

Strategies for Engagement in Online Classroom Discussions

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Defining Student Engagement

- “Engagement is **a state of being** that combines high effort, attention, and participation with emotions of interest, enthusiasm, enjoyment, and lack of anxiety or anger. In this study, engagement is defined as a state of interest, mindfulness, cognitive effort, and deep processing of new information that partially mediates the gap between **what learners can do** and **what they actually do**” (Schuetz, 2008, p. 312).
- “Students’ **cognitive investment** in, **active participation** in, and **emotional commitment** to their learning” (Zepke & Leach, 2010, p. 168).
- “**Engaged students** do more than attend or perform academically; they also put forth effort, persist, self-regulate their behavior toward goals, **challenge themselves to exceed**, and enjoy challenges and learning” (Christenson et al., 2012, p. v).

Strategies for Engagement

1. **Let Students Lead.** Integrate students’ ideas and interests into the course by asking students to share ideas, articles, images, or other media that relates to the course content and then using those contributions to prompt class discussions or reflections.
2. **Make it Multimodal.** Create discussion prompts, journal entries, or blog posts that ask students to be active participants in their learning and learn through doing, such as creating memes or infographics, composing social media posts, or writing with images.
3. **Live Q&As.** Enable students to ask questions in real-time (even anonymously) about major projects or course concepts, or use “ask me anything” (AMA) sessions as town halls and spaces for co-constructing knowledge.
4. **Polls.** Use polls to gather feedback, gauge students’ knowledge, and let learners make decisions. Ask students multiple-choice questions or give them options about what to discuss that day or choices for what to do in the next class session.
5. **Word Clouds.** Pose a question with a live word cloud tool to collect textual data in a visual way, highlight the most common responses, and present the information in a meaningful way to facilitate student-centered learning.

Interactive Discussion Tools & Resources

- **Mentimeter.** A website where you can create Q&As, quizzes, live polls, and word clouds for interactive presentations and discussions. Free basic version for unlimited presentations and quizzes up to five slides. (www.mentimeter.com)
- **Poll Everywhere.** A resource that offers live polls, Q&As, quizzes, and word clouds that can be embedded into PowerPoint and Google Slides presentations. Free version for higher

education with unlimited questions and audiences up to 40 people.
(www.polleverywhere.com/)

- **Class Flow.** A cloud-based platform designed for hybrid and online learning that offers polls, quizzes, and 10 different activity types for creating interactive presentations and lesson plans. Free. (<https://classflow.com/>)

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