

Active learning



Active learning is a model of instruction that focuses the responsibility of learning on learners. It was popularized in the 1990s by its appearance on the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) report (Bonwell & Eison 1991). In this report they discuss a variety of methodologies for promoting "active learning". They cite literature which indicates that to learn, students must do more than just listen: They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. It relates to the three learning domains referred to as knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA), and that this taxonomy of learning behaviours can be thought of as "the goals of the learning process" (Bloom, 1956). In particular, students must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.^[1] Active learning engages students in two aspects – doing things and thinking about the things they are doing (Bonwell and Eison, 1991)

Active learning is a process whereby students engage in activities, such as reading, writing, discussion, or problem solving that promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class content. Cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and the use of case methods and simulations are some approaches that promote active learning. This section provides links to bibliographies, research summaries, articles, and other resources about active learning.

Active Learning

What is active learning?

Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging.

Through it you can explore a set of learning experiences that can be more effective and interesting, and you can take more responsibility for your education. This is especially critical in an online environment where you may not even meet your teacher or fellow students.

Begin by defining content (what to study) and establishing your objectives (what to learn). Next read! Do your research. Then build a foundation of activities that can help you learn, and communicate what you have learned. Some may not be interesting to you; some a nice fit with your preferred learning style(s).

You can engage in these first activities as an individual:

Active listening:

Active listening intentionally focuses on who you are listening to, whether in a lecture, in a conversation, or a group, in order to understand what is said. As the listener, you should then be able to "replay" or repeat back in your own words what they have said to their satisfaction. This does not mean you agree with, but rather understand, what they are saying.

Actively listen

- Be other-directed; focus on the person communicating
Follow and understand the speaker as if you were walking in their shoes
Listen with your ears but also with your eyes and other senses
- Be aware: non-verbally acknowledge points in the speech
Let the argument or presentation run its course
Don't agree or disagree, but encourage the train of thought

- Be involved:
Actively respond to questions and directions
Use your body position (e.g. lean forward) and attention to encourage the speaker and signal your interest

Looking/seeing

Look at images, such as pictures and graphs and maps (for example, the *Cone of Learning* below). Try to understand the use and importance of each image: enter key words that come to mind. Verbal cues, such as titles and authors, and visual cues such as line, color, visual organization, etc. will help you interpret information and understand its story without the words. Often the context of the image is vital to understanding it, as illustrations in a text book, examples in a catalogue, graphs in a financial statement. So also a painting can be better understood by its time, art movement, etc.

Seeing and hearing:

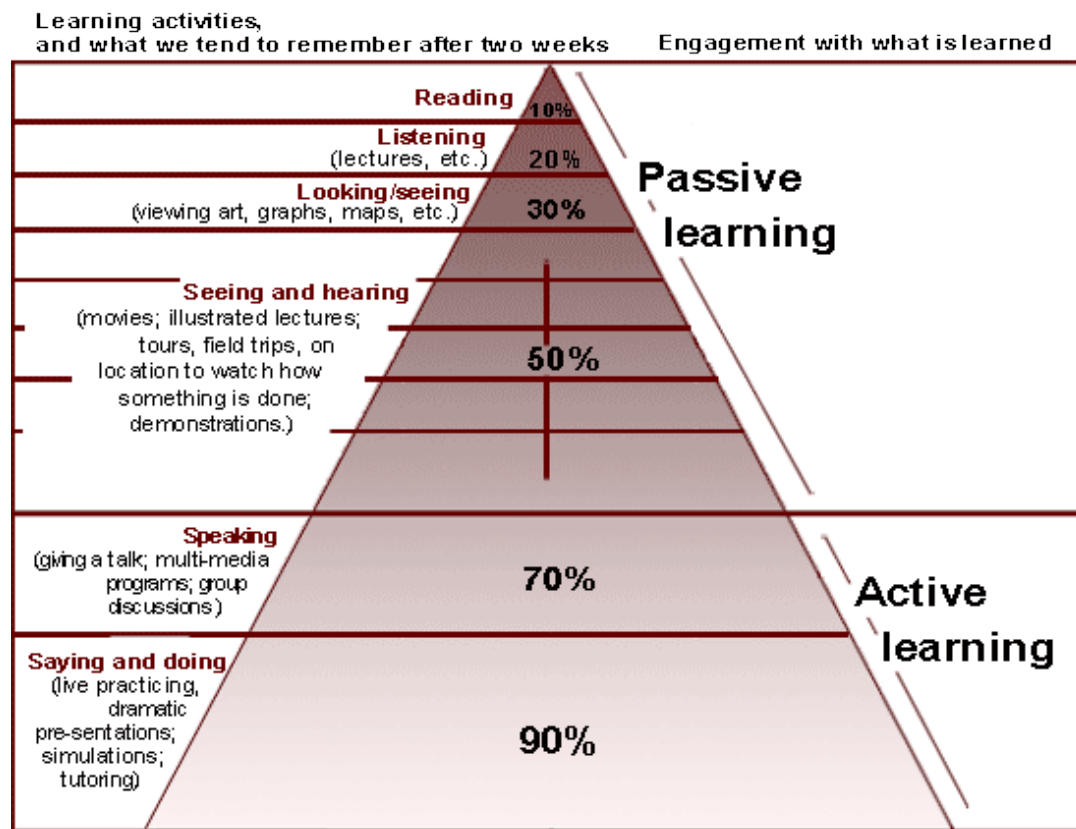
In addition to PowerPoint lectures, multimedia and movies have the advantage of illustrating reading and lecture content in new (engaging) formats.

Demonstrations and field trips build on classroom experiences and can provide you as an individual with a shared learning experience on a topic

They also enable you as learner to witness how concepts are practiced or exemplified in real life processes or situations

Remember: you don't need a classroom trip to visit locations that will help you understand your studies!

Brainstorm organizations, factories, etc. and send an email or phone to set up a visit. Don't just go and expect professionals to stop their work.



Cone of Learning adapted from Edgar Dale (1946)

As we progress into “active” learning , a group can make the task more effective. Within the group, you share responsibility to participate and collaborate, take advantage of each participant’s strengths, and rely on each other for good project management and effective learning.