

Activity Description

Reading check activity

Background/context: Students are expected to read before coming to class (e.g., chapter 5 of the textbook)

Beginning of class: present students with QR code to Qualtrics survey that asks them to answer questions

1. Honesty questions
 - a. Did you read this week's chapter? (yes/no/partially)
2. Comprehension check questions
 - a. What is this week's broad topic?
 - b. What is one model/theory discussed in this chapter?
 - c. What is one specific study you remember from the reading?
3. Reflection/relating questions
 - a. What did we talk about last week?
 - b. How does the information from this week's chapter seem to relate to what we'll talk about this week?
 - c. How can you relate this week's material to your life

Once everyone turns them in, I'll see how many said they'd read the chapter and present that data to the class (anonymous – they won't see each other's names).

Then I'll have them turn to a partner and share their answers for a few (3) minutes while I look through their short textual answers to find patterns. Once I'm done, we'll start the lecture.

Throughout the lecture as we run into material discussed in the textbook, I'll point it out. Before I explain it, I'll ask them to write down what they remember from the textbook. If they're someone who hasn't read, I'll ask them to think about what we've talked about so far and use some context clues to make an educated guess about what we're going to discuss. A specific example is coming across a study discussed in the book. First I'll ask them to write generally what they remember/think it will be about. Then, I'll ask them to do the same for each step: the method, the results, the implications, the purpose, etc. (retrieval practice)

As we go through the lecture I'll ask them to reflect on why it might've helped to read before class (hopefully encouraging them to read next time) (reflecting on how prior knowledge connections improves learning).

Evidence for Activity Effectiveness

Reading before class: encourages spacing (i.e., scheduling learning/studying to occur at multiple time-points before examination; inverse of cramming) by having students learn information more than once. Spacing is generally very effective for learning and can result in better learning than other techniques such as cramming (see: Carpenter, 2022 for a table of studies providing evidence for spacing as a learning technique)

Retrieving previously learned information: retrieval practice can also significantly improve learning (Carpenter, 2022). Actively attempting to remember previously learned information can strengthen the memory and help students remember it again later.

Reflecting on ease of understanding: metacognitive monitoring (i.e., being aware of your own metacognitive processes, such as your understanding of material) can impact your study decisions (Carpenter, 2022 touches on this). Having students reflect on how easy/difficult it was to understand the newly presented information without prior context may encourage them to read before class (or at least maybe after class) so they can get more out of the class-time.

References

Carpenter, S. K., Pan, S. C., & Butler, A. C. (2022). The science of effective learning with spacing and retrieval practice. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 1(9), 496-511.