

Five Activities to Engage Your Learners Differently

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Messy Start

Use the "Messy Start" to crowd-source the introduction of the content.

Note: This is called a "Messy Start" because it actually begins before the official start of a session or before a break has officially concluded. It will need to be set up in advance of the start of a session or in advance of the end of a break.

Pre-Work:

- Hang flipchart paper.
- Brainstorm headlines for participants to respond to.

Supplies Needed:

- Flipchart paper
- Markers

How to Run Activity:

1. Create several questions related to the topic you would like to have your audience think about.
2. Write each question on a separate piece of flipchart paper.
3. Hang these flipcharts around the room prior to participants entering.
4. Post a sign indicating that we are going to begin with a "Messy Start" activity outside of the training room entrance or instruct participants as they arrive.
5. Greet participants as they enter the room and encourage them to pick up a marker and begin writing even before the session begins.
6. Refer to the comments that participants have written during your introduction, and during the session as each topic arises.

Notes on modifications:

How I See It

Force your participants to "take a side" on a variety of statements to encourage them to think more critically about situations.

Pre-Work:

- Create "Agree," "Disagree," and "Hung Jury" pages.
- Draft "How I See It" statements for learners to discuss.
- Print "How I See It" statements on cards (or pages).

Supplies Needed:

- "Agree," "Disagree," and "Hung Jury" pages
- "How I See It" Statement cards

How to Run Activity:

1. Break participants up into groups of 3-6 people per group.
2. Once participants are in their groups, give a deck of "How I See It" cards to each group.
3. Instruct groups to read each card, and then each person in the group must declare whether they agree or disagree with the statement on the card. They should share why they agree or disagree with the statement. Keep in mind that this activity isn't about trying to persuade others to agree with you, but rather that different people may have different opinions about the same statement.
4. If everyone agrees with a particular statement, then they should place the card in an "agree" pile. If everyone disagrees with the statement, they should place the card in a "disagree" pile. If some people agree and others disagree, they should place the card in a "hung jury" pile.
5. Once it looks like most groups have gone through each of the cards, ask for everyone's attention.
6. Ask each group to share one card that seemed to lead to a lot of discussion.
 - * What did the group talk about?
 - * Did other groups have similar discussions about that card?
 - * Did other groups see the statement differently?
 - * What conclusions can you draw from the topic at hand based upon your "How I See It" conversations?

Notes on modifications:

Elimination

Once participants are familiar with several aspects of a topic, they can play a game of elimination to apply what they learned by eliminating answer choices and arriving at the correct answer.

Pre-Work:

- Create elimination cards or a virtual elimination board for a shared screen.
- Brainstorm clues.
- Test clues to ensure the activity works properly.

Supplies Needed:

- Elimination cards (if using)

How to Run Activity:

1. Break participants into small groups and distribute a set of elimination cards to each group, OR display elimination cards virtually on a shared screen.
2. Ask each group to arrange the cards face-up on the table (if using cards).
3. Reveal a series of clues that each describe one aspect of [insert topic at hand].
4. After seeing each clue, instruct participants to turn over any cards that could be eliminated until they are left with the card they would recommend.
5. At the end of the clues, ask each group to share which card they felt survived the process of elimination and their rationale for arriving at their conclusion.
6. Repeat, if necessary, for another series of clues.
7. Ask some or all of the following questions:
 - * What were some of the clues that allowed you to eliminate some cards?
 - * Is there always just one right answer?
 - * [Insert your own questions.]

Notes on modifications:

Pair and Share

After introducing a topic or content to participants, give them time to discuss their ideas or reactions with a partner.

Pre-Work:

- Brainstorm discussion questions.

Supplies Needed:

- None

How to Run Activity:

1. Break participants into partner pairs.
2. Share discussion questions and the time limit for discussion.
3. Once it looks like most groups have discussed most of the questions, ask for everyone's attention.
4. Ask each group to share what they learned from their discussions.

Notes on modifications:

Sticky Note Brainstorm

After introducing a topic or content to participants, give them time to brainstorm ideas.

Pre-Work:

- Hang flipchart paper.
- Brainstorm headlines for participants to respond to.

Supplies Needed:

- Flipchart paper
- Sticky notes
- Pen or pencil for each participant

How to Run Activity:

1. Hang flipchart paper with headlines that reflect what is being brainstormed.
2. Distribute sticky notes to participants.
3. Ask participants to individually take some time to write down as many ideas without discussion with their peers. Each idea should be written on a new sticky note. OR ask participants to take some time to work together with the people near them to write down as many ideas as possible. Each idea should be written on a new sticky note.
4. After several minutes, ask participants to place their sticky notes on the appropriate flipchart(s).
5. Before participants return to their seats, ask them to look at what others wrote and to take note of any trends they are seeing - new ideas they had not thought of.
6. Once participants return to their seats, ask some or all of the following questions:
 - * How can these ideas be used outside of this training room, in the real world?
 - * What is one idea that you saw posted on a flipchart that you had not thought of?
 - * [Insert your own questions.]

Notes on modifications: