

Student Engagement Tip Sheet

Student engagement has to do with students' meaningful involvement in their own learning that incorporates behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects. (For one definition of student engagement, see [this national survey report](#).) Additionally, [active learning strategies](#) can be used to promote student engagement.

Best Practices for Student Engagement Online

- Allow students the opportunity to get to know the instructor as well as the other students; allow opportunities for social interaction.
- Incorporate multiple types of media and modalities; use [UDL and inclusive teaching principles](#).
- Utilize both [synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities](#).
- Use various groupings for increased student interaction.
- Adapt effective strategies used for face-to-face instruction to work in the online environment.

More information about student engagement can be found on the [VALRC Student Engagement & Motivation webpage](#).

Creating Opportunities for Student Engagement

- **Engagement with Content, Students, and Instructor**
 - Students should have the opportunity to engage with the course content, other students, and the instructor.
 - [Engagement in Online Courses](#): This article provides examples of activities and strategies that allow students to engage with the content, with other students, and with the instructor.
- **Engagement Options for Synchronous Learning**

Synchronous course sessions typically take place via [a web conferencing tool](#). Instructors can use the tools built into a web conferencing platform or they can integrate

outside tools to create opportunities for student engagement during a synchronous session.

- **Built-In Tools:** The following chart outlines tools that are built into web conferencing platforms and can be used to engage learners. The advantage for using these tools is that students do not have to leave the web conferencing platform to participate in and engage with the class.

Built-In Tool	Use for Engagement
Chat box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Check for understanding ● Monitor engagement ● Ask and answer questions
Polling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish knowledge ● Check for understanding ● Elicit student feedback
Hand raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage participation ● Avoid interruptions
Annotation (Built-in Whiteboards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow students to generate material ● Create opportunities for peer feedback ● Create opportunities for formative assessment
Breakout rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitate group work ● Differentiate instruction for multilevel classes ● Facilitate face-to-face discussion
Reactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Check for understanding ● Monitor engagement ● Allow students to share their voice while avoiding interruptions

- **Integrated tools:** Many additional collaboration or interactive tools can be used during synchronous learning sessions. In most cases, using such tools requires students to open a separate window and navigate to a different webpage, but these tools are often more collaborative and allow for more interaction than the built-in tools.
 - Best practices for introducing new tools include: only introducing one tool at a time, providing [onboarding](#) for all new tools, and ensuring that all tools have a specific purpose.
 - Tools that can be integrated into the synchronous session include [polls](#), [whiteboards](#), and [other instructional tools such as these](#).

- Optional tools for polls include [Mentimeter](#), [Poll Everywhere](#), and [Google Forms](#).
- Optional tools for whiteboards include [Jamboard](#), [Whiteboard Fi](#), and [AWW Board](#).
- Additional instructional tools can be found on the [VALRC Technology for Teachers webpage](#) as well as detailed in [Proliteracy's Winter 2021 Resources for the Adult Educator](#).

● Engagement Options for Asynchronous Learning

- **Discussion:** Asynchronous discussion can take place in an [LMS platform](#) or via other tools such as [messaging apps](#), information sharing platforms, social media platforms, or discussion forum tools.
 - Information sharing platforms include [Padlet](#) and [Wakelet](#).
 - Discussion forum tools include [Threads](#) and [Backchannel Chat](#).
- **Collaborative Assignments:** Students can work together on collaborative assignments outside of the synchronous class session.
 - **Google Suite:** Students can use these tools to collaborate on documents (Google Docs), presentations (Google Slides), spreadsheets (Google Sheets), and more.
 - **Strategies for Effective Group Work in the Online Class:** This blog post outlines the purpose of and strategies for effective group work in the online class.
 - It is important to note that collaborative documents can also be used during a synchronous session for whole group work or for small group work during breakout sessions.
- **Technology Tools:** Students can also use technology tools such as polls, whiteboards, and other instructional tools that were described in the aforementioned section [Engagement Options for Synchronous Learning](#) — asynchronously. Instructors can use these tools to either prepare learners for the synchronous session or for extension activities after a synchronous session.

- For more information on asynchronous student engagement, please see this resource from Wiley Education: [Tips to Create an Engaging Asynchronous Online Learning Environment](#).

Engaging Activities for Online Courses

● Collaborative Documents

- Collaborative documents can be used as a way to promote peer-to-peer engagement and group work in an online class. Students can use collaborative documents to create a collaborative product.
- Options for using collaborative documents include students completing graphic organizers, making charts or infographics, and creating collaborative documents, presentations, and/or sites.
- For more information on using collaborative assignments in the online classroom, please refer back to the [Engagement Options for Asynchronous Learning](#) section of this tip sheet.

● Open-ended Questions

- Open-ended questions can be used to check for student understanding, establish background knowledge, and allow students to share their voice.
- Instructors can also create assignments where students create their own questions.
- Open-ended questions can be done during synchronous sessions, either as a whole group or as small groups in breakout sessions, or asynchronously through an online discussion board forum. See the [Engagement Options for Asynchronous Learning](#) section for more information on discussion boards.

● Peer-to-peer Feedback

- Peer-to-peer feedback can be used to create engagement opportunities between students that stimulate peer learning and self reflection.
- Peer-to-peer feedback can be done during a synchronous session, most likely during breakout sessions, or asynchronously via collaborative working documents, such as [a Google Suite application](#) or [an LMS platform](#).

● Short Quizzes

- Short quizzes can be used to check student understanding, for student self-assessment, and for establishing background knowledge.
- Short quizzes can be done during a synchronous session or sent to students to complete asynchronously.

- Instructors can also embed quizzes or reflection questions into video presentations using tools such as [EdPuzzle](#) or [Nearpod](#).
- Instructional tool options for short quizzes include: [Quizlet](#), [Kahoot!](#), [Google Forms](#), [Poll Everywhere](#), [Mentimeter](#).

- **Fill-in-the-blank Activities**

- Fill-in-the-blank activities allow students to practice skills and present the instructor with an opportunity for formative assessment. These activities are most effective with low-level English language or literacy learners.
- Fill-in-the-blank activities can be done during a synchronous session or sent to students to complete asynchronously.
- Options for fill-in-the-blank activities include: [Google Slides](#), [PowerPoint](#), [Google Docs](#), [Quizlet](#), whiteboards (such as [Jamboard](#), [Whiteboard Fi](#), and [AWW Board](#)), or polls (such as [Google Forms](#), [Poll Everywhere](#), [Mentimeter](#)).