

Opportunities to Respond

Purpose: Teachers can keep students academically engaged and on task by providing multiple ways for students to respond in class. The table below describes strategies for incorporating opportunities to respond (OTR) into instruction.

Opportunities to Respond Strategies

Strategy 1: Choral Responding

- Description:
 - Students respond orally in unison to questions or prompts from the teacher.
- Implementation Tips:
 - Develop questions with one correct answer.
 - Provide think or wait time.
 - Use a clear signal to cue student response.
 - Keep a brisk pace.
 - Provide immediate feedback.
- Instructional Application:
 - Word or letter-sound recognition (e.g., “What word?” “What sound?”)
 - Blending sounds (e.g., teacher says the two parts of a word, then students say the whole word in response)
 - Vocabulary or definitions (e.g., “Addition is...”)

Strategy 2: Verbal Responding

- Description:
 - Individual students respond orally to questions from the teacher.
- Implementation Tips:
 - Use a system to ensure that response opportunities are distributed across all students (e.g., use a seating chart, or pull popsicle sticks with students’ names on them).
 - Provide expectations for appropriate ways that students will respond (e.g., single word vs complete sentence).
- Instructional Application:
 - Critical thinking questions (e.g., “Why do you think that?”)
 - Open-ended questions (e.g., “Explain how you got the answer”)
 - Inferences (e.g., “What do you think will happen?”)
 - Summaries (e.g., ask students to summarize or rephrase what was just shared)

Strategy 3: Think-Pair-Share

- Description:
 - Students think about a topic, pair with a partner, and share their ideas.
- Implementation Tips:
 - **Think:** Have students write or draw a response to the question.
 - **Pair:** Ask students to pair up to share their responses.
 - **Share:** Reconvene the class and ask pairs to report back on conversations.
- Instructional Application:
 - Cooperative learning activities
 - Discussions to gather ideas or access prior knowledge before an assignment
 - Conversations to gauge reactions after watching a video clip
 - Responses to a text to begin a discussion

Strategy 4: Guided Notes:

- Description:
 - Teacher prepares handouts that students complete during class.
- Implementation Tips:
 - Prepare a handout with spaces to write key concepts or specific facts.
 - Allow students time to fill in the blank spaces during the lesson.
 - Model this process with students using a document that requires limited guidance.
 - Vary the length and type of notes (essay outline, documentary notes, test prep).
 - Have a plan for students who have trouble writing (technology).
- Instructional Application:
 - Provide students with guided notes to fill out as they prepare to study for their test during unit review.
 - Introduce new concepts by using guided notes to determine prior knowledge and connections to key vocabulary words.

Strategy 5: Non-Verbal Responding

- Description:
 - Individual or groups of students respond to teacher questions using an agreed upon silent movement or gesture.
- Implementation Tips:
 - Use a variety of options for non-verbal responses (e.g., thumbs up/down, red sign/green sign).
 - Provide expectations for movement during the exercise (e.g., “remain seated and...”).

- Create a system that encourages maximum participation.
- Instructional Application:
 - Provide response cards to students or pre-printed answers they can choose from (e.g., “yes” or “no”).
 - Have students write their answers on a whiteboard and hold them up when asked to respond.
 - Use non-verbal gestures (e.g., hold up a card to represent the place value of each digit in a number).
 - Give each student different colored cups to indicate the level of assistance they need.

Reference

McLeskey, J., Barringer, M-D., Billingsley, B., Brownell, M., Jackson, D., Kennedy, M., Lewis, T., Maheady, L., Rodriguez, J., Scheeler, M. C., Winn, J., & Ziegler, D. (2017, January). *High-leverage practices in special education*. Council for Exceptional Children & CEEDAR Center. <https://highleveragepractices.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Instructionfinal.pdf>