



Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for
advancing teaching and learning at Mona

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Active Teaching & Learning

Focused listing

Focused listing is an active teaching strategy that can be used to get students focused on important concepts in a lesson. It is an effective way to get students actively engage material. Further, it offers feedback to the teacher that can be used to inform subsequent teaching and learning sessions. In this strategy, students recall what they know about a particular subject by making a list of terms or ideas that are directly or indirectly related to the concept. In carrying out this teaching and learning activity, the teacher will ask students to generate a list of terms and ideas based on a topic that was presented or studied. The topic selected might be related to the day's assigned reading, to a previous day class or to the subject being treated in the current class. The teacher might want to move around the room and observe student's lists as they write them down, briefing providing a summary of the major trends or themes as a way of closing the exercise. Some teachers ask students to share the content of their lists for the benefit of the entire class and then move on with the lesson. However, it is carried out; focused listing need not take more than a few minutes.

Special points of interest:

- The **Teaching Tips Newsletter** is a publication of the Instructional Development Unit (IDU) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter will be published once per month and will focus on tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. The Newsletter will be available online as well as in the office of the IDU.
- If you have an area that you would like to explore using this medium, do not hesitate to contact us at the IDU.

Note check

The note check is an active teaching strategy in which the teacher asks students to partner with another student usually sitting nearby and compare their notes, focusing on summarizing key information and locating misconceptions. Students can also generate questions or solve a problem posed by the teacher. This exercise can be completed in as little as two or three minutes. As students engage in this exercise they compare notes with each other to ensure that they understand the information and fill in gaps in their collective understanding. In this way, teachers can help students learn good note taking skills, as well as monitor whether or not students are able to identify the key ideas in the lesson that was taught.



Web 2.0 Tools for Higher Education

Defining Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is used to refer to the Read/Write nature of the web. What this means is that the web is no longer simply an outlet for passively receiving information from a source, but a platform for information sharing, and social construction of knowledge. Web 2.0 encourages a more user-centred paradigm where users of the web become both producers and consumers (prosumers) of information available via this medium. Through Web 2.0 technologies, users of the web are now free to collaborate, create, publish, share, edit and repurpose content on the web without programming skills.

Web 2.0 is different from the original Web 1.0 version which was characterized primarily as a read only web to its present state of a read/write web where content is dynamic and easily created. A new generation of web-based tools is most frequently associated with the concept Web 2.0. It is usually used to make reference to a group of technologies that include weblogs or blogs, wikis, social networking, RSS (Real Simple Syndication), podcasts, social bookmarking etc.

Blogs

Bloggging is one of the most popular activities facilitated through Web 2.0 tools. A weblog or blog as it is commonly called is, in its most basic sense, an online diary or journal. It is usually a simple webpage with postings of opinions, comments or information related to a particular issue or topic. Blogs allow users to post not only text messages but photos, audio and video files as well and postings are usually arranged in a reverse chronological order with the most recent addition posted first. Users are allowed to add a comment or a blog entry to existing postings. Bloggging allows for an exchange of views on a particular issue and can be a powerful tool in the higher education classroom. It is a collaborative space where users can share in issues of importance to them. Free blog creating tools such as Blogger (www.blogger.com), Easy Blog Creator (www.easyblogcreator.org) among others enable users to easily create their own blogs. In addition, OurVLE has a built in Blog tool that can be used by both faculty and students.

Bloggging can be used in higher education courses to foster the development of students' critical thinking and analytical skills as students discuss issues related to the topics under investigation in their courses. A blog can be used as a space where learners explore cases and problems and read more critically ideas proposed by their peers. Through bloggging, students can learn not only from each other and their professors, but can easily access other professionals in their field as well. Weblogs provide students with a platform to publish their writings and is a source for metacognitive journaling of their own thought processes. *Blogosphere* is the term used to describe the community of bloggers and their interconnection on the Internet.

Creating an Evaluation Rubric

If you decide to use a blog as part of your course, you may want to find ways to evaluate student participation and learning. For the blog to become a teaching and learning tool, evaluation of the process and the end product must become part of the course requirements. Many students already know how to use blogs for social computing. You want the students to take from your course an understanding of how a blog can be used in their careers.

Determining and creating the evaluation instrument begins BEFORE you create the blog. This will help you develop your expectations for the students and will provide a clear look at how you will manage the evaluation. Management is the key word here. Depending on the number of students you are evaluating, it will also help determine the blog requirements. Questions that you might ask: What is the rationale for choosing a blog for this course?

- What free blog service will I use? (Does your institution offer blog workshops? Ask people you know who are already using free blog services to recommend one, or search the Internet for more information.)
- Will each student set up their own blog or will the class have one blog that everyone has access to?
- Will the blog(s) be private or public?
- Who will add posts?
- How many posts will be required per student?
- What are the criteria for use of the language? (Multilingual courses can utilize blogs in a variety of languages.)
- Does the post raise issues and questions relevant to the course?
- Who is responsible for comments?
- How many comments will be required per student?
- Entries demonstrate reflections of the post.
- Entries convey knowledge obtained through readings.
- Entries show reflection and understanding of the topic.

Once you have established the framework of the blog and the criteria for the evaluation, ask students to offer ideas for the blog so they understand the process and the purpose. Using blogs will be a learning experience for teacher too!

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