

# Implementing Active Learning: *Recommendations for Success*

1. Start small (e.g. 1 activity, 1 class session)
2. Provide the rationale and purpose of the strategy
  - Why are you asking students to do this?
  - What do you want students to learn? (try to use action verbs)
3. Be explicit. Tell them their 'job' for this activity.  
Students know their job in a traditional lecture course—to write down as much of what the professor says as they can.
  - What will they do?
  - How long should it take?
  - What is the product?

[Note: 2 and 3 should take no more than a couple of minutes or sentences]

4. Wrap-up/Debrief
  - What happened to students during the activity?
  - What changed for students over the course of the activity?
  - Where are students now, relative to where they started?

This step is one of the most difficult to remember, but it is crucial. For some students, active learning is invisible. Since active learning is not yet standard in most college classrooms, students' may not realize that they have learned. When they take notes during a lecture, their notes constitute a visible by product of learning. Discussion among students may be considered "busy work," even when the topic is scholarly and/or they have made intellectual progress.

You can answer the Wrap-Up questions above, but you can also ask students to answer them. Students do need to hear what you think, but it is also good to find out if their views differ from yours. If you are the only person to summarize the activity ("Today we learned..."), your students might be thinking "We did!?"

[Note: wrap-up sessions should be brief—a quick benchmark or comparison point for students' learning]

5. Expect to improve!  
Even though you are a content expert in your field, you might not be very good at active teaching the first time you try it. If you have not taught using active learning strategies before, you might need practice before you are comfortable or adept at it.