

## Universal Response Techniques

In a famous comment, Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson point out that “learning is not a spectator sport.” So it’s useful to find ways to encourage more students to participate during class. Simply asking questions may not work because typically just the “usual suspects” reply.

Using a few universal response activities is a good alternative. As the name suggests, these are activities that make it simple—and low risk-- for all students to respond. Clicker questions are a common universal response activity, and free aps like *Socrative* or *Kahoot* allow students to use their phones as clickers. But here are three no-tech options that can be easily used on the spur of the moment.

- **Thumbs up/Thumbs down.** Students use this gesture to respond to a yes/no question. It’s a good idea to ask students to hold their thumbs close to the chest to discourage copy-cat responses. A simple true/false question can check understanding of the material that’s already been presented. But yes/no questions can be used to prompt more sophisticated thinking, too. For example, such questions can address what is most urgent in a clinical situation or what might happen if one event or variable changes.
- **Line up.** Post a provocative statement and ask students to line up showing how much they agree or disagree. For example, students might create a line across the front of the classroom standing near the door if they agree and near the window if they don’t. This activity encourages participation in two ways. First, students informally talk to others to find their position in the line. Second, the instructor can ask a few students to explain why they stand where they do. In a variation, students can be asked to put their name on a post-it note and place it close to or far from a provocative statement.
- **Four Corners.** Label the corners of the room “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree” and then present a provocative statement or ethical dilemma. Students go to the corner of the room that best represents their view. In their corners, student might be asked to decide on the three best arguments in support of their view or one argument supporting and one opposing their view.

**Do you want more ideas on this topic?** The Angelo and Cross book is still widely used and can be borrowed from the CTL library.

Angelo, T. A. & Cross, K. P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.