Resource Guide

Alternatives to the Think-Pair-Share Activity Design

Think-Pair-Share is a common active learning practice used to generate the discussion of ideas. However, the share component of Think-Pair-Share can take a large amount of class time, has the chance to increase anxiety that may distract students from conversation, and can have unnoticed inequities due to the prevalence of the same few people sharing each time. Below are four alternatives to the Think-Pair-Share activity. Consider what the goals of the share portion of this activity are for your class and if an alternative method could be used.

- Making the Share optional: You can modify the share by making it optional by asking students during the pair if they would be willing to share, giving them time to prepare or a chance to opt out.

- Sharing Locally: You can also modify by doing a local share, where students share ideas beyond the pairs with nearby students but not the whole class. If time allows, you could also do a share go-around where everyone contributes their ideas.

- Synthesizing ideas in real-time: The instructor can synthesize the ideas and act as the share portion to alleviate stress about speaking in front of the class. This can be done in real-time through polling (clickers) following the pair discussion or by listening in on pairs as you walk around the room. You could also summarize the pair discussions and bring attention to salient ideas you heard while observing the pair discussions.

- Synthesizing ideas asynchronously: Consider asynchronously synthesizing the ideas using index cards or electronic posts. This would give you access to all students' ideas and time to review before presenting ideas and/or addressing alternative conceptions.

- Eliminating the share: If the goal of doing a think-pair-share is to have students engage in discourse about the topic/problem, you may not need to include the share portion of the activity. This method would also allow for time for other in-class activities.

Resources

Greenman, Sarah J., Valerie Chepp, and Samantha Burton. "High-Impact Educational Practices: Leveling the Playing Field or Perpetuating Inequity?" *Teaching in Higher Education* 27, no. 2 (February 17, 2022): 267–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.2000384.

Cooper, Katelyn M., Jeffrey N. Schinske, and Kimberly D. Tanner. "Reconsidering the Share of a Think–Pair–Share: Emerging Limitations, Alternatives, and Opportunities for Research." *CBE—Life Sciences Education* 20, no. 1 (March 2021): fe1. https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.20-08-0200.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center by email at cttl@slu.edu.