



Engage Students from the Start: Implementing Meaningful Warm-up Activities

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The Value of Warm-up Activities

- Cognitive – warm-ups can activate prior knowledge, spark curiosity, and monitor learning and progress
- Logistical – hold students accountable to pre-class work and provide instructor time for administration
- Social – create a sense of belonging and connect to students’ lived experiences

How Can You Use Warm-up Activities in Your Classes? (with sample prompts)

(1) Warm-ups Activate Prior Knowledge – When students *make connections with relevant prior knowledge* from previous courses or their own lives, they are more likely to retain new knowledge.

- Why do you think...?
- What do you think of when you hear...?
- What do you know about...?
- List all of the words that come to mind when I say [term/concept].

(2) Warm-ups as Formative Assessment – Providing students with as many opportunities as possible to *retrieve and use* information supports long-term retention and deeper understanding. *Immediate feedback* helps instructors and students know where to focus their efforts moving forward.

- What were the main topics we covered in our last class session?
- How would you define/explain this concept to a non-expert?
- What is the significance of this topic (from a homework assignment, class session, etc.)?
- What questions do you still have about the content covered in previous classes?

(3) Warm-ups as Accountability Measures – Starting class by *connecting to pre-class readings or other assignments* can help to hold students accountable to coming to class prepared.

- What is one question you have after today’s readings?
- What are the highlights of the reading for today or work you completed for today?
- How do the assigned readings connect with what we discussed last class?
- What is one key takeaway you gained from the assigned video?

(4) Warm-ups Build Community – By asking students to *share their emotions, feelings, opinions, or personal lived experiences*, you can help create a sense of belonging for students and increase their motivation to learn.

- Think of a time when...
- What are your thoughts on...
- Have you ever experienced...
- How do you feel about ...

(5) Warm-ups Support Interaction – Regularly integrating opportunities where students are *engaged in interactive and collaborative activities* creates an inclusive learning environment by centering social presence.

- Share with a partner...
- Form a small group and think about...
- Turn to the person next to you and talk about...
- Work with the people around you to...

How might you apply these ideas and suggestions to create meaningful warm-up activities in your course(s)?