

Teaching with Your Mouth Shut: Analyzing Samples Worksheet

Purpose: To identify common principles and practices for effective “teaching with your mouth shut.”

Activity: Reflect on the initial exercise, and look over the other samples provided to your group.

- Which of the following features describes these activities?
- Can you identify other features that might make these activities successful? Please feel free to add them.

Handout Legend

1. Symbolic Logic: Structured Questioning
2. Chemistry: Find Your Match
3. Management: Problem Case
4. Political Science: Peer Review
5. Thesis Statements and Research Questions: Compare and Contrast
6. Language Learners in Your Classroom: Simulation
7. Psychology: Conceptual Matrix
8. Writing Instruction: Sharing Diverse Perspectives

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Structures activity								
Helps to identify patterns or connections								
Asks questions								
Poses problems								
Focuses on higher order concerns								
Is open-ended								
Offers visual cues								
Engages student in authentic disciplinary dialogue or first-hand experience								
Converts a product of knowledge into a process								
Requires collaboration								
Fosters learner autonomy								

Teaching with Your Mouth Shut: Creating Your Own Activity Worksheet

Step 1: Choose a discipline and topic you wish to “teach with your mouth shut.”

Step 2: Brainstorm activities, problems, or experiences that will help students acquire an appropriate level of mastery. (Hint: Focus on the process, rather than the product)

Step 3: Turn to a neighbour, briefly share your ideas and initial thoughts. Continue brainstorming.

Step 4: Outline an activity

Purpose:
Required Resources:
Draft timeline, steps, problem, or scenario for the activity

Teaching with Your Mouth Shut: Peer Review Worksheet

With your partner, take turns giving each other feedback on your activities. You will each have 10 minutes both to explain your activity and to receive and discuss the feedback with your partner.

	Yes
Does the activity require students to achieve a particular, specified goal (solve a problem, identify a pattern, build a time-line)?	
Is the activity collaborative, ensuring more than one perspective is at work?	
Does the activity focus on the process of acquiring knowledge, rather than the product?	
Does the activity focus on problems (or concepts) that are important and relevant to the discipline, or that challenge common assumptions?	
Is the activity structured in a way that all students will know what they need to do to complete it?	
Will the activity provide an experience that is directly relevant to the discipline?	
Is there a follow-up debrief (or other activity) planned in the event that the students fail to achieve the goal?	

Comments:

Further Refinements	Yes	No
Could this activity be conducted in a large class?		
If not, in what ways might it be modified for this purpose?		
Does this activity require complex resources?		
If so, in what ways might it be modified to reduce the demands?		
Is the activity appropriate to the knowledge and abilities of the learners?		
Identify one way the activity could be scaled back or further sequenced if learners are struggling.		
Identify one way the activity could be made more complex if learners find it too easy.		

Teaching with Your Mouth Shut: Troubleshooting Chart

Potential Challenges	Some Ideas for Solutions
Keeping students on task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time activities carefully - Ensure problems and activities are compelling and relevant - Build from simple to complex, to give students the foundations to engage more deeply with the material
Ensuring students do not lead each other astray, or compound errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structure activities carefully, considering both level of student, learning outcomes, and common mistakes or misperceptions - Avoid grading work done during these activities; provide that space for students to make mistakes and learn from them - Debrief with students after the activity to reinforce learning
Sustaining motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide problems authentic to the discipline or that challenge common assumptions - Explain context to establish importance of question - Make activities collaborative to help students stay engaged should they get “stuck” - Sequence problems, both to give students a sense of accomplishment, and to guide their thinking
Developing critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on “sticky” problems or open-ended issues where there really is no one correct answer - Create activities where students need to make corrections, spot errors, or reflect on how they might improve something, to give them practice in both evaluating and revising
Managing large classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow for some flexibility in size and structure of groups when designing the activity - Or create fixed groups through LMS or other software - Ask TAs to circulate during activities to help students - Use response technology (clickers, twitter, etc) to ask open-ended or survey style questions to engage students actively as a whole group
Ensuring students understand what they are supposed to do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give clear instructions both orally and directly written on the worksheets. - Clarify the purpose and objective of the activity
Managing with limited resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on formative activities rather than summative, to reduce need for graders - Harness student energy with peer-to-peer activities, and student-created materials - Recreate complex activities in low-tech formats – or rely on existing technologies already licensed by your institution - Build some activities that can occur online or outside of class time