding or spark discussions about subject/ note making/ ordering ideas.

Activity level

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Energy

Questions

"So Hist 106, what are the implications of this idea?"
Hard to do & treated by some students with suspicion
"Why aren't you just telling us the answer?" Useful though. Perhaps more useful with final year students. Reasoning and approach need careful explanation. Why not set them the challenge of asking you Socratic questions about the subject instead?

Activity level

☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Counting down the time remaining

Not so much a distinct activity as something that needs doing whenever students are set short tasks with a view to increasing energy levels. Obviously 5 minutes is as long as you want it to be, shorter if the group is getting restless, longer if they are engaged.

Ask Jane about Europe

Activity level

☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Moving into groups

Everyone has a favourite place to sit. And a friend to sit with. Breaking students out of the norm is potentially terrifying and energising. Sell the benefits of hearing a different perspective as you start. It always takes longer to do than expected and can be overused, but occasionally it is good to prick the complacency bubble. Ask Ed about Shoe Size

Activity level

☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Action planning

We expect students to do this automatically, yet they're probably very inexperienced at it. After discussion/ activity give them time to plan individually/ in groups to prepare for the next activity or for working outside the classroom. Many students may struggle with the specificity of planning and not creative thinking.

Activity level

☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Tutor greeting the group & small talk

The evidence suggests that students in post-16 education have reasonably close relationships with their tutors. HE is larger, more anonymous and so a little chat might help make things a little smoother.

Activity level

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Energy

Discussing (intended) Learning Outcomes

It's worth taking time out from the subject activity to periodically remind students about where they are against the module outcomes. And, if it's possible to do, other modules too. This is probably low energy, but might be a good focussing activity, particularly if combined with personal reflection/ action planning.

Activity level

☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Student Debates

Takes a lot of setting up, but when delivered as a normal part of the learning process, very powerful.

Use formal rhetorical rules: 2 motions for, two motions against, questions and then a vote.

Follow up with a reflective piece about the strength of the arguments or ways to improve debating skills.

Activity level

☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Balloon Debates

Start with 5-6 historical figures/leaders in your field/ employee roles (e.g. hedge fund manager, taxidermist, etc.) and debate why they ought to remain in a balloon losing air. Lose one person at a time. Perhaps give a more specific situation. Who would be most useful on a desert island? Play an inverse version, who is most responsible for the financial crisis?

Activity level


☹ ☹ ☹

Energy

Concept Mapping

Engrossing and challenging activity. Students will need to be shown how to do this activity beforehand. Concept mapping is a way of visually showing the connections between key ideas in a discipline. Use to consolidate knowledge part way through the programme and perhaps also before exams. Works well in class as a small group/ paired activity.

Activity level




Energy

Role play

Requires maturity from participants and confidence from facilitators.

But, if used occasionally, can reap enormous rewards. Set up activities such as a commission, or planning meeting and hear from witnesses 'in character'. Or for more confident groups work through crisis situations.

Activity level




Energy

Formalising Student Questions

Most lecturers stress the value of questions, but it still takes confidence. Instead:

- Ask students to work in small groups to write a question
- Ask them to hand in slips part way through or at the end of the lecture (if the latter, then perhaps start the next lecture with the questions)

Activity level




Energy

Mini Papers

Similar to seminar presentations, a limited number of students present a paper to then instigate discussion. To make it more active for the audience, charge them with writing down key questions and invite a few individuals to ask them.

Alternatively ask the presenters to set questions for discussion.

Activity level



Energy

Pyramid Discussion

Start the discussion in pairs. Then the pairs talk to other pairs, and then the fours meet up with other fours. Needs to have a distinctive activity at each stage to prevent it from getting repetitive, for example ranking the quality of the ideas. Alternatively ask students to look at different issues and then bring them together.

Activity level



Energy

Using Padlet

<http://padlet.com/>

Many lecturers like padlet. It can be an effective way to get questions from the group, but does the fact that students join the performance have any impact on who posts ideas/questions?

Is it more useful to post throughout the lecture, or to build in key times for questions?

Activity level



Energy

Watching a Video

The activity level depends very much on the choice of film. It can be as low energy as a traditional lecture (often lower as it's usually darker), but the right short clip might be useful as an energiser.

How do you strengthen it's use good questioning and discussion before and after the clips.

Activity level



Energy

Using social media

Questions/ thoughts raised through twitter are either reassuring to other students struggling to understand or free licence to students to watch videos about kittens. And before we get too excited, twitter's a lousy alternative to note making anyway (harrumph).

So is there a constructive way to use social media?

Activity level



Energy

Take away the methamphetamine (well the mobile phones)

Okay it's probably a human right or something, but.

With the right group, would it be a useful social experiment and discussion to ask them to leave their phones in envelopes at the front of the room and discuss with them how many times they went to check during the hour?

Activity level



Energy

Voting

Show of hands, clickers or mobile apps. What works/ what fails?

Activity level



Energy

Give students formal roles to respond to issues

At the start give students a formal role. For example two students look for flaws or weaknesses in what's presented, two others describe what's most compelling/ convincing.

Activity level



Energy

Activity level

