

What Do Students Already Know About Course Content?

The more you know about your students' capabilities, attitudes, preconceptions and interests, the more you can:

- Adapt your teaching to their needs.
- Build on their skills and experience.
- Gauge their growth in skills/knowledge during the semester.
- Direct students to available support before they encounter problems.

Finding out about your students' attitudes and abilities can take the form of a:

- Pretest of concepts/vocabulary.
- Short writing task about attitudes towards the subject.
- Questionnaire about expectations and perceived needs.

Here's an example of an activity that allows students to meet their classmates as they discover each other's knowledge, skills, and interests. This activity can also help illustrate the benefit of **collaborative** work.

Group Assets and Interests

Directions: Students work in small groups (3-5 students) to fill in the chart seen below.

Example: Group chart for film class

Name	Relevant Education/Experience: Courses taken, work experience, related hobby, etc.	Tool or resource you could share: Graphic or presentation software, digital camera, etc.	Relevant skills: writing, film editing, drawing, acting, facilitating, etc.
Student 1	Film history course in High School. Hobby: photography	Free passes to AMC theaters	Good at database research; photographer
Student 2			
Student 3			
Student 4			

Follow up: Each student reports one "asset" of a group member to the class and how it might be of value to a team project member. Collect the charts to jog your memory throughout the semester.

Online Variation:

1. Create small group in the "announcement" area (i.e. Group A: Bill, Han Joo, Maria, etc.).
2. Create separate discussion threads for each group. Post one table in each group thread for students to download, fill in and repost.
3. After the table is complete and posted, have students discuss the list of "assets" their classmates bring to the class (i.e. How might group members serve as useful resources for a team project or other activities/assignments for this class?).

Sources:

Barkley, Cross, Major, (2005), *Collaborative Learning Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*



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