Active Learning

"Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves." *Chickering, 1987*

"Simply, active learning refers to techniques when students do more than simply listen to a lecture or watch a presentation. When students are DOING something (discovering, process, applying information, etc.), they are actively learning.

Active learning assumes 2 important things: (1) Learning is by nature an active endeavor (2) Different people learn in different ways. Active learning research proves greater retention, comprehension, satisfaction, and application in learners than other non-active methods." *Borden, 2010*

http://www.youtube.com/user/NWIACOMMCOLLEGE#p/a/u/0/UsDI6hDx5uI
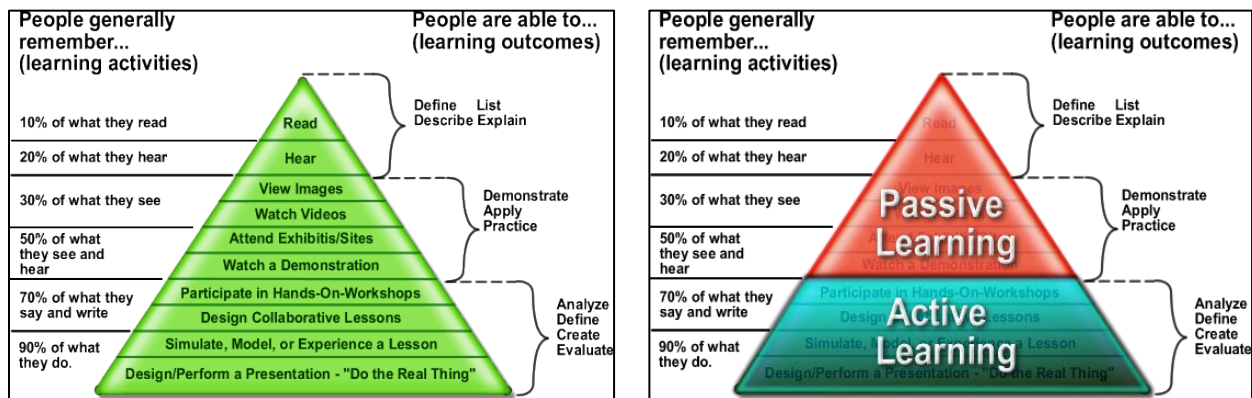
Be intentional. Keep in mind that what we do in our classrooms need to have meaning and purpose for the student. When selecting an assignment, make sure you keep in mind the structure you are using to develop a good course.

- What learning outcome/goal is being met?
- Where does it fall in Bloom's taxonomy?
- Are you addressing multiple learning styles?
- Does the time needed to complete this assignment seem realistic to you? To the students?

IDEA #1 – GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The primary way most of us are involving active learning in our online course is to have a threaded discussion. However, we need to be intention about what we want them to talk about, and how we are going to evaluate their responses.

Our own internal research shows that these are effective in helping students succeed, and it also shows that instructor participation is very important.

I recommend The Café Design Principles http://www.theworldcafe.com/principles.htm as a good beginning point for understanding the dynamics of good discussions – especially online.
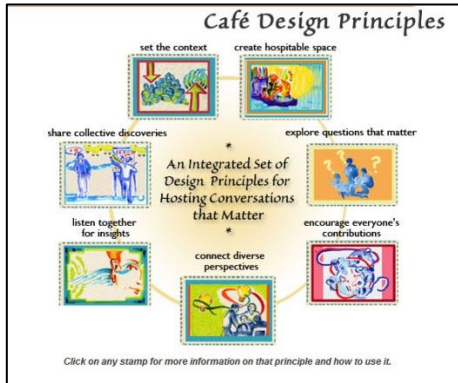
1. set the context
2. create hospitable space
3. explore questions that matter
4. encourage everyone's contributions
5. connect diverse perspectives
6. listen together for insights
7. share collective discoveries

Here are a few more tips on a good question for a threaded discussion

1. Ask open-ended questions. Do not ask yes/no questions. You can't get a good discussion going that way.
2. Be timely and relevant. Students do love to discuss what is happening around them. Help them to see the relevance of the course content by asking them to analyze, think, apply what they are learning to a contemporary question.
3. Don't make the question too broad – or too narrow. Ask a good question that helps them to understand what you are looking for.
4. Use a rubric - let it help you not only grade, but formulate a good discussion.

Examples/notes	I'd Try this!	Rubric Created?

T-S-D-R-A	Bloom's Level(s)	Objectives/goals	Other

Idea #2 Think-Pair-Share for the Internet

Basic Assignment Structure	Working it out online
1. Students should have a 'master' question, a problem to solve, or the task to create an original example, etc. (think)	Students will need to be given a specific assignment, with time parameters set at the beginning. *You may want to let them self-group with others, or analyze the work habits of your students – for example put those who work early in like groups.*
2. Have them discuss their ideas for a limited time with other students in the class. (pair)	Could be put into small group threaded discussions, or into groups and encouraged to use the chat room, or rely on email. *Skype and other outside software options are also available.*
3. Finally, ask or choose student pairs to share their ideas with the whole class (or smaller groups if required) (share).	Students could share in larger threaded discussions, or they could post their ideas in Doc Sharing for everyone with a follow-up threaded discussion about the ideas/presentations.

Examples/notes		I'd Try this!	Rubric Created?

T-S-D-R-A	Bloom's Level(s)	Objectives/goals	Other

Idea #3 At the Movies

We now have access to Films on Demand (check the website for more information). Find a movie clip (a relatively short 5 to 20 minutes is best) and embed the link in a threaded discussion heading. Prepare students ahead of time by giving them a specific assignment of what to look for and evaluate in the video. Then have them work in small groups after the video to answer these critical questions. You may have them write a review, or reaction, or apply a theory from course content to the issue/information raised in the video clip.

Examples/notes	I'd Try this!	Rubric Created?

T-S-D-R-A	Bloom's Level(s)	Objectives/goals	Other

Idea #4 Tough Times

Have a threaded discussion at the end of each week and ask students to discuss the hardest concept learned during the week. Encourage students to express concerns about learning that is confusing, troublesome, and difficult. Listen to them to better understand how students are applying class materials, discussions etc. You may want to provide an incentive for this – especially in the beginning of the term.

Examples/notes	I'd Try this!	Rubric Created?

T-S-D-R-A	Bloom's Level(s)	Objectives/goals	Other

Idea #5 Student-led Review Sessions

This exercise allows students to create "master" questions and "teach" peers content. There are several suggestions here; you do not have to do them all.

1. Put students into small threaded discussion groups of 5-6. Each student is to ask at least one question related to the material s/he doesn't understand, and must try to answer a question raised by another student.
2. Assign students (or student groups) the task of crafting "ideal" exam questions for your test or quiz. Break them up by chapter, module, etc. Put the questions into the exam tool and have the students take the exam. Then conduct a threaded discussion or chat session that allows students to discuss answers following the exams.
3. In a 16 week class, incorporate 16 quizzes. Assign 1-2 students to facilitate each week's review session. This could be done in threaded discussions or chat rooms. Provide incentives for participation – extra points, or make it assigned.

Examples/notes	I'd Try this!	Rubric Created?

T-S-D-R-A	Bloom's Level(s)	Objectives/goals	Other