

ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES FOR ACTIVE LEARNING

Varied Groupings	<p>Varied grouping patterns provide participants ample opportunities to reflect, apply, and practice (RAP) new learning through productive language opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual: Individual reflections, often done in writing. • Structured Partners: Various forms of partnering is the most reliable way to engage ALL participants in the learning activities (speaking/ writing/doing) called for in a training. Creating structured partners—usually a “shoulder” partner at a table— allows partners to have someone specific to work with as they share and discuss their learning. For management purposes, it is helpful to “name” partners within the pairing—As and Bs or 1s and 2s, etc. When tasks need to be divided, this allows the presenter to provide guidance on who is in charge of specific tasks (i.e., 1s read the quote and 2s summarize the quote.) • Table Groups: Table groups provide variation throughout the training for sharing reflections and are especially important for tasks where participants need to gather ideas from more than one person. • Pairs-to-Square: This has the same format as structured partners, except it expands the conversation by prompting a pair to form a square (group of 4). These groupings work best if the questions/prompts are open ended. It is a helpful strategy to use when you need to get participants up and out of their seats to move a little.
Parking Lot	<p>This structure provides a systematic way to handle questions. An instructor can post a piece of chart paper at the front of the room where participants can “park” questions they have about training content. Participants simply write a question on a sticky note and then place it on the parking lot. The instructor can then check questions at breaks, use the questions to help drive training content, and ensure questions are answered by the end of the session.</p>
Talking Chips	<p>Using talking chips for a table group of Pairs-to-Square discussion helps to facilitate an equitable dialogue around a topic. The instructor hands out two-three “chips” to each participant. The instructor assigns a question or discussion topic to the group. Participants then share their thoughts. Each time a participant contributes to the discussion, he/she places a talking chip in the middle of the table. This continues until all talking chips are used. Using this strategy, each person contributes to the discussion, but one person does not have the chance to overwhelm the discussion.</p>
Quick Write	<p>For this structure, participants take out a sticky note and write for a short time frame (around 60 seconds or so) on an assigned topic or question. Once time is up, the instructor then directs participants to turn their structured partner and share their writing. The goal of quick writes is to engage participants in reflection through writing. As stated by Raphael, Pardo, and Highfield, “the act of putting words down on paper—however small—pushes thinking beyond casual reflection” (2002).</p>
Whip Around	<p>This structure can be done as a whole group or within small groups of 4-6. The instructor provides a question or prompt for participants to reflect upon. A short time frame is given for participants to think. Once thinking time is up, a volunteer begins the whip around by sharing and then it moves clockwise to the next person. Because it is a whip around reflection, it will move fast. Each share out should be quick—no more than one sentence.</p>

Weighty Words	<p>This engagement structure can be particularly helpful when needing to get participants to reflect on small chunks of information, such as research quotes, short paragraphs in a text, etc. The instructor has participants read through the selected piece of text, providing a specific number of words they should highlight within the text. To determine what to highlight, participants should focus on words that are “weighty”—the words carrying the most meaning in the text. Providing participants a maximum amount of words they can highlight helps them reflect more deeply on what they are reading as they determine which words to choose. Once they have finished, they can turn to their structured partner and discuss what they highlighted and why.</p>
Cold Call	<p>This engagement structure involves regular and consistent calling on individual learners to answer questions or share reflections. The key feature of cold call is the unpredictability about who will get called or when they will be called. It can be especially helpful when paired with structured partners. Participants have a moment to share their ideas with a partner; from there, the instructor cold calls 2-3 participants to share out. Note: <u>Never</u> use cold calling as a “gotcha” moment to catch someone who is not paying attention. One should never cold call with the purpose of public shaming. If a participant doesn’t know an answer, let them pass while also promising to come back to them soon.</p>
Inside-Outside Circle	<p>This engagement structure is especially useful as a wrap-up activity at the end of a training session. Instructors can use the structured partner designations (i.e., 1s and 2s, As and Bs, etc.) to create the inside-outside circle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, direct 1s to make a large circle. This is the inside circle. • Then, have the 2s make a circle around the 1s. This is the outside circle. Have the 1s turn around to face the 2s. Each person should be facing a partner. If there is an odd number, have one partner group create a group of three. • Then, give the participants a topic to discuss from the day. Provide the partners a few minutes to discuss. Then, have the outside circle (the 2s) move clockwise three spaces. They can discuss that same question or topic with the new partner or discuss a new question or topic. Continue in that manner until all questions/topics have been addressed.