

Activities for Reflection

Blue: Getting started and facilitating discussion

Green: Digging deeper and making connections

Orange: Wrapping up and taking action

Jumpstart Journal

Time required: 5-10 minutes

What is it? Routine writing activity that takes place at the start of each class meeting or discussion.

Good for: Incorporating reflection into every class, giving students time to collect their thoughts, facilitating equal participation, preparing for or debriefing after an excursion, articulating goals, making connections to course readings.

How to: Ask students to bring a journal or notebook with them to every class. At the start of each class or discussion, pose a question and give them five minutes to write down their response. You might ask: "What are your goals for today's excursion?" or "How did today's readings change or expand the way you think about X?" The students' prepared responses can be used to "jumpstart" a discussion or the next activity.

Active Knowledge Sharing

Time required: 10-15 minutes

What is it? An activity for starting class that helps students identify what they do and don't know about a subject.

Good for: Activating students' prior knowledge, identifying misconceptions, ensuring that every student contributes to the discussion, making connections to course readings.

How to: Provide students with 2-4 questions related to the subject matter of that class. Students pair up to answer the questions, then compare responses with another group of two. Finally, call on pair groupings to explain their answers.

Think-Pair-Share

Time required: 5-10 minutes

What is it? A quick activity that allows students to think carefully about a question before sharing their responses with others.

Good for: Giving students time to collect their thoughts, facilitating equal participation, ensuring every student contributes to the discussion.

How to: Pose a question. Give students 1-5 minutes to think through (or write down) their response. Next, have students turn to a partner and discuss their ideas. Finally, ask students to share what came up in their pair discussions during a whole class discussion.

Ball Pass

Time required: 10-20 minutes

What is it? A method for structuring a large group discussion that encourages active listening and student-to-student interaction.

Good for: Facilitating equal participation.

How to: The facilitator, holding a ball, begins by posing a question or sharing an observation. Students wishing to respond raise their hands, and the facilitator passes the ball to one of them. The person who received the ball must first respond to the first speaker's question or comment before adding his or her own contribution. The second speaker then passes the ball on to the next person wishing to contribute.

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What? So what? Now what?

Time required: 15-20 minutes

What is it? A method for sequencing reflective thinking that moves from description to analysis to action.

Good for: Debriefing after an excursion, articulating goals, developing strategies for achieving goals.

How to: Begin by asking students to describe an experience, such as an excursion, a class discussion, or personal life event: What happened? What did you do? Next, ask them to analyze the experience: Why does it matter to you? To DePaul students? To Chicago residents? How is it significant within the context of this class? Finally, ask students to take action: What have you learned? What will you do differently?

Mind Maps

Time required: 15-20 minutes

What is it? An activity that asks students to visualize the relationships between academic concepts and personal experiences.

Good for: Making connections between academic content and personal experiences; organizing knowledge.

How to: Working either in groups or as a class, ask students to write down a central concept on a large sheet of paper. Students then arrange related ideas, keywords, and experiences around the central concept. They may use colors and arrows to show relationships between items on the map, and images to illustrate ideas.

Force Field Analysis

Time required: 15-20 minutes

What is it? An analysis activity that asks students to identify the helping or hindering forces affecting their movement towards a specific goal.

Good for: Articulating goals and developing strategies to achieve goals.

How to: Ask students to identify an educational, professional, or personal goal and to provide a description of what success looks like. Ask students to chart the hindering forces and helping forces that affect their movement towards the goal. Next, have students articulate where they currently are in terms of reaching that goal and steps they can take to accomplish it.

Photo Captions

Time required: 20-40 minutes

What is it? A small-group activity that asks students to connect photographs taken during an excursion to course readings or concepts.

Good for: Reflecting on an excursion experience, connecting the experience to academic content.

How to: Students take a series of photographs during an excursion outside of the classroom. Once back in class, students work in small groups to create captions for their photographs that describe what is depicted and/or articulate a connection to a course reading. If you have access to a computer lab, students can create their photo sequences in PowerPoint. If not, ask students to print out photographs in advance and write the caption on the paper. Consider asking groups to present their photo sequences to the rest of the class, or to post them online on the course site.

Index Card Takeaways

Time required: 5 minutes

What is it? A quick end-of-class activity that asks students to reflect on what they learned that day and to plan how they will act on that learning.

Good for: Debriefing after an excursion, articulating goals, developing strategies for achieving goals.

How to: Provide each student with an index card. On one side, have them identify a key idea or concept they learned that day. On the reverse side, ask them to identify a next step (e.g. how they plan to implement what they learned in a project or future course).

Minute Paper

Time required: 5 minutes

What is it? An end-of-class writing activity that asks participants to reflect on the questions raised in

discussion or the personal significance of what happened that day in class.

Good for: Debriefing after an excursion, making connections between academic content and personal experiences, identifying misconceptions.

How to: Students respond in writing to an open-ended question (e.g. What was the most useful idea discussed in today's class? What relationship did you see between today's topic and other topics previously covered in this course? What interesting questions remain unanswered about today's topic?). The facilitator collects the written responses, reads them, and uses them to plan the next class meeting. These responses do not require grading or written feedback.

Letters to Future Students

Time required: 30-40 minutes

What is it? An end-of-term writing activity that asks students to consider their experience in the course as a whole.

Good for: Showcasing self-development and personal growth, describing how the course prepares them to embark on the remainder of their liberal studies education.

How to: Ask students to write a letter to next year's incoming DePaul students based on what they learned in Chicago Quarter. What should incoming students expect to learn? What will they find most challenging? What advice should they follow? Allow time for students to share and discuss each other's letters.

Figurative Transformation

Time required: 30-50 minutes

What is it? End-of-quarter activity that asks students to creatively articulate how they have changed throughout the term.

Good for: Showcasing self-development and personal growth, articulating goals, describing how the course prepares them to embark on the remainder of their liberal studies education, thinking creatively.

How to: Ask students to imagine themselves and their transformation in the course through an extended metaphor. For example, you might ask students to imagine themselves as a superhero, and then describe (in words or in a drawing):

- The story of their transformation into a superhero - An account of how they changed in the course
- The superpowers they gained - Strengths and abilities that have gained in the course
- Their kryptonite - Challenges yet to overcome, areas for improvement

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