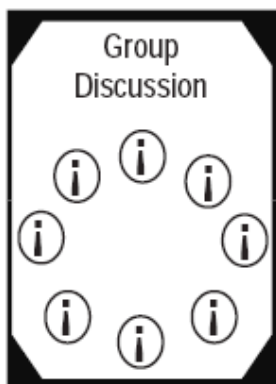# SI Showcase:
The Basic Collaborative Learning Techniques
Supplemental Instruction
Iowa State University

Group Discussion

Group Discussion is a general unstructured discussion of an issue or topic by the group. Individual members are free to contribute or not contribute.

Hints:
♦ This is the most common form of collaborative learning. It is also the form that requires the most skill to use successfully.
♦ Ideally, everyone is actively involved in the discussion and the discussion topic is of equal interest to all group members.
♦ When group discussion is successful, it is difficult to determine if there is a discussion leader.

Assigned Discussion Leader

One person in the group is asked to present on a topic or review material for the group and then lead the discussion for the group. This person should not be the regular group leader.

Hints:
♦ When assigning a discussion topic to individual members of the group, you may need to be prepared to allow a little time for the person leading the discussion to prepare for the discussion.
♦ This technique works best when everyone or nearly everyone in the group is given an assignment to be the "expert" on.
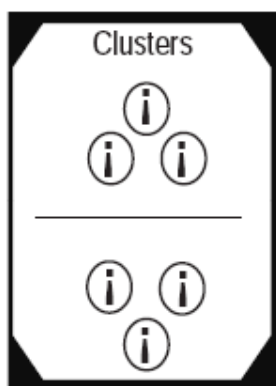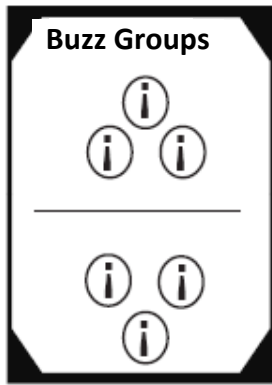
Clusters

In clusters, group participants are divided into smaller groups for discussion. They may also be allowed to self-select the small group they want to be in. After discussing the assigned topic, the cluster may report their finding to the last group.

Hints:
♦ Make sure that each group is provided flip chart paper or assigned a space on the blackboard.
♦ Allow time for each group to report back to the large group. You have to assign someone from each group to report back.

Buzz Groups

A variation of clusters, buzz groups are set up to brainstorm ideas as quick as possible. Ideas are always shared with the large group.

Hints:
- Small groups should always assign one person to be a recorder and one person to be a spokesperson.
- Create a list of ideas when shared with the large group. When sharing, recorders can cross out their small group ideas that have been shared.
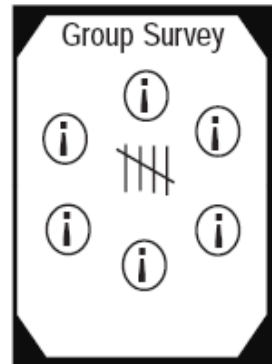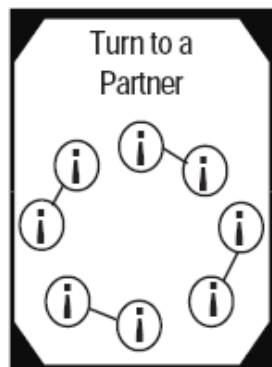
Group Survey

Each group member is surveyed to discover their position on an issue, problem or topic. This process ensures that each member of the group is allowed to offer or state their point of view.

Hint:
- A survey works best when opinions or views are briefly stated. Be sure to keep track of the results of the survey.

Turn to your Partner and…(TTYP)

Group members work with a partner on an assignment or discussion topic.

Hints:
- TTYP's would best when group participants who have already been provided with enough background on a subject that they can immediately move to a discussion with their partner without previewing or reviewing concepts.
- There is a variation on TTYP called "Think/Pair/Share."
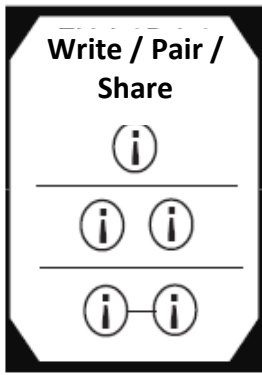
Think/Pair/Share

Group members think about a question/topic individually, then share their thoughts with a partner. Large group summarized sharing also occurs.

Hints:
- The goal of a think/pair/share is to allow participants time to think BEFORE they discuss. Research shows that when people are given time to contemplate an answer to a question, their answers differ from those they would give if them responded immediately.
- When doing a think/Pair/Share, give participants a specific amount of time (30 seconds, 5 minutes, etc.) for the "think" portion.
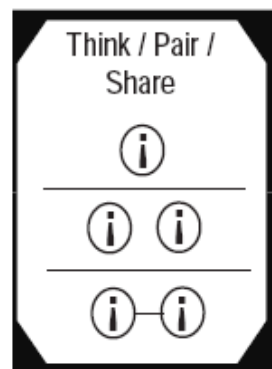
Write/Pair/Share

Same as think/pair/share, but the student must develop a written response on their own before sharing.

Hints:
- The goal of a write/pair/share is to allow participants time to write something BEFORE they discuss with a partner.
- When doing a think/Pair/Share, give participants a specific amount of time (30 seconds, 5 minutes, etc.) for the "think" portion.
- This format works well for problem solving. In the pair step, partners can write a joint solution on the board to share with the large group.
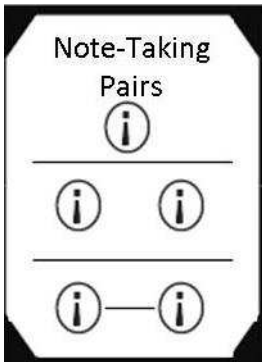
Note-Taking Pairs

Students combine information from their individual notes to create an improved partner version.

Hint:
- Ask students to identify areas they were missing.
- Discuss as a large group inaccuracies or conflicts.
- Point out that this method should help improve note-taking skills.
- If notes get too dense, help students to see that simplifying note-taking may improve note-taking.
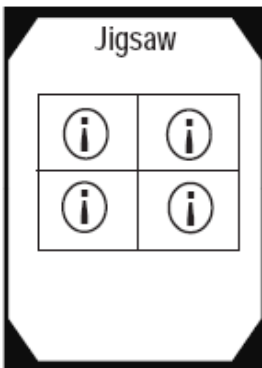
Jigsaw

In Jigsaw, group members are broken into smaller groups. Each small group works on some aspect of the same problem, question, or issue. They then share their part of the puzzle with the large group.

Hints:
- Jigsaws, when used properly, make the group as a whole dependant upon all of the subgroups. Each group has a piece of the puzzle.
- When using a Jigsaw, make sure you carefully define the limits of what each group will contribute to the topic that is being explored.
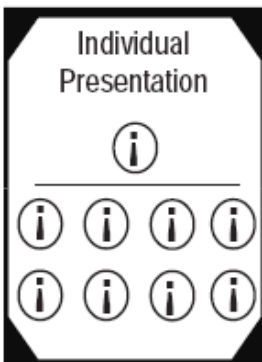
Individual Presentation

An individual presentation is an uninterrupted presentation by one person to the group. Group members present on a topic, question, or issue to the group. Unlike an "Assigned Discussion Leader" this is a formal presentation delivered to a captive audience.

Hint:
- Use of *individual presentations* should typically be used sparingly and only when independent research is required.
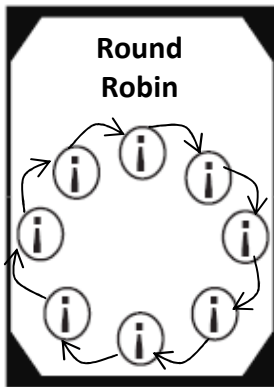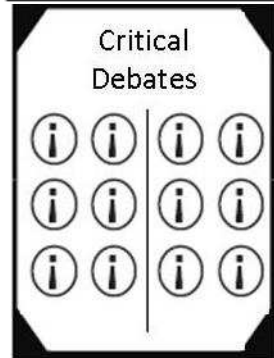
Round Robin

Generate ideas by speaking in order, moving from one student to the next. Use to structure brainstorming sessions and ensuring that all students participate.

Hint:
- ♦ A student can "pass," but be certain to establish the expectation that you will return to him/her.

Critical Debates

Students take the side of an issue that is in opposition to their personal views, then argue that side of the issue. This methods helps students develop critical thinking skills and challenges assumptions.

Hint:
- ♦ This method works well in dueling partners, or works well when a larger group is divided into two.
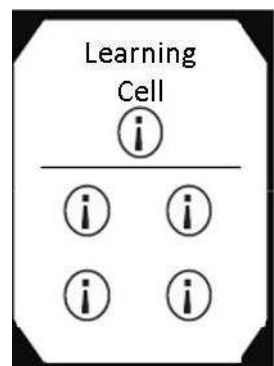- ♦ Also can work as a "four corners" method or continuum line.
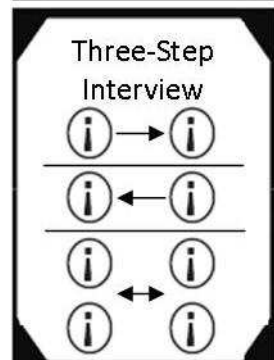
Three-Step Interview

Students, in partners, interview each other, then report what they learn to another pair. This method helps students network with each other and develop communication skills.

Hint:
- ♦ Useful as an icebreaker.

Learning Cell

Students develop questions individually, then quiz each other based on these questions. A facilitator can compile all questions for future use as practice quizzes/exams.

Hint:
- ♦ Encourage students to create quiz questions based on notes, books, and other resources.
- ♦ Encourage a variety of questions (based on Bloom's taxonomy) for deeper understanding.
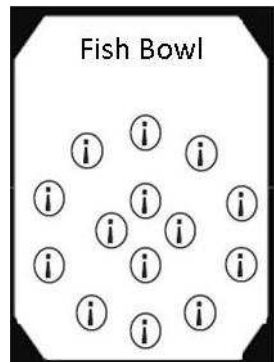
Fish Bowl

Form two concentric circles. The smaller, interior group discusses a topic, while the larger outside group observes.

Hint:
- ♦ Describe how this activity presents students with an opportunity to model or observe group processing behaviors.
- ♦ Reverse roles as needed.
- ♦ Rotate perspectives as an observer.