

# Resources for Teaching

## GENERAL SOURCES FOR RESEARCH-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES

**ABLConnect** <http://ablconnect.harvard.edu/>

Harvard's large, searchable site is a repository for active learning strategies, both in the classroom and in community settings. Many of the activities housed here will work in a range of disciplines and the discipline-specific activities are equally diverse.

**A Brief Summary of Best Practices in College Teaching** <http://teaching.uncc.edu/learning-resources/articles-books/best-practice/instructional-methods/best-practices-summary>

This list describes twelve research-based practices for university teaching. While the practices are diverse—they range from lecturing effectively to using active learning strategies—the discussions emphasize things that are easy to implement in a variety of disciplines.

**Chronicle of Higher Education** <http://chronicle.com>

The *Chronicle* provides consistent coverage of issues in university teaching. Many of these articles come from authors of new books on teaching or from the ProfHackers, a tech-savvy group of instructor. Articles on teaching are typically available to those who subscribe to the free digest version of the *Chronicle*.

**Faculty Focus** <http://www.facultyfocus.com/>

This online newsletter-- edited by Mary Ellen Weimer and sponsored by Magna Publications—addresses common teaching dilemmas for university professors. Sign up for a free subscription and issues will appear frequently in your inbox. Often Weimer discusses interesting articles from the teaching literature and includes a link to the original source.

**Pedagogy Unbound** <http://www.pedagogyunbound.com/>

This site bills itself as a place for “college teachers to share practical strategies for today’s classrooms.” The searchable site contains contributions dealing with teaching, grading and other classroom matters. The site has collected suggestions from many individuals teaching at all types of institutions.

**Scholarly Teacher** <http://scholarlyteacher.com/>

Hosted by Todd Zakrajsek, this series of podcasts is devoted to the mission of the Lilly conferences on college teaching, extending evidence-based practices to college teaching. Postings on a new teaching issue appear monthly and are authored by faculty members from many institutions.

**Teaching First Year Students** <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/firstyears/>

The Center for Teaching at Vanderbilt University presents a list of teaching strategies that can help students successfully make the transition from high school to college. They are all easy to implement and pertinent to many disciplines; many also work with more experienced students.

**Teaching in Higher Ed** <http://teachinginhighered.com/>

In this series of podcasts—they appear weekly—Bonnie Stachowiak interviews experts in the field of teaching and personal productivity. Each interview lasts about a half hour

## ***Teaching Professor***

The Mabee Library and the CTL jointly sponsor a subscription to this online newsletter. The 10 issues emphasize practical responses to common problems. To subscribe, please contact the CTL ([kallwein@uiwtx.edu](mailto:kallwein@uiwtx.edu) or 283-6359) for the subscription code—we can't show it here because this is an open web site.

## **SMALL GROUP WORK**

***Cooperative learning: Group Work*** <https://www.cte.cornell.edu/teaching-ideas/engaging-students/collaborative-learning.html>

This substantial discussion of the topic from Cornell University includes directions for sample activities, suggestions for forming groups, and ideas for introducing group activities to students.

***Cooperative Learning Techniques*** <http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/cooperative/techniques.html>

The focus here is on specific small group activities; there's a good variety, including some of the less common options.

***Group Work: Using Cooperative Learning Groups Effectively*** <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/setting-up-and-facilitating-group-work-using-cooperative-learning-groups-effectively/>

The teaching center at Vanderbilt University offers a good overview of group work and its implementation. The site covers a range of practical issues like selecting activities, forming groups, preparing students for the approach, and assessing the work. They also include a discussion of the theory and research that support group work.

***How Can I Assess Group Work?***

<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/instructionalstrategies/groupprojects/assess.html>

In a concise but comprehensive discussion of the topic, the staff from Carnegie Mellon's Center for Teaching Excellence offer suggestions for assessing multiple dimensions of group works: individual and group learning, the process and the product. The page also includes several sample assessment tools.

***What Are Best Practices for Designing Small Group Projects***

<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/instructionalstrategies/groupprojects/design.html>

This short section of the Carnegie Mellon teaching and learning center's web site provides practical advice for implementing group work in a university class. Especially helpful are the suggestions for helping students gain the social and teamwork skills that undergird group work.

## **SPECIALIZED TOPICS**

***Classroom Response Systems*** <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/clickers/>

Derek Bruff, the author of a book-length treatment of the topic, has created this informative page on the classroom uses of clickers. He emphasizes pedagogical issues over technology with helpful information on challenges, and types of questions. The page includes a bibliography and links.

***Icebreakers That Rock*** <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/classroom-icebreakers/>

Jennifer Gonzalez argues that many icebreakers are ineffective because they ask students to take big social risks with strangers. Here she offers several activities that help students to learn a bit about each other without that problem.

**Is This a Trick Question? A Quick Guide to Writing Effective Test Questions** <https://www.k-state.edu/ksde/alp/resources/Handout-Module6.pdf>

This online guide, offered by Kansas State University, presents useful and research-based advice for constructing each of the most common types of test questions.

**Making the Most of the First Day of Class** <http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/firstday.html>

The folks at Carnegie Mellon organize their advice under eight headings ranging from the obvious—introduce yourself and make expectations clear—to less expected points like collecting baseline data about student performance. The succinct advice is probably most useful to those just beginning a career in college teaching.

**The Last Five Minutes: Class Endings and Student Learning** <http://languages.oberlin.edu/blogs/ctie/2014/04/20/the-last-five-minutes-class-endings-and-student-learning/>

Steve Volk of Oberlin College discusses why the last few minutes are often the worst portion of a session. More importantly, he offers several practical strategies for enhancing student learning by ending a class session well. If you have ever wondered what UIW peer review form means by “closure,” read this.

## WRITING AND READING

**11 Strategies for Getting Students to Read What’s Assigned.** <http://www.facultyfocus.com/free-reports/11-strategies-for-getting-students-to-read-whats-assigned/>

This report from *Faculty Focus* includes 11 short articles from strategies for introducing a reading assignment to ways to respond when students come to class without having read.

**Active Reading: Comprehension and Rate** <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/reading.html>

This site includes several handouts to help students make the most of reading assignment. They include titles such as “Six Reading Myths,” “Pivotal Words,” and “Getting to Know Your Textbook.” Students are the primary audience.

**Brief Guides to Writing in the Disciplines** <http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/brief-guides-writing-disciplines>

Currently, there are three guides available in this series—for history, English and philosophy. The guides might give instructors ideas for designing effective assignments; however, students are the primary audience. The guides emphasize issues like a discipline’s typical rhetorical strategies and use of evidence.

**Informal, In-Class Writing Activities** <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/assignments/informal.html>

The University of Minnesota has posted descriptions of several writing activities (often ungraded) that can be used to deepen students’ thinking about the topic at hand in class. Also included is a useful and realistic discussion of ways faculty can respond to this sort of writing.

**Informal Writing Assignments** <https://writing.wisc.edu/wac/node/138>

The U. of Wisconsin offers this list of short writing assignments designed to help students think about what they have learned in a class session. They are easily adapted to many contexts.

**They Haven’t Done the Reading. Again.** <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/719-they-haven-t-done-the-reading-again>

In this posting from his *Pedagogy Unbound* blog (listed above), David Gooblar points to research indicating that relatively few students do the assigned reading and offers three solid strategies to combat this problem.

**Writing in the Disciplines** <https://writingcenter.utk.edu/for-students/writinginthedisciplines/>

This site, a project of the U. of Tennessee (Knoxville), provides links to many discipline specific writing guides. There's considerable variety in the resources—from biology to religious study, from writing a press release to writing a philosophy paper. Students are the primary audience for each handout.

## A FEW POEMS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

***“Aristotle” by Billy Collins*** <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/46706>

Descriptions of the beginning, middle and ends of all kinds of things provide a framework for thinking about the rhythms of the semester from the first day when all things seem possible or to times when “disappointment . . . pitches his ragged tent.”

***“Before I Was Gazan” by Naomi Shyhab Nye*** <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/i-was-gazan>

In this short poem, the San Antonio poet meditates on finding lost homework—and other knottier problems.

***“Did I Miss Anything?” by Tom Wayman*** <https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/013.html>

The speaker in the poem answers—in various voices, some quite sarcastic-- the universal question of students who have missed class.

***“Digging” by Seamus Heaney*** <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/47555>

The speaker in this poem—who digs with his pen—reflects on his connections to a father and grandfather who did hard manual labor. The renowned Irish poet has written an unsentimental poem about gratitude.

***“Do You Have any Advice for Those of Us Just Starting Out?” By Ron Koertge***  
<https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/007.html>

The speaker in this short poem gives advice to those just moving into adult life—his suggestions are sharply observed and funny yet ultimately inspiring.

***“An Introduction to Poetry” by Billy Collins*** <https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/001.html>

The speaker in the poem wryly suggests that we kill the things we are trying to understand.

***“Numbers” by Mary Cornish*** <https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/008.html>

What we love about what we teach is quirky and personal, and the speaker in this short poem expresses her affection for “the generosity of numbers.”

***“Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes*** <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/theme-english-b>

Many decades ago, the great African-American poet wrote about a teacher asking him to write “something true” for English class. Many readers will find that the speaker’s dilemma still resonates.

***“Who Burns for the Perfection of Paper” by Martin Espada*** <https://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/136.html>

The speaker in the poem, a law student, relives his experience working in a paper factory as he writes on a clean legal pad.