THE K. PATRICIA CROSS ACADEMY

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

Teaching Technique 14

Update Your Classmate

ACTIVITY TYPE	TEACHING PROBLEM ADDRESSED	LEARNING TAXONOMIC LEVEL
• Active/Engaged Learning • Writing	• Insufficient Class Preparation	• Foundational Knowledge • Application: Analysis & Critical Thinking • Caring • Learning How to Learn

Update Your Classmate

Update Your Classmate is a short writing activity where students explain what they learned in a previous class session to set the stage for new learning.

1 Clarify your teaching purpose and learning goals

2 Identify the learning task's underlying problem and craft the prompt

3 Set assignment parameters for completing the prompts

4 Develop a plan for learning assessment or grading

5 Communicate assignment instructions to students

6 Implement the technique

7 Reflect upon the activity and evaluate its effectiveness

Step-By-Step Instructions

In this section we provide you with guidance on each of the seven steps involved as you consider this technique.

STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS

This is a flexible technique that you can use in any course in which it would be helpful for students to recall information learned in a previous session before providing new content. You can use the technique with different content and even frame it around content-based information other than lectures. For example, you could have students respond to a prompt about an assigned reading and why it would be important to understanding the day's lecture or discussion topic.

This technique can help students achieve several important learning goals. It helps students recall foundational knowledge by activating their schemata on the topic as well as by rehearsing information. It also has students think critically about why the information will be important and asks them to make predictions and create connections between concepts in their schemata. *Update your Classmate* is a recall task with an authentic feel to the information, which students may find more interesting, and thus they tend to care more about it. If you explain the purpose of the activity, it can also help students with learning beyond your course.

This technique can be a useful way to assess student learning from a previous course session as well as their ability to gauge what was most important and what will be most useful to them going forward. The template/handout you create serves as a learning artifact you can quickly scan to get a glimpse into student understanding.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE LEARNING TASK'S UNDERLYING PROBLEM AND PROMPT

For this step, simply identify an important unit of content from your last learning module or class session. Think through for yourself what were the most important parts of the content for student learning in upcoming sessions or modules.

STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS

Determine how students will respond to the prompt of telling a classmate what they missed and why it was important. Will they write in complete sentences? How long will they have to respond to the prompts?

STEP 4: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OR GRADING

Typically this activity is done for formative/learning purposes rather than summative ones. It can be used as an indicator of student participation/engagement.

STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS

Create a handout that prompts students to respond. On the handout share the assignment parameters.

STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE

- At the start of a class session, students write a memo to a real or fictional student who missed the last class session. In the memo, they describe the missed content and anticipate why the information might be important for understanding new content.

- The professor collects the memos, reads them quickly if time permits.

- The professor holds a class discussion about the connections between the prior content and the upcoming content and then presents the lecture.

STEP 7: REFLECT UPON THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS

When reflecting on the activity and how effective it was, consider the following questions:

- Did the technique match the course learning goals and objectives?

- Did it meet my goals for this learning module?

- Was it appropriate for the students?

- Did the technique keep the students engaged?

- Did it promote student learning?

- Did it provide me with information about student understanding?

If you answer yes to all or most of these questions, next consider how you might improve the activity for the next use.

Support Materials

The materials in this section are intended to help you with the process of implementing this technique.

SAMPLE MEMO TEMPLATE

To: My classmate who missed the lecture on Tuesday
From: A concerned fellow student: _____ (initial here)
Subject: The course content you missed from class yesterday
Date: Month/Day/Year

Write a brief memo to your classmate who missed the first class session by outlining the three most important points from Tuesday's lecture.

1.

2.

3.

Explain why the points from Tuesday were critical to understanding today's lecture.

VARIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS

- Instead of a letter-writing activity, *Update Your Classmate* may be done as a journaling activity. This approach has the advantage of having students keep track of their own responses, which may be collected and assessed periodically rather than daily.

- Consider having the students work in pairs rather than as individuals.

- Consider having students report to the full group. This approach would have the advantage of having multiple insights and sparking conversation and deeper learning.

- Use the activities as entrance and exit tickets.

- Consider posting the responses for students who actually did miss the lecture. This approach will add to the authenticity of the assignment.

Technique Template

Following are two templates to assist you as you think through how you might implement this technique in your own class. The first is a completed template, providing an example of how Claire Major adapted *Update Your Classmate* in her course, *Reading Research in Higher Education*. The second is a blank template for you to fill out to tailor this technique for your course.

Technique Template

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Sample *Update Your Classmate* Completed Technique Template:
Content from Claire Major

Reading Research in Higher Education
Course Name

COURSE CHARACTERISTICS

What are the situational factors that impact this course? For example, is it on campus or online? How many students? Is it lower division or graduate? Are there student attributes such as attitudes, prior knowledge, reasons for enrolling, and so forth that should be taken into account as you consider this technique?

This is a graduate level research course that we offer as part of an executive EdD in Higher Education Administration. The course has approximately 15 students enrolled each term. The program is an accelerated one, and this is one (1) of four (4) research courses they take prior to writing their dissertations.

STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS

Why are you choosing this technique? What do you hope to accomplish?

In this course, students read research articles to become familiar with research design, methods, writing conventions, and so forth. I do mini lectures on different types of research methods. Because we meet only once a month, there is a big gap between meetings, and it can be useful to have students recall information from the last session before going on to new content.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE LEARNING TASK'S UNDERLYING PROBLEM AND PROMPT

What is the question you want learners to address, or problem you want them to solve?

During the first class session, I provide a general overview of qualitative research methods and quantitative research methods. During the second session, I talk about quantitative methods specifically. I will use Update Your Classmate to ask students to recall the general information about quantitative research (e.g. philosophy, type of data, etc.) prior to talking about specific quantitative designs (e.g. experiments, correlation studies, etc.).

STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS

What are the assignment logistics? For example, will this be assigned individually or is it group work? How long will the assignment take? Will students be submitting a product? What materials, resources, or additional information do you anticipate needing?

Students will complete this assignment individually. I will vary the technique by providing students with a couple of minutes to discuss their responses prior to turning in their handouts. I think talking with each other will help spark their memories.

STEP 4: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OR GRADING

If you decide to assess learning, how will you determine that learning has occurred? For example, will you use a simple +/check/- grading system? If you use a rubric, will you use an existing one or create one? What will be your criteria and standards?

> I'll take up the handouts and score them with a plus, check, or minus. I'm simply looking for basic recall of information and ability to make inferences about why the information might be important.

STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS

How will you communicate assignment parameters to students? For example, through a handout? A prompt on a presentation slide? Assignment instructions in your online course?

> The assignment handout will have the basic instructions, but I will also tell students about the assignment.

STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE

How will you adapt steps/procedures for your students? Are there any additional logistical aspects to consider?

> I will ask students to complete the handout at the start of the class session, allowing approximately 10 minutes (it is an 8 hour class, so I have the luxury of time). I will ask them to complete the template using complete sentences.

STEP 7: REFLECT UPON THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Note: This step will be completed after you have implemented the technique.
Did this technique help you accomplish your goals? What worked well? What could have been improved? What might you change if you decide to implement the activity again?

> I plan to assess their responses to determine whether they were able to recall the information. If not, I may add some assignments in between sessions. If so, I will ask students if they found the activity beneficial to their understanding.

Technique Template

This template is intended for use when planning to implement *Update Your Classmate* in your class. Fill in the blanks below, and use the information provided elsewhere in the Instructor's Guide to assist you in your thinking.

_____

Course Name

COURSE CHARACTERISTICS

What are the situational factors that impact this course? For example, is it on campus or online? How many students? Is it lower division or graduate? Are there student attributes such as attitudes, prior knowledge, reasons for enrolling, and so forth that should be taken into account as you consider this technique?

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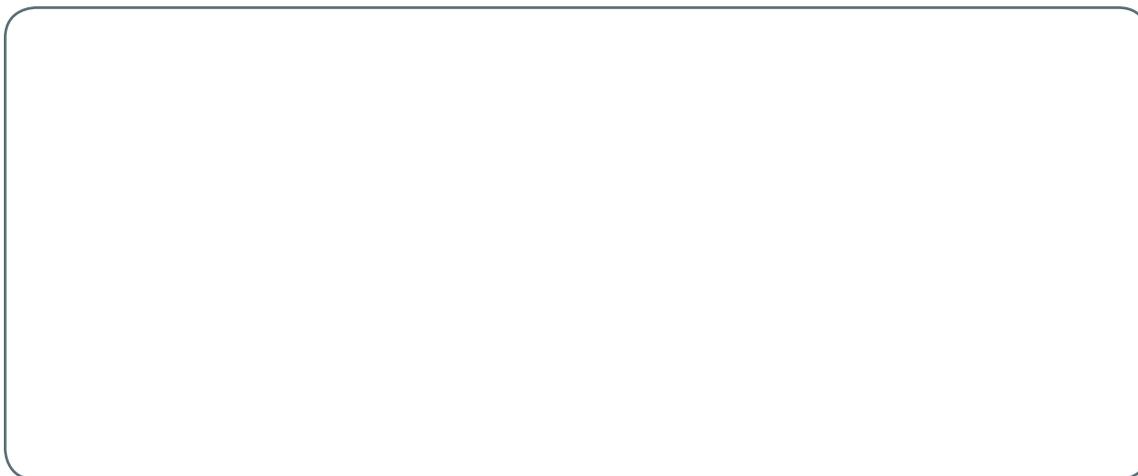
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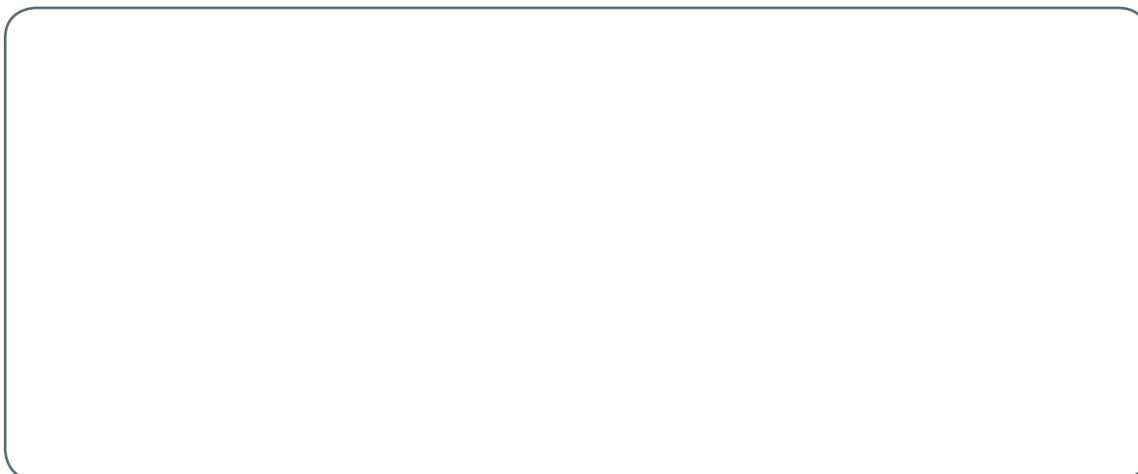
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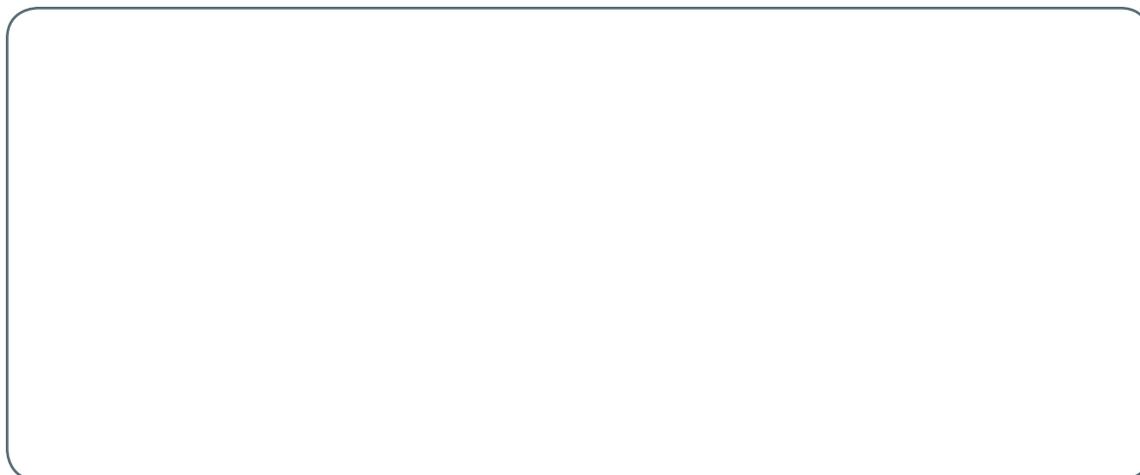
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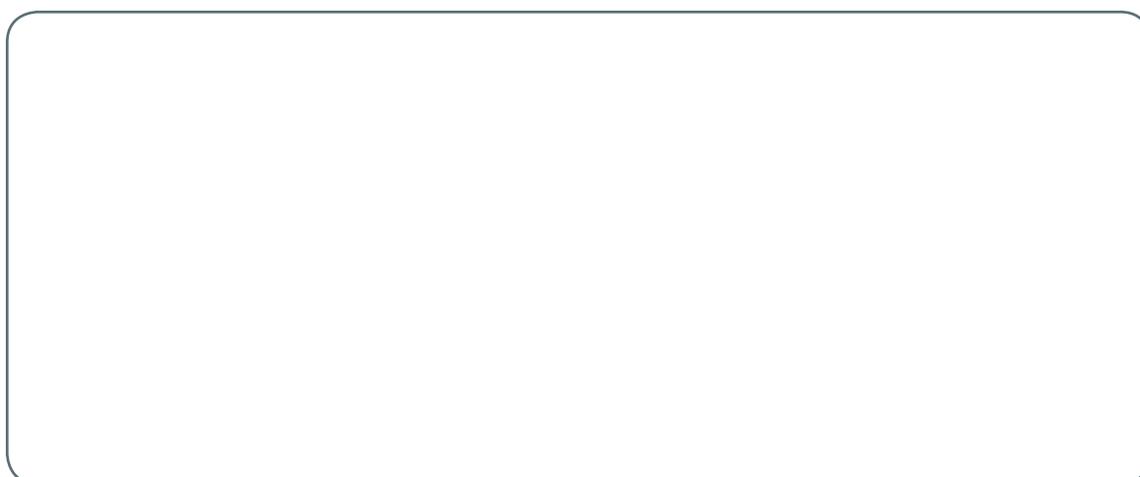
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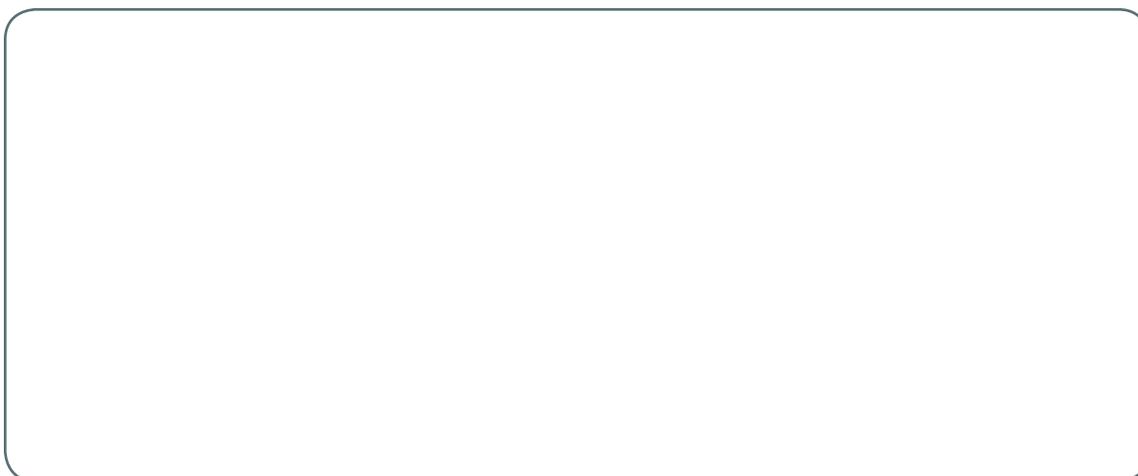
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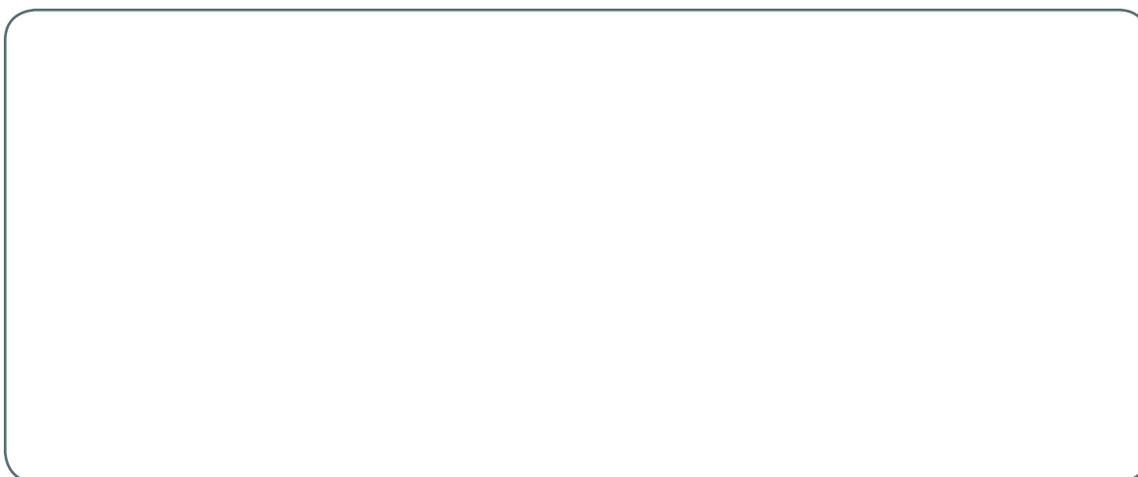
References and Resources

PRIMARY SOURCE

Content for this download was drawn primarily from "Active Learning Technique 5: Update Your Classmate" in *Interactive Lecturing: A Handbook for College Faculty* (Barkley & Major, 2018), pp. 217–220. It includes material that was adapted or reproduced with permission. For further information about this technique, including examples in both on campus and online courses, see the primary source:

Barkley, E. F., Major, C. H. (2018). *Interactive Lecturing: A Handbook for College Faculty.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

CITATIONS AND ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Barkley, E. F., & Major, C. H. (2016). LAT 3: Entry and exit tickets. *Learning assessment techniques: A handbook for college faculty* (pp. 91–95). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2011). *Improving adolescent literacy: Strategies at work* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

- TEAL. (2011). *Just Write! guide.* Retrieved from http://lincs.gov/sites/default/files/TEAL_JustWriteGuide.pdf

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