

## Teaching Tip 9: Getting Student Feedback Easily

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This tip focuses on using technology to get quick student feedback. Formative student feedback is essential in order to monitor teaching and learning and to provide information which can be used to improve teaching and learning in our courses. All of us who teach have experienced situations where we just completed what we believe to be a great class only to later find out that for the



students, the pace was too fast, the content too detailed or above the comprehension of students or unclear and confusing. This scenario is more prevalent when we are confident of our teaching and have a deep understanding of the materials we are presenting, and we overestimate students' ability. The simple act of stopping and asking, "Are there any questions?" or "Do you understand?" almost inevitably results in students providing positive feedback that they understand, even when they don't, or they simply remain quiet until the professor resumes talking. This occurs even when the wait time between when the question is asked and when the instructor moves on to the next point is a reasonable 6 to 8 seconds. The average wait time for most instructors, between asking a question, giving the answer and moving on to the next topic, is generally less than two seconds. Fortunately, there are many easy, user-friendly technologies available that can be used to quickly collect and analyze student feedback during class and provide insights into what students think and do or do not know. One useful approach is the use of the BYOD – bring your own device – to collect student immediate feedback. There are a number of available systems, some of which are free, for others there may be a small fee for the student or the instructor. To find current available technologies one simply searches the Web for "student response systems".

The general approach is for the instructor to post a question where students select the best answer or fill in a blank. The students' responses are automatically collected and can be displayed to the class. One nice feature is that many systems allow the student responses to be displayed as a word cloud. The system can also be used to facilitate peer-instruction, where students select an answer, the class results are shown and discussed among peers and then the question is re-pollled before the correct (best) answer is given. For more information and examples search peer-instruction on the Web. As a rule of thumb if more than 70% of the class get the correct answer of the first try then this is a good indication that the concept or information has been assimilated by students. For peer instruction it is best if the question deals with underlying basic concepts rather than fact memorization or recognition.

If we want to meet students on their home ground, then it is useful for us to use approaches that are part of their everyday existence, i.e. digital media accessible from mobile devices.

Using mobile devices for in-class academic activities also helps to reduce their use for non-academic activities and establishes within the class a culture of using mobile devices for learning as opposed to social networking where students are surfing the web or using social media to connect with friends.



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