

Increasing Student Participation:

A New Bag of Tricks

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If teachers are not careful, we can let ourselves get stuck in a rut when it comes to the methods we use to involve students during class discussions and in-class activities.

Here are several ideas to increase student participation in the classroom:

Quiz Show

Presidents (before 1800)	Presidents (1800-1850)	Presidents (1850-1900)	Presidents (1900-1950)	Presidents (1950-2000)	Presidential Pets
100	100	100	100	100	100
200	200	200	200	200	200
300	300	300	300	300	300
400	400	400	400	400	400
500	500	500	500	500	500

Round 1 ▶

Buttons: Play Game, Print, New Board, Help, Edit Board, Quit

QUIZ SHOW

Quiz Show is a flexible quiz-format software tool that can be used to encourage student participation. It includes an easy-to-use file editor, built-in help, and user manuals. Patterned after a popular television game show, it can be used briefly or during an entire class period. Users can place a “hidden” picture behind question boards that is revealed square by square during play. Sound effects can be turned on or off. Game boards can be created around lesson topics or can be used in a variety of ways to select student respondents during in-class discussions.

You can download a complete, royalty-free, copyright-free, public domain copy of Quiz Show with accompanying Quick Start Guide, User’s Manual, and sample game files online at: www.kenalford.com/QuizShow/

Anagrams

Visit www.wordsmith.org/anagram/advanced.html to create anagrams from lesson topics or phrases, student names, etc. The anagrams can be used to select student respondents and to generate class participation and interest as an “attention getter.”

Online “Sign” Generators

Visit www.addletters.com/image-list.php to create signs for in-class use. Numerous sign formats are available, including a Bart Simpson sign, a diploma sign, a Disneyland sign, refrigerator magnet signs, a football stadium sign, a hiking trail sign, a newspaper front page, ransom note, restaurant sign, highway road sign, theater marquee sign, warning signs, etc..

Online “Motivational” Poster Generators

“Motivational” posters can be used to encourage and enable student participation. Here are two websites where you can create free “motivation-style computer graphics (that can be copied and pasted into course materials or lesson slide shows):

- bighugelabs.com/flickr/motivator.php
- diy.despair.com/motivator.php

Worldwide Telescope

Visit www.worldwidetelescope.org to create video presentations using high quality photos from space.

Wordles

According to the Wordles website (www.wordle.net/), Wordles are “word clouds” created “from text that you provide. The clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text. You can tweak your clouds with different fonts, layouts, and color schemes.” Wordle word clouds can be used as an attention-getter or discussion aid.

“Free Pass” Tickets

At the beginning of the semester, give students one (or more, as desired) “Free Pass” tickets. Students may submit them to the professor, prior to the beginning of class, to exempt themselves from being asked questions during class that day.

Small Group Quizzes

Periodically have an unannounced, short, in-class quiz. Allow students to form small groups (2-4 students per group) with one student selected as the group recorder. Allow students to quietly discuss their answers before reaching a consensus. Receive group responses prior to submission.

Pass Around Cup

Prior to class prepare slips of paper – one per student – with either a question, concept, or student’s name written on it. Place the papers in a cup or bowl and invite each student to take one. Use the questions as the basis for organizing your lesson discussion.