THE K. PATRICIA CROSS ACADEMY

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

Teaching Technique 11

Active Reading Documents

ACTIVITY TYPE

- Reading
- Learning Assessment
- Active/Engaged Learning

TEACHING PROBLEM ADDRESSED

- Insufficient Preparation
- Surface Learning

LEARNING TAXONOMIC LEVEL

- Foundational Knowledge
- Application: Critical Thinking
- Learning How to Learn

Active Reading Documents

Active Reading Documents (ARD) are carefully prepared forms that guide students through the process of critical and careful reading.

1 Clarify your teaching purpose and learning goals for the *ARD*

2 Choose a reading assignment

3 Set assignment parameters (state the main idea, supporting details, etc.)

4 Develop a plan for learning assessment or grading

5 Communicate assignment instructions to students

6 Have students complete the *ARD* and submit for grading

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

Students who come to class having done the assigned reading will most likely learn more than those who don't, but getting students to prepare appropriately is one of the perennial problems in college teaching. Research indicates that most students simply don't read at all, particularly when there are no immediate consequences for not doing so. Even students who have done the reading may just have skimmed it, not reading deeply enough to engage with the content in a way that will help them understand and process information for an upcoming class session. The result is that it is difficult for the teacher to know how best to target their lecture presentation because students will attend class with widely varying levels of preparedness.

Active Reading Documents (ARDs) are carefully prepared forms that guide students through the process of critical and careful reading. In particular, *ARDs* walk students through knowledge retrieval and comprehension since students must access and make sense of the new information to complete the document. *ARDs* can scaffold reading assignments so that students read at more sophisticated levels of comprehension and critical analysis. They not only help students prepare for a given session, but they also help students develop careful reading skills that can be used in other contexts. *ARDs* also provide teachers with an artifact that can be evaluated and count toward the course grade, which can motivate students to do the preparatory work out-of-class and at an appropriate level.

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

An *Active Reading Document* is a prepared form that guides students through the process of critical and careful reading.

STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS

- Prior to coming to class, choose a reading assignment.

- Create a handout with corresponding tasks for the reading assignment, such as:

    › State the main idea of the reading.

    › State the key supporting arguments, etc.

Step-By-Step Instructions (CON'T)

STEP 4: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OR GRADING

Choose how you wish to assess or grade the completed *ARD*. For example, a plus, check, or minus may be sufficient for a simple *ARD*, while you may want to create a rubric for more complex ones that require sophisticated levels of thinking and analysis.

STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS

Distribute the *ARD* handout or post it in the assignment section of your course's online LMS.

STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE

- Distribute the *Active Reading Document*.

- Assign the reading and ask students to bring their *ARDs* to the next class session.

- Collect the document.

- Assess and grade the document.

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.

Online Adaptation

This section is intended to help you with the process of implementing *Active Reading Documents* in your online class.

HOW TO START

- Choose a reading assignment, and determine what tasks you want students to do in relation to the reading. Select tasks that address different types of learning, including Application and Integration. Consider linking each task to a different section in the Taxonomy of Significant Learning.

- Create a new assignment in your LMS, and decide how they will be assessed and graded.

- **For Simple *Active Reading Documents*:** Include the prompts in the assignment instruction pane of the LMS.

- **For Complex *Active Reading Documents*:** Consider creating a handout in a word processing program that students can download, fill out and then submit as an attachment.

VARIATIONS

Alternatively, you can:

- Create a quiz that presents your *Active Reading Document* prompts in a series of short answer or essay questions.

- Ask students to complete and submit the *Active Reading Document* either as a standalone assignment or prior to a follow-up activity, such as watching your online lecture.

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 Elizabeth Barkley adapted *Active Reading Documents* in her course, *Music of Multicultural America.* The second is a blank template for you to fill out to tailor this technique for your course.

Technique Template

Sample *Active Reading Document* Completed Technique Template:
Content from Elizabeth Barkley

Music of Multicultural America
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?

> My course is an on campus, Honors Institute section of a lower division General Education course. The course meets my institution's United States Cultures & Communities requirement and also the Humanities requirement. It enrolls about 25-30 students. A significant number are international students and we are also trying to recruit more first generation students. As members of the Honors Institute, these students tend to have good academic skills.

STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS

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

> I am looking for an activity that will help ensure students do the assigned reading prior to the class lecture so that I can focus in the lecture on application of the information in the reading to real music examples. This way I can use valuable class meeting time to help students connect 'theory' to 'practice.'

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?

I will create an ARD that will be used for each chapter that asks students to: 1) summarize the historical and social context of the chapter's music genre; 2) describe the structural characteristics (rhythm, melody, form, etc.), 3) describe the main stylistic categories, and 4) identify and describe three key musicians.

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?

I will create the template so that it applies to all chapters and will inform students that they need to download and print the template out for each chapter and then submit it at the beginning of the class that corresponds to the reading as indicated in the Syllabus.

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 will use a simple +/check/- next to each template box, and then award 5 points for each +, 3 for a check, and 0 for a minus based on the following criteria: the answer is a minimum of 75 words, it uses appropriate college-level language and grammar, and it is a thoughtful and accurate response to the prompt.

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?

I will include instructions in the Syllabus under "Learning Activities and Assessments" and then I will post the ARD template in the course's LMS. I'll note in the Calendar of Deadlines when each of the ARDs are due and collect them at the beginning of the corresponding class.

STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE

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

> Students will be responsible for printing and filling out the template and bringing it to class on the due date. I will not accept late submissions. I am going to first try insisting that students fill out the ARD by hand, so that they don't just copy/paste. Then I will have a discussion with them to see if we should accept ARDs that have been filled out through a word processing program.

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?

> After implementation, I found that students were coming to class much better prepared, which allowed class time to be used for more advanced learning. I also held a discussion about students' perception of the ARDs usefulness and the general consensus was that they took work, but that they did ensure students did the reading. Students also felt they made excellent study guides for exams. I will definitely continue using this technique.

Technique Template

This template is intended for use when planning to implement *Active Reading Documents* 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?

STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS

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

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?

STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS

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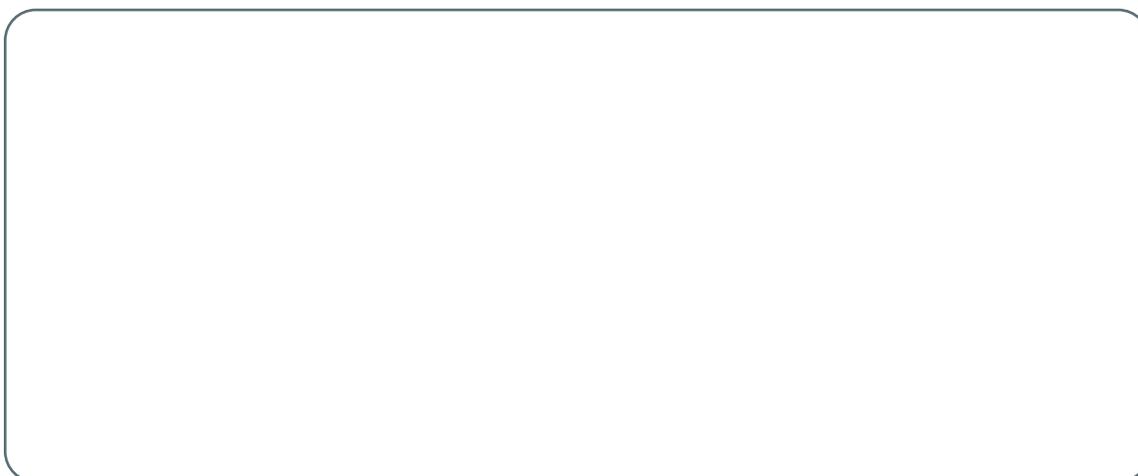
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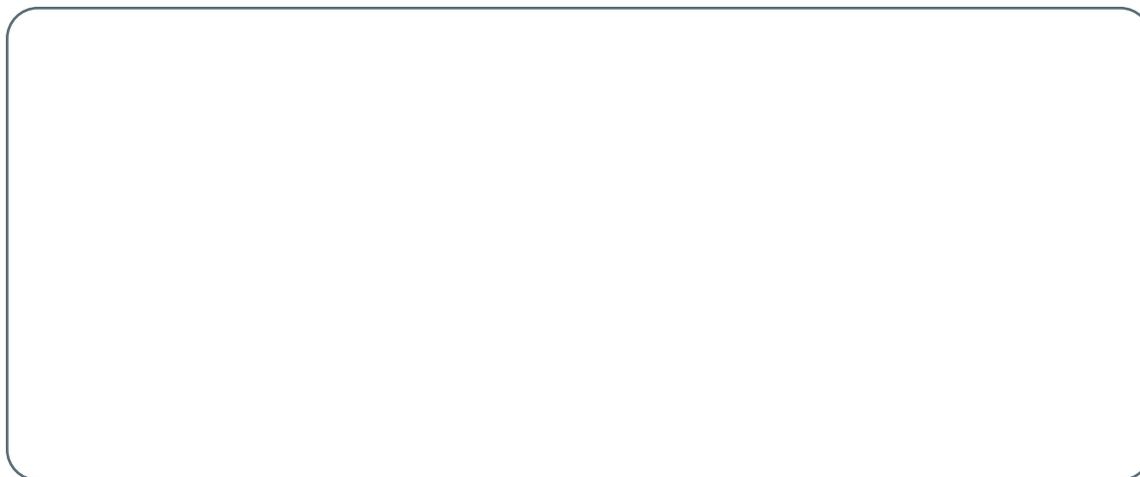
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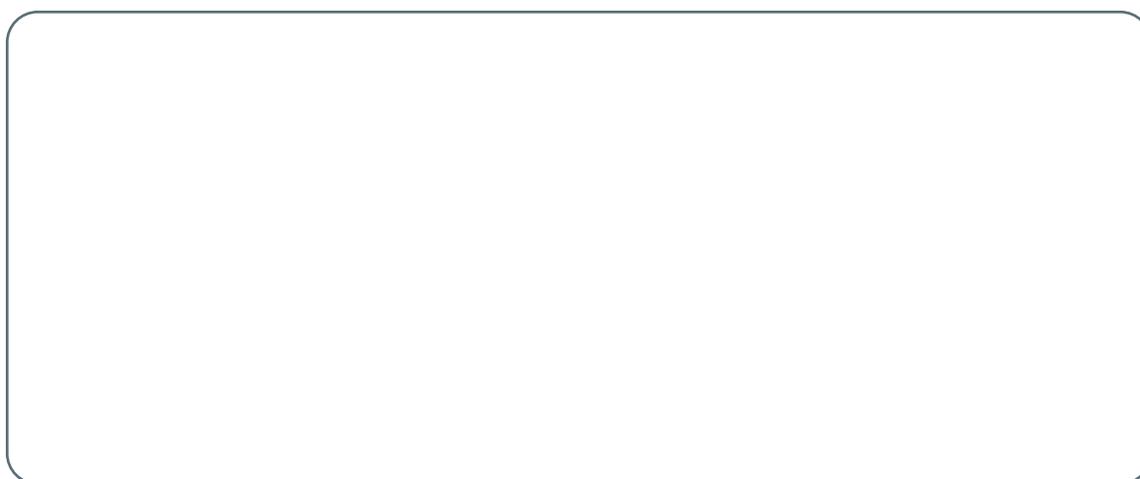
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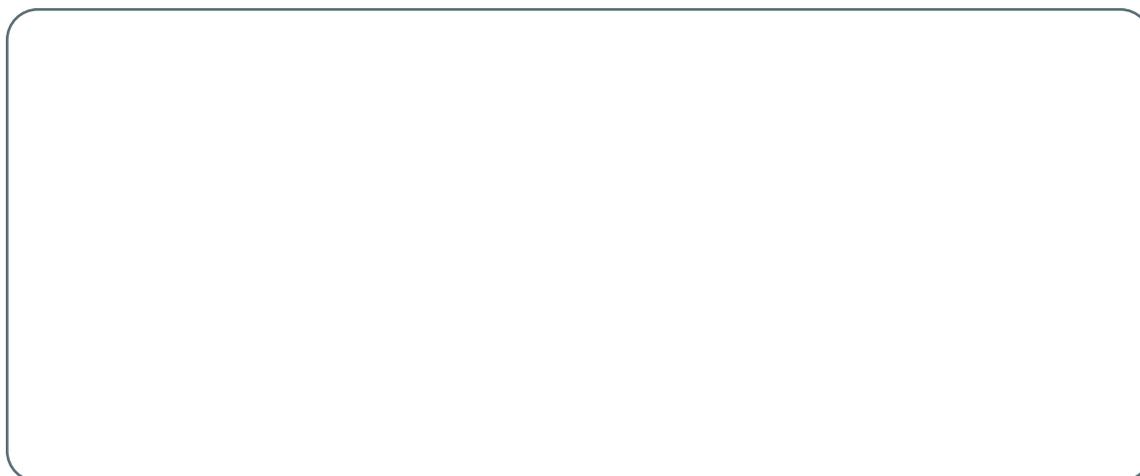
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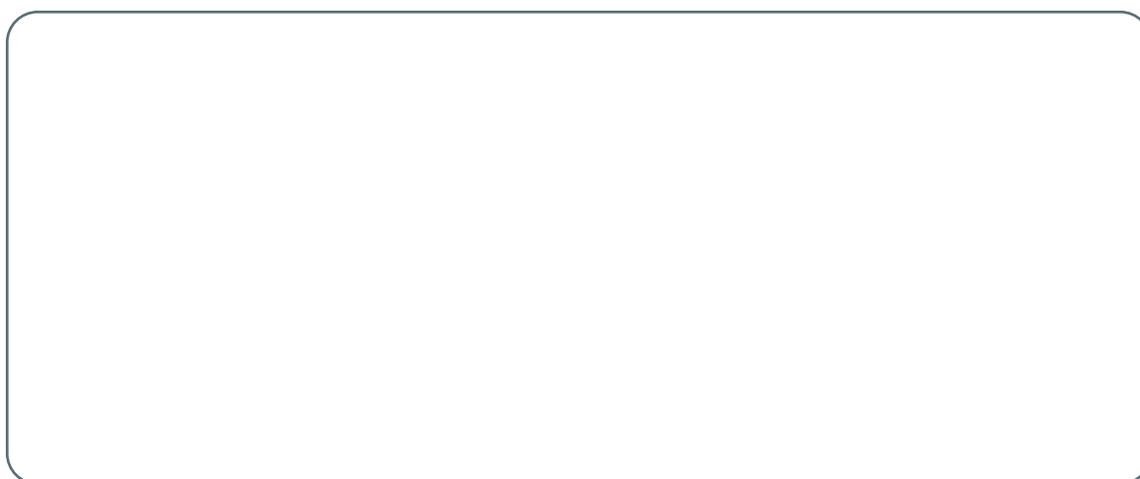
References and Resources

PRIMARY SOURCE

Content for this download was drawn primarily from "Interactive Lecture Technique 1: Active Reading Document." Barkley, E. F. and Major, C. H. (2018). *Interactive Lecturing: A Handbook for College Faculty.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp. 200–203. It includes material that was adapted or reproduced with permission. For further information about this technique, including examples in online and on campus courses, see the primary source:

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

CITATIONS AND ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Dubas, J. M., & Toledo, S. A. (2015). Active reading documents (ARDs): A tool to facilitate meaningful learning through reading. *College Teaching*, 63(1), 27–33.

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