



PRODUCED BY THE CENTER FOR TEACHING AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

# CLASS PARTICIPATION: MORE THAN JUST RAISING YOUR HAND

## CHAPTER 1: LEARNING THROUGH CLASS PARTICIPATION

### CLASS PARTICIPATION

---

College courses are meant to advance knowledge. Learning on the college level requires that you connect yourself with information and materials and actively participate in class.

Take our survey to evaluate how well you participate in class now.

### HOW WELL DO I PARTICIPATE IN CLASS?

---

If you saw me in class, you could describe me as:

- a. That person in the corner looking out the window.
- b. The person who monopolizes class discussions.
- c. The person with prepared notes and questions and ready to participate.
- d. None of the above.

IF YOU PICKED C – GIVE YOURSELF 3 POINTS

My teacher probably thinks during class that I:

- a. Suffer from tendonitis since I never write anything down.
- b. Am the next Picasso based on all the doodling that I do.
- c. Wrote the textbook since I always know what it said without even opening it up.
- d. None of the above.

IF YOU PICKED D – GIVE YOURSELF 3 POINTS

Check all that apply:

- a. I contribute to the discussion every week in class.
- b. I check my email during class.
- c. I could give classes in study skills since I exhibit them so well.
- d. I read the text five minutes before class starts for the first time.

IF YOU PICKED A – GIVE YOURSELF 2 POINTS

IF YOU PICKED C – GIVE YOURSELF 2 POINTS

## PRE-TEST

---

Use the information below to see that your score really means.

10-8 – You’ve got the right idea! Participation is a regular part of what you do in class. This module can provide you with some additional ideas on how to participate in class and how to use different strategies and ideas to improve your participation.

5-7 – You’re on the right track. You may need some ideas on how to continue to get better.

2-4 – Uh-oh! Let’s get to work. Participation isn’t something that just happens – you need to make it happen!

0-1 – You’re having a class participation emergency! Take extra notes during the module so you can put these ideas to work right away.

## WHAT DO TEACHERS EXPECT?

---

Your teacher requires that you read and discuss assignments and projects to enhance and bring about student learning.

Listen carefully when your teacher goes over the participation expectations and guidelines – he or she may not take class time to go over this again and it will be too late if you realize at the end of the semester that you should have been participating more.

Teachers often give instructions on how they would like you to participate.

Most teachers view participation as a way for the class to discuss the material as a group and they welcome student interaction through questions and comments during class.

## A PLAN TO IMPROVE YOUR LEARNING

---

Class discussions are often necessary to learn. Your contributions to the discussion should be well thought out and address the subject in depth or detail.

Your ability to participate depends on the work that you put into it. To participate well, you should build a plan that will help you develop your skills and contribute ideas to the course.

Hot Tip: In addition, it is a good idea to understand your individual learning style that you can implement into your participation. Check out the EXTRA's section of this tutorial for a link to a quiz you can take to evaluate your personal learning style and develop participation strategies that work for you.

## BUT WHAT IF I AM SHY?

---

If you are a naturally shy person, building a participation plan will be even more important.

Don't give up! Over time you may find it easier to speak in class. Finally, remember that your instructors and peers are there to support and help you.

## CHAPTER 2: ASSESSING WHAT YOU KNOW

### HOW WELL DO YOU PARTICIPATE?

---

There are many parts to class participation. Take this quick survey to find out where you should focus your effort.

What are some things you do **in class**? (Check all that apply):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ask questions                 | <input type="checkbox"/> give my opinion during discussion    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> check my email                | <input type="checkbox"/> do homework for another class        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gossip with my neighbor       | <input type="checkbox"/> use my cell phone                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> do the reading from last week | <input type="checkbox"/> raise my hand                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> do the reading for next week  | <input type="checkbox"/> focus my attention on the instructor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> take notes                    | <input type="checkbox"/> check out my neighbor                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> think about other things      | <input type="checkbox"/> listen when my peers ask questions   |

What are some things you do **before class**? (Check all that apply):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> do all of the assignments                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> get a lot of sleep      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> prepare discussion questions or points of clarification to ask | <input type="checkbox"/> run - I'm usually late! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> meet with a fellow student to discuss ideas                    | <input type="checkbox"/> review the syllabus     |

What are some things you do **after class**? (Check all that apply):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> do my homework right away          | <input type="checkbox"/> write up ideas for questions for next week |
| <input type="checkbox"/> party until the next class meeting | <input type="checkbox"/> go to my professor's office hours          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> go through my notes                |   |

## PREPARATION, PARTICIPATION, AND LISTENING

---

**Preparation** — much of the learning on college goes on outside the classroom when you are following up on class discussion/material after class preparing for the next one. Set aside time for these activities and follow some of the guidelines in this tutorial and you will be more prepared to learn and get more from your classes.

The choices about participating in the survey were:

- asking questions
- giving opinion during class discussion
- raising the hand
- go to the professor's office hours

**Listening** — pay special attention to the section on listening in this tutorial. Listening is a skill that you can work on, develop, and get better at over time. This tutorial will give you some ideas about how you can practice and improve your learning and retention.

The choices about listening in the survey were:

- taking notes
- focusing attention on the instructor
- listening when my peers ask questions

Now think about these examples and the responses you have chosen. See how your responses match the examples and what areas you might want to focus on in the tutorial.

## CHAPTER 3: PREPARING TO BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT

### CLASS PARTICIPATION STARTS BEFORE YOU EVEN GET TO CLASS

---

To participate in class, you need to have a good understanding of the material you have covered up to that point.

Review your study notes from the previous class or classes and make a list of concepts, ideas and facts to ask about:

- What concepts did you cover in class and in the materials last week?
- Do you have any questions about how the different concepts, articles or activities relate to each other?
- Do you still have any questions about last week's class or reading?

**Hot Tip:** Do not just ask your teacher to repeat facts from the previous class. Go through your notes and your books to generate more than just factual questions but ones about concepts too.

## PREVIEW AND PREDICT THE COURSE

---

If your professor hasn't already told you what the topic of the next class will be, look at the assigned readings, syllabus and material covered last week. These may help you predict the topic of next week's class.

- Write down some notes and ideas about what you know about the topic already. Have you ever heard about or read about this topic before?
- Skim the pages of the readings for the next class. Read at least the beginning and ending of each piece. Write down what you can find out about the topic by doing this.
- Think about what you might learn about this topic. What questions does it bring up for you? Write down what you would like to know.

## DO YOUR ASSIGNMENTS

---

Your professor expects that you complete the assigned reading for next week before the class meeting so that you have a grasp of the main ideas for discussion.

If you can't get through all of the reading, skim the difficult portions and write questions that you can ask another student or your professor.

Often asking another student can help you get through some of the more difficult parts of the reading and help you prepare for class.

Hot Tip: If you are not in a regular study group, you may want to connect with other students on the phone, on an online discussion board or by email so you can ask them your questions and share ideas and information.

## GO TO CLASS!

---

Ok, this may sound really basic but it's important.

You can't participate if you're not there. Whether being there means physically attending class or participating in an online chat or discussion board, you need to be there when it happens.

## WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN?

---

### SHOW UP EARLY.

Arriving a few minutes late can throw off your ability to participate for the entire class and will probably be disruptive. Arrive early and take a few moments to prepare yourself before the class begins. This is a good time for you to look over your notes and questions and refresh your mind about what you covered in the last class and what today's class will cover.

## PICK OUT A GOOD SEAT.

Sit where you will be able to interact comfortably with the professor or with other students if needed. Make sure you are able to see your professor easily so you can get his or her attention when you have a question and respond when he is looking for feedback.

## TURN ALL OF YOUR ELECTRONIC DEVICES OFF COMPLETELY.

Be honest. You know that even if you don't answer it, a vibrating cell phone takes your attention away from the lecture and interrupts your concentration.

## CHAPTER 4: ACTIVE LISTENING

### WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?

---

Active listening means being an active learner in the classroom. By practicing some active listening techniques you:

- Increase the amount of information you get and retain from each lecture
- Improve your ability to actively participate in class.

Active listening is a skill, just like reading, that requires concentration and practice to develop.

You will need to become aware of your concentration practices and work at them to improve them and make them better.

Active listening includes listening to peers as well as your instructor throughout the class.

### SELF-MONITORING YOUR CONCENTRATION SKILLS

---

The next time you are in class evaluate your listening performance.

1. Take out a sheet of paper and every time your concentration lapses and you begin to think of lunch, your boyfriend/girlfriend, what you're doing next weekend, what you did last weekend, a hamburger, or anything else not related to class, make a small check mark on the paper and bring yourself back to the class discussion.
2. Concentrate as closely as you can on what's being discussed in class. After class look at your checkmarks and think about what things caused your mind to wander. Were you successful at bringing yourself back to the topic? What were the best ways you found to help you concentrate on the discussion at hand?

Use this knowledge to help you in your next class.

**Hot Tip:** Don't worry if this is difficult at first. It is natural for the mind to wander, but monitoring yourself will help you improve over time. With practice, your mind will wander less and you will have fewer checkmarks at the end of class. Over time, you will get more out of the class.

## AS YOU LISTEN, PAY ATTENTION TO VERBAL CUES

---

Verbal cues are phrases or words that your professor may use that can help you identify key concepts and main points.

Some examples may include:

“Now this is important...”

“The point that I’d like to make is....”

“In summary... “

“There are three ideas that I’d like to cover today in relation to X. The first is...”

Hot Tip: Verbal cues can help you identify main concepts and important points that you should review after class and look over again before the next class.

## CHAPTER 5: HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DISCUSSION

### ASK A QUESTION

---

There are several ways you can participate in a class discussion.

One way is to ask a question relevant to the material covered in class or in the readings.

Asking a well thought out question lets the teacher know that you are engaged with the material. And often your classmates will be happy you asked a question they were thinking of too.

### DEVELOPING A QUESTION

---

Remember, you are not quizzing your teacher on the facts. The reading will provide you with the factual details. Class is for discussion on a more in-depth level.

To get ready to ask good in-class questions, practice creating some discussion level questions before you get there.

Below are some “Question Stems” to help you start.

Use two or more of these fill-in-the-blank questions to develop your skill at digging deeper into the concepts of the course.

- What are some possible solutions to/for the problem of [blank]?
- What conclusions can you draw about [blank]?
- In your opinion, what do you think is the best [blank] and why?
- Explain why [blank].
- How would you use [blank] to [blank]?

## WHEN TO ASK YOUR QUESTION

---

Look for cues from your teacher to know when to ask a question. He or she may even check in with the class to see if everyone is following.

Ask your question when the topic is being covered so you don't disrupt the flow of the class. For example, it is a good idea to bring up questions on last week's lecture at the beginning of class, before your teacher brings up new material.

**Hot Tip:** Remember, asking questions in class is a good way to get information from an expert—your teacher!

## ASK FOR CLARIFICATION

---

Another way to participate is to get clarification on a key point with a summary of the discussion or principle. You may introduce your comment by using words like: "As I understand it..." or "So what you're saying is..."

Restating the discussion or relating it to ideas in the homework or reading also shows that you are working on understanding the material and that you are engaged with it.

**Hot Tip:** Be sensitive to other when asking questions or responding—leave time for peers and your teacher to discuss and respond.

## GIVE AN OPINION

---

You may also want to give an opinion or example to further class discussion.

Relating the facts or concepts of the class to your own experience can be a good way to help you incorporate the material into your own thinking and help you to remember it later.

Be clear that you are giving an opinion and not stating a fact or summarizing class material. Begin your comment by saying something like "In my opinion..." or "The way I see it..."

## CHAPTER 6: ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

### GIVE AND TAKE

---

You may be asked to participate in a group activity in class.

Be ready to work with others in a small group. Listen and interact with peers with respect for their views. Try not to sit silent or be the loudest. Be ready to give and take.

Your teacher may ask for students to take part in a role play or activity. Do your best to participate fully. Becoming more involved in the activity will increase your interest and your learning.

## OFFICE HOURS

---

Don't hesitate to see your teacher during his or her office hours if you have a question. You can ask for clarification on coursework, assignments, or reading.

Remember, a question or concern that you raise might be something that the teacher may want to bring up in class and have a class discussion on. Creating dialogue with your teacher is important.

Your teacher will let you know the methods of communication that you can use to seek clarification or advice during the semester. These may include email, appointments during office hours or interacting with them through an online learning management system.

This information is usually printed on the course syllabus or posted on your teacher's office door. You can ask your teacher for more information if you need it.

Hot Tip: Let your teacher know if you have a special interest or goal for the course. This way your teachers can get to know you and your interests.

## FOLLOW THESE RULES FOR SUCCESS!

---

Class participation improves your learning, involvement in the subject, and your grade. Follow the rules below to achieve success in class:

- Review your study notes
- Do all assignments before class
- Go to class on time
- Be an active listener in class
- Know when and how to ask and respond to questions

Hot Tip: Ask your teacher about his or her policy on food, drink, visitors, cell phones, etc. and follow any guidelines provided.

## POP QUIZ!

---

1. Some of the basics of class participation include:
  - a. Showing up early
  - b. Picking out a good seat
  - c. Turning all of your electronic devices off completely
  - d. All of the above

D IS THE CORRECT ANSWER

2. Active participation means showing up for class.
- a. True
  - b. False

FALSE IS THE CORRECT ANSWER

3. Active participation is much more than just being there.
- a. Some strategies for increasing your learning include:
  - b. Writing discussion questions before you get to class on the homework materials.
  - c. Asking your friends what they are going to ask and raising your hand before them.
  - d. Bringing food to share.
  - e. Talking on your cell phone.

A IS THE CORRECT ANSWER

4. It is not as important to listen to the ideas of others as it is to listen to the ideas of the teachers.
- a. True
  - b. False

FALSE IS THE CORRECT ANSWER

5. Asking questions in class
- a. shows that you seek clarification
  - b. helps you learn by engaging with the material
  - c. helps you learn by hearing responses from your peers
  - d. all of the above

D IS THE CORRECT ANSWER

6. Your teacher probably expects you to participate in class if he or she had you complete a class participation tutorial online.
- a. True
  - b. False

TRUE IS THE CORRECT ANSWER

7. If there is something in the reading that you don't understand, you should write down questions to ask in class.
- a. True
  - b. False

TRUE IS THE CORRECT ANSWER

8. Participating in class can help you
- a. prepare for tests
  - b. improve your grade
  - c. integrate the lectures and the homework materials
  - d. all of the above

D IS THE CORRECT ANSWER

9. It is OK to give an opinion during class as long as you:
- a. make sure the class knows that it is just your opinion
  - b. tell the class it is a summary of the readings
  - c. talk for a long time
  - d. none of the above

A IS THE CORRECT ANSWER

10. It is a good idea to write down every word the instructor says.
- a. True
  - b. False

FALSE IS THE CORRECT ANSWER

Verbal cues can help you pick out the main points of the discussion.

## EXTRA'S

### HOW TO LEARN IN CLASS

Take this learning styles questionnaire online to find out more about your individual learning style.

<http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html>

### CONCENTRATING WHEN STUDYING

<http://www.dushkin.com/online/study/dgen3.mhtml>

## CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

Your teacher may have asked you to provide some proof of completion in the form of a certificate. If so, print the Certificate of Completion for this tutorial on the following page and fill in the required information for your instructor before handing it in.

# Certificate of Completion

*Class Participation: More Than Just Raising Your Hand*

Please print this document, neatly fill in the requested information and do the self-evaluation. Sign it and submit it to your instructor.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First

Course Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Section: \_\_\_\_\_ Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below, I certify that I have completed this tutorial as requested by the instructor.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Date



Self Evaluation

What is (are) the most important thing(s) that you learned from the tutorial?

Is there anything about class participation that you are still unclear about? Please be specific.

What other questions do you still have about class participation?