

## Participatory Learning Activities

**Interactive learning activities** engage participants by allowing them to actively participate and verbally respond within the learning environment. Group discussion, case studies, questionnaires, and crossword puzzles easily fall within this category, which is **characterized by mental stimulation and verbal expression**.

**Experiential learning activities** engage participants physically, mentally and emotionally in a multisensory experience. Simulation, visualization, dramatization, role play and physical movement easily fall within this category, which is **characterized by emotional stimulation and physical expression**.

However, the design and facilitation of a learning activity will ultimately determine whether it is interactive, experiential, or both. For example, physical movement can be added to almost any activity by having groups stand together, moving participants into different pairings, or adding a walking component. Building an activity around a meaningful metaphor can add an emotional component by tapping into the participants' experiential memories.

**Bottom line:** the more the participants are engaged and stimulated mentally, emotionally, and physically, the more likely they are to learn and to retain what they have learned.

There are approximately ten broad categories of interactive or experiential learning activities. They are identified on the following pages, along with some specific examples.

Please note that these categories often overlap. Many activities involve reading, writing, and discussion. For example, a relay race is a game that also involves physical movement, writing, problem solving, and discussion, etc. To emphasize this point, scavenger hunt is listed under both physical movement and reading.

1. **ART:** Any creative design activity intended to embody learning concepts in a visual or tactile manner.
  - ◆ Draw a picture of themselves as either a food, a vehicle, or an animal- and label their characteristics.
  - ◆ Use art supplies to create an image of the learning essence or metaphor (bridge, fruit tree, etc.).
  - ◆ Create a mind map.

Most Responsive Learning Styles\*: Haptic and Visual

\* For a description, please see Perceptual Learning Styles.

2. **DISCUSSION:** Any activity involving verbalization of thoughts, questions, or experiences related to the learning content.

- ◆ Directed large group discussion.
- ◆ Small group discussion.
- ◆ Question and answer session.

Most Responsive Learning Style: Interactive

3. **DRAMATIZATION:** Any activity that involves acting out some aspect of the learning content.

- ◆ Role play.
- ◆ Skit.
- ◆ Debate.
- ◆ Presentation.

Most Responsive Learning Styles: Interactive, Kinesthetic and Aural

4. **GAME:** Any activity that is enjoyable, interesting, often timed or competitive, and carried out by its own rules.

- ◆ Crossword puzzle or word search.
- ◆ Board game.
- ◆ Ice breaker or energizer.
- ◆ Relay race, either physical or verbal.
- ◆ Competitive brainstorming, where groups compete against each other and the clock to come up with the best responses.

Most Responsive Learning Styles: Haptic, Kinesthetic and Interactive

5. **PHYSICAL MOVEMENT:** Any activity that is primarily kinesthetic, intended to get the body moving.

- ◆ Gallery walk, in which groups of participants walk from flipchart to flipchart, posting their answers to questions.
- ◆ Pop ups, where participants pop up out of their chairs to give an answer.
- ◆ Pair share, where knowledgeable and less knowledgeable participants meet in the middle of the room to share questions and answers.

- ◆ Signal answers with hand, fingers or thumb.
- ◆ Walkabout, in which pairs walk and talk together.
- ◆ Ropes course involving various physical challenges.
- ◆ Ice breaker or energizer, such as a Koosh toss.
- ◆ Scavenger hunt to obtain ideas from other participants.
- ◆ Snow ball toss, where participants write an issue on a piece of paper, scrunch it up, and throw it in the air, for others to find and respond to the issue.

Most Responsive Learning Styles: Haptic, Kinesthetic and Interactive

6. **PROBLEM SOLVING:** Any activity that involves analyzing a situation and recommending alternative solutions.
- ◆ Small groups work on case studies of prepared scenarios or situations identified by the participants.
  - ◆ Small groups brainstorm solutions to identified challenges.
  - ◆ Envelope pass, where tables compete against each other to identify the most useful solutions to identified problems.
  - ◆ Individual participants apply learned content to resolve self-identified issues.

Most Responsive Learning Styles: Interactive and Print

7. **READING:** Any activity that involves interacting with the written word.
- ◆ Participants read aloud key content in reference materials.
  - ◆ Participants read off group conclusions as posted on flipcharts or worksheets.
  - ◆ Participants engage in a scavenger hunt to seek out specific information by reading reference materials to discover what would otherwise be provided through lecture.

Most Responsive Learning Styles: Print and Aural

8. **HANDS ON:** Any activity that involves practicing or applying what has been learned.
- ◆ Participants practice using a learned skill in a simulation: i.e., conduct a mock interview.
  - ◆ Participants demonstrate new learning: i.e., make computations.

- ◆ Individual participants apply what they have learned to a real life situation: i.e., create a time management plan.

Most Responsive Learning Styles: Haptic, Kinesthetic and Interactive

9. **VISUALIZATION:** Any activity that results in a mental picture, often accompanied by emotions or sensations.

- ◆ Participants are asked to remember how it felt to be in a situation related to the learning content.
- ◆ Participants are asked to imagine a situation and experience it in their minds.
- ◆ The participants are emotionally drawn into a vivid story.

Most Responsive Learning Style: Visual

10. **WRITING:** Any activity that focuses on creating a written record.

- ◆ Participants create a written log of activities.
- ◆ Participants write a personal action plan.
- ◆ Participants complete an individual assessment or questionnaire.
- ◆ Small groups post their conclusions on a flipchart.

Most Responsive Learning Style: Print