

Active learning in new spaces

Have you tried?

Think-pair-(square)-share

What is it?

Think-pair-(square)-share is a learning strategy to encourage students to use higher level thinking and justify their reasoning. It allows students to take time to think about a problem and explore their prior knowledge. It also exposes students to different ways of thinking about a problem through peers.

How does it work?

The facilitator introduces a problem or question and explains the Think-pair-(square)-share activity with the time constraints of the different stages of the activity.

Students think individually about their response to the question or problem in silence. They may like to write their thoughts down. After a few minutes, students pair up and share their ideas with a peer. Depending on the size of the group, pairs can then join another group, making a square, and discuss their responses. Responses are then communicated by the group, with the reasoning behind their responses to the whole class. This is where the higher level thinking comes in as students have to justify the decisions they have made.

Why use it?

Think-pair-(square)-share is used to develop students' critical thinking skills by identifying issues and arguments in a theory, in a reading, in a video or podcast. It gives students 'thinking time', is collaborative and exposes students to other ways of thinking through a problem and encourages class participation.



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How can it be used?

- To debate a topic within a small group of students
- To unpack a complex problem and find the 'best' solution
- To unpack a project brief and/or assessment rubric
- As a scaffolding activity to develop presentation skills, enhance communication skills, explore an assignment

In a technology enabled learning space, students can develop key points together on a shared screen that are then presented to the rest of the class. It is a strategy that can be used in any space and is particularly useful in interactive lectures to make the learning active.

Resources

- Prompt questions, problems or scenarios
- Whiteboard, whiteboard markers

Other:

Bok Center Quick Tip: Think, Pair, Share; <http://vimeo.com/60114963>

Cooperative Small Group Learning Structures from the Centre of Teaching Support and Innovation University of Toronto http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTsLuVwg_RI

A descriptive information sheet from Edith Cowin University
<https://intranet.ecu.edu.au/learning/for-academic-staff/curriculum-2012-resources/good-teaching/related-content/downloads/Think-Pair-Share-explained-120629.pdf>