

Emphasis on Collaborative Learning

What are Collaborative Learning Techniques (CoLTs)?

Collaborative Learning Techniques, or CoLTs, are structured learning formats used to allow students to work and learn together under the direction of a session leader (i.e., the mentor). These techniques are helpful methods to encourage students to interact with each other to learn a common theme. As facilitators, mentors regularly use CoLTs to accomplish specific learning objectives.

One of the best ways to master a subject is to teach it. As such, the utilization of CoLTs enables students to learn from each other and increase their comprehension of the course content. In addition, collaborative learning helps build student confidence and develop a sense of community among the students in a course.

Examples of CoLTs Used by Mentors

Group Discussion

A group discussion is exactly that—a general discussion of a topic or issue with each member of the group participating. This is the most commonly used form of collaborative learning, but it also requires the most skill to use successfully.

Clusters

Large groups are divided into smaller groups of three or four to discuss a topic separately from the larger group. After discussing the topic, clusters present to the larger group. Make sure each group has space on the board and all the information they need before reporting back to the larger group.

Jigsaw

The group is divided into smaller groups, and each one is assigned a separate part of a larger problem. Each individual group is given 15 or 20 minutes to work, then the groups present their parts to the entire session. Each smaller group has a piece of the puzzle, so every group counts on the other to solve the problem. It is also important to clearly define what each group is responsible for.

Group Grid

The group grid might be most useful for those students who are learning a lot of new terms, definitions, dates, or ideas. The grid columns and rows are made up of these difficult concepts. The students receive subordinate items that they sort into the correct grid categories during the session. This technique helps students understand and solidify groups of information into memory.

*To learn more about CoLTs, ask a Learning Center staff member or student coordinator. You can also come and check out a CoLT textbook from the Learning Center!