

***Strategies for Making Lectures More Active: Write (think) – Pair – Share***

Write-pair-share is a classroom learning device that merges reflective and active learning and, as the name suggests, involves three steps.

- First, students respond to a question or statement by writing an answer in their notes.
- Second, each learner discusses his or her result with a neighbor to solidify points of mutual agreement, debate and resolve disagreements, and to flesh out inadequacies in their original written response.
- Third, responses are shared with the whole class with further clarification or questioning by the instructor.

The first step is reflective, the second is active, and the third step has elements of both. With think-pair-share, students are not asked to write a response before pairing with a neighbor for discussion. Including the writing step is preferable because the thought process is more likely complete when the learner has to make sense of a response in writing. This step also assures a written record of a key concept in the students' notes. Write-pair-share exercises can take as little as 5 minutes or as long as 15 minutes, depending on the complexity of the prompting statement or question.

Write-pair-share questions can be used at anytime during a lecture. Placed at the opening of class, this exercise engages students with the course material and can explore understanding and application of information from reading or from the previous class section. Placed at the middle of class, write-pair-share breaks up the passivity of lecture and serves as a check on understanding of what has been presented. Placed near the end of class, this exercise permits students to integrate what was presented during the class period.

Write-pair-share also leads to wide participation in class discussion. Most instructors, and students, are accustomed to the experience of the same few learners responding to all questions that are addressed to a large class. Anecdotal experience shows that when the same questions are posed as write-pair-share, then the ensuing discussion involves many more students and, in some cases, is difficult to terminate. This more beneficial discussion and learner participation likely results because (a) sufficient time has elapsed for all students to formulate adequate answers, and (b) the pairing activity has promoted self-confidence that the constructed answer is a valid one to present to everyone. While wandering the classroom and overhearing conversations during the pairing part of the exercise, the instructor can encourage particular students to share their viewpoint during the whole-class discussion; this is particularly effective for engaging typically quiet and nonparticipatory students (including some that likely have low self-confidence) with classroom discussion.