

10 Small and Effective Changes You Can Make to Your Teaching Right Now

1. Stop for 1-2 minutes a few times during class to have students **compare their notes** with each other. Answer any questions that arise as a result. (Even this tiny change has been shown to improve exam scores).
2. **The minute paper**. For the last 1 minute of class, have students take out a small piece of paper and write down a) the most important thing they learned that day, and b) what they are still confused about (or just b)). After 1-2 times doing this, you will start to get really helpful results (because students begin to expect it).
3. Prepare **learning goals** for your students: Decide, for a particular topic, what you want the students to **be able to do** related to that topic (for example, explain the difference between two things; calculate the value of x given y and z; define the following words; draw the relationship among the cells of a tissue; etc.) If you don't have time now to do this for all your topics, just start with one. Use the goals to prepare your exam.
4. **Ask conceptual questions**: Write 1 question per class day (or more!) that tests whether students really *understand* the information you have presented. Stop class 5 minutes early, ask students to work together in pairs or small groups on the problem and collect their responses. (If you're not comfortable yet asking students to work together, simply have students work on the question individually).
5. A few times during class, **ask students to make predictions**. (Examples: "Now that you know how blood pH is controlled, what do you think the blood pH would be in a person with emphysema?" "What would happen if the aorta and pulmonary artery switched their destinations?") This will work best if you give the students a short time (1-2 minutes) to discuss the question with each other (or at least think about it themselves) instead of asking them to respond immediately.
6. Ask students to **read (or watch) something before class**—a section of the textbook, an article, a handout you give them, a video overview of the topic of that class day—**and have them "respond" to it** by coming to class with answers to a few questions you give them about the reading, especially what the students found to be interesting and confusing in the reading. Spend the first 10 minutes of class (or more) discussing their ideas and questions. (You can give students credit for simply doing these; otherwise most will not do it).
7. Help your students learn how to study better by **telling them to watch these videos**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RH95h36NChI> (they can just search "Stephen Chew studying", or you can post the link on Moodle)

8. Have your students **introduce themselves** to the five or six students around them—on the first day of class, and several times afterward.

9. A few weeks into the semester, ask your students for “**start/stop/continue**” **feedback**—at the end of class, have them write down what they would like you to start doing, stop doing, and continue doing. (You don’t have to do what they suggest! But sometimes they have good ideas.)

10. **Encourage your students to work together** outside of class, especially by *practicing explaining* the concepts to each other, and by *testing each other*.

These changes make teaching both more effective and more enjoyable. Choose one or a few to try (and remember, almost any technique works better after the first couple of times, when students begin to expect and mentally prepare for them). Explain to your students that you are doing this because the evidence shows that if you do, they will learn more, and more deeply.

I can help provide more information, examples, support, materials, explanations, etc. about each of these 10 actions. Please contact me: leupen@umbc.edu or sarah.leupen@lfp.cuni.cz.