# **Inventory of Synchronous Active Learning Activities**

**GOAL:** Identify what synchronous active learning activities worked well or require modification, identify gaps or challenges to address, and prioritize changes for your next course. coursecg.



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## STEP 1: Reflect on what worked and what needs modification

Think about recent offerings of your course, whether those were remote, face-to-face, or both. Make note of which of those synchronous active learning activities worked well that you’d like to keep doing and which activities you’d like to keep but require some modification.

**Synchronous active learning activities:**

* involve “doing things and thinking about what they are doing” (Bonwell & Eison, 1991), constructing knowledge through writing, talking, problem solving, or reflecting
* are completed individually or collaboratively
* are completed by all students at the same time, either in-person or virtually

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| **KEEP:**  What synchronous active learning activities worked well that I would like to keep doing? | **MODIFY:**  What synchronous active learning activities would I like to keep doing, but require modification? |
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**How do I know if an activity worked well?** For example, the activity helped students effectively learn and meet the learning outcomes or prepare for an assessment, supported student engagement, feelings of community, or inclusivity, I received student or TA feedback that it worked well, etc.

## STEP 2: Identify gaps where I’d like to introduce new or improved synchronous active learning activities

Identify places in your course where students might benefit from opportunities for individual or collaborative discussion, reflection, or practice. Remember that active learning activities should intentionally help students make progress towards learning outcomes or assessments.

See **Handout 1: Effective Practices for Designing and Implementing Synchronous Active Learning Activities** for an overview of active learning

* Which course learning outcomes or course topics/skills are students struggling to grasp?
* Where do students need more opportunities to analyze, extend, or apply concepts?
* Where do students need more opportunities to practice and receive feedback?
* Where would it be beneficial to provide opportunities to build community or connection?

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| **Gaps to address or places in my course where synchronous active learning would be beneficial:** |

## STEP 3: Prioritize course improvements or additions

Based on the previous tables, identify up to three changes or additions you’d like to make to your course related to synchronous active learning activities, and a brief note about why you’re interested in making those changes. Although you may be considering additional changes, keep this process manageable and prioritize changes that are most important or needed.

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| **Modifications to Current Activities or Gaps/Challenges to Address with New Activities** | **Rationale** |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |

# **Selecting Synchronous Active Learning Activities**

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**GOAL:** Explore potential synchronous active learning activities and the implications on your course.



Select one of your course changes from the end of **Worksheet 1**. Repeat this process for each course change related to synchronous active learning activities.

## STEP 1: Define the purpose of the new or modified active learning activity and potential activities to meet your goals

The active learning activities you select should serve the course learning outcomes and your other goals for the activity. Whether you are modifying or introducing a new active learning activity, consider these questions to decide on the purpose and goals of a new or modified activity:

* How do you want this activity to support students’ learning or progress towards achieving the course learning outcomes and/or preparing for course assessments?
* Aside from learning, do you want this activity to have other impacts (e.g., build community, gather feedback, offer support)?
* What do you want students to do? Practice or develop skills, discuss, analyze, apply, or extend concepts, create ideas or products, gather peer feedback, reflect, etc.?

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| **Purpose of the Modified/New Activity**  (use Worksheet 1, Step 2 as a starting point) | **Potential Synchronous Active Learning Activities that will Meet these Goals/Needs** |
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When exploring potential activities to meet your goals, consider the following:

See **Handout 2: Exploring Synchronous Learning Activities** for a variety of activities organized by the purpose/goals of the activity

* How effective would this activity be in promoting the learning I desire from students?
* Should this be a collaborative or individual activity, or a combination?
* Should this be an in-person or virtual activity, or a combination?
* Can this activity work with your class size?
* How much time would be needed to complete the activity?
* How does the activity fit into my overall course design? What implications would this activity have on other aspects of my course?
* What’s my and my students’ level of comfort with this type of activity?

## STEP 2: Identify the implications of a new synchronous active learning activity on your course

Select one synchronous active learning activity and use this checklist to identify the implications. Answer YES, NO, or ? for each question. Repeat for each potential activity you are considering. After considering the implications of all the potential activities, finalize your selection.

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| **Will this activity…** | [Potential Activity] | **Additional Considerations** |
| 1. achieve your goals outlined in Step 1? |  | If NO, what purpose would the activity serve for the course? Does this activity support an unwritten course goal or outcome? |
| 1. Require students or the instructor/TA to **learn new technologies**? |  | If YES, what guidance or support will be provided to ensure students are successful with the activity? Can challenges be addressed by changing the activity [engagement or delivery mode](https://otl.uoguelph.ca/system/files/Handout%202%20Delivery%20and%20Engagement%20Modes%20%281%29.pdf) to in-person or virtual? |
| 1. **increase student** **workload**? (use [Student Workload Calculator](https://cat.wfu.edu/resources/tools/estimator2/) and [Time on Task](https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/online-courses/time-task) to estimate) |  | If YES, and overall workload is an issue, what will you remove? |
| 1. **increase grading/feedback workload**? |  | If YES, how will workload be rebalanced or managed? Can other forms of feedback be used? |
| 1. **impact my overall course design, requiring other minor or major modifications to my course?** (e.g., how you deliver content, discuss content, use synchronous time, use asynchronous time, the timing or deadlines of key assessments, the weighting of assessments, etc.) |  | If YES, are the other course changes manageable? What resources (e.g., time, knowledge, technology) would be required to make other course changes? Is there another activity that would achieve the same goal that requires fewer course modifications? |

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# **New Synchronous Active Learning Activity Details**

**GOAL:** Plan the details and logistics for each new active learning activity and identify what support and resources you need to finalize your plans.



Refer to **Handout 1: Effective Practices for Designing and Implementing Synchronous Active Learning Activities** for strategies related to the design and implementation of active learning activities.

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| **Activity name** |  |
| **Alignment with course learning outcomes and/or assessments** |  |
| **Timing and frequency**   * when the activity occurs in the semester * how much synchronous time is needed * is the activity repeated throughout the semester and, if so, how often and when |  |
| **Mode of completion** (in-person, virtual, both)   * If in-person, what’s the use of physical space (e.g., students in groups of 4) |  |
| **Format** (individual, pairs, groups, whole class, or combination) |  |
| **Inclusivity and accessibility considerations** (e.g., [offering multiple means of expression, engagement, or representation](https://ctl.columbia.edu/resources-and-technology/resources/inclusive-teaching-guide/principle-4/)) |  |
| **Tools, technologies, resources needed** |  |
| **What do students need to do prior to the activity to prepare?** (e.g., readings, create account for a tool, post questions) |  |
| **Prompts, questions, templates, etc.** given to students for the activity |  |
| **Activity facilitation notes:**   * Introducing the activity * Providing support during the activity * Debriefing and gathering feedback |  |
| **Submission, Grading, Feedback**   * Will students submit anything? * Are submissions graded? If yes, what is the weighting and how are they graded? * Is feedback offered? If yes, in what form and from whom (e.g., peers, instructor/TA)? |  |
| **Impacts on other aspects of the course:**   * Is this activity replacing synchronous time that was formerly used for other teaching or learning activities (e.g., content delivery)? If so, will those teaching and learning activities be moved, changed, or eliminated? * Do any other activities or assessments need to be moved, changed, or eliminated? |  |

# **Planning my Next Steps**

Consider the following questions as you move forward with your assessment planning.

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| **What questions do I still have? What do I still need to learn?** (e.g., about your course, your teaching space, your students) |
| **What decisions do I still need to make to finalize my course and activity plans?** |
| **What would I like more feedback on?** (stop by one of our [drop-in sessions](https://otl.uoguelph.ca/summerprogramming#Open%20Virtual%20Drop-In%20Sessions) throughout the summer!) |
| **What support and resources do I need to implement the course plans I’ve chosen?** Consider your physical space, technology, TAs or course support, etc. |

Register for other[OTL Summer 2021 Programming sessions](https://otl.uoguelph.ca/summerprogramming) for additional opportunities to connect with colleagues, share your ideas, gather peer feedback, and get support for your course planning.