

Teaching

A series of practical and innovative teaching tips for college faculty No. 21

The Top 10...

Learning-Based Ways to End Lessons

Endings are as important as beginnings. After all, this is what students will most remember until the next lesson. Perhaps you recall that we suggest planning lessons using the **BOPPPS** format (*Top 10 # 6*), where the “S” means “summarize.” Well, there are a variety of ways to “Summarize” - close a lesson! Use the final **10 minutes** of class in a way that helps build student self-efficacy (*Top 10 #19*) and brings the lesson to a deliberate, planned close.

- ✓ **Do the unexpected.** Ask teams to list songs that relate to the material being studied, or even to make up a little song about the lesson. Or, ask teams to draw pictures illustrating key points. Boring is as boring does!
- ✓ Get feedback about how well you identified the key points in a lesson by asking your students to write briefly on “the 3 most important points I’ve studied this week are ...” Compare this to what ***you hope they will list based upon your lesson plan*** to see if you need to make adjustments (and to get insight into each student’s level of engagement and thinking).
- ✓ When you suspect/know that the lesson covers confusing material, ask students to **list the most confusing point(s)**. Compile the results, using those points that many students mentioned to provide a **Bridge** (BOPPPS again!) into the next lesson (tell them how their input influenced you).
- ✓ **Diagrams** help many students. After showing them how to connect concepts that they are studying several times, *have them draw diagrams* that capture their sense of the connection between the 3 – 5 key ideas covered in a lesson. Discussing this in class allows you to make additional comments about how key concepts link together.
- ✓ Give students a **question to answer on the material they will study next** that connects it with what they have just studied. This both helps you think like your students as you consider the next lesson and gives you

something to focus the next lesson around. To promote more collaborative learning, have students prepare their answer in teams of 2 – 3.

- ✓ Develop **reflective learning skills** by giving your students a question to reflect upon based upon the lesson. For example, if the lesson is on diversity, a reflective question might be “how are you different from other people in this class”? An advantage of a reflective question is that you can then link the next lesson back to their answers.
- ✓ Instead of you developing the reflective question as above, have your **students create a reflective question** on the lesson. This is difficult so start by having students pair up to develop a question.
- ✓ After showing students how to summarize, have them summarize what they consider to be a key point of the lesson for a student who could not attend. Thinking how to **summarize for someone else** requires much more complete summarization. Or, working in groups, have them outline how they would teach the material to someone not in class (which also gives you insight into how they like to learn).
- ✓ Working in teams, have students pretend there is a test coming up, and create a “**cheat sheet**” on the material studied. This enables them to compare ideas by discussing what they are studying (always good!) and learning from each other.
- ✓ **Applying learning** is a high level thinking skill. Have students write about “3 ways I can apply what I have learned this week to my life. “ You will need to help them with applications the first couple of times. Asking students to share ideas gives others an even larger range of models.

The more we help students solidify their learning, the better most will feel about their ability to learn – increasing their self-efficacy as students (and the more they will **REMEMBER** – *top 10 #20*). Demonstrate that these kinds of activities are important by randomly having some responses handed in for extra credit. This provides incentive for students to put significant effort at the end of class when their energy and engagement risks being lowest.

BONUS!

A handout combining several ideas for “fixing” learning is attached. Modify it to fit your specific needs.

Class Analysis

It is often useful to do a bit of summary thinking when we finish something like a class. Please be as complete as you can be, while also being brief. The key is to grab a few key points while we still remember them!

What do you consider to be the **main topic** we discussed in class today? Please explain it as well as you can.

What are the **two most important things you learned in class today**? Write a sentence each please.

Do you have any questions about anything we covered today?

What did you do to help other students learn and/or participate today?

Name: