



Helping Students to Study

FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING



COFFEE BREAK GUIDE

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WHEN IT COMES TO ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE and skills, there are a variety of techniques that students can try.

Here are some useful methods for you to employ to ensure that you support your students to use a variety of learning styles.

Put it into their own words

When students internalise and synthesise thoughts by putting notes into their own words, it makes those words more memorable. When students can fluently express an idea in their own words, you can be sure they have really understood it.

What you can do to help:

- Make PowerPoint slide handouts with room for notes.
- Never give students all of the notes but encourage them to make their own.
- Leave enough time in your lesson plan to allow them to write.
- Ask for verbal feedback from students.

Create a mind map

Visual learners find mind maps useful for organising, reviewing and brainstorming information.

What you can do to help:

- In group work, hand out large sheets of paper to encourage creativity
- If you are comfortable with using mind maps, plot information on the whiteboard this way.

Discuss ideas with peers

Having to express their thoughts and ideas helps to clear up any woolly thoughts. Learning with others is more enjoyable for social learners.

Discussion introduces questions and insights that can bring a fresh viewpoint and understanding to a subject.



What you can do to help:

- Plan for group discussions in your lesson plans.
- Try mini-break discussions where students turn to a partner and discuss for 5 minutes before giving feedback to the class.
- Don't under-estimate the power of social networking. Where possible, allow students to remain connected during class and lectures by allowing silent cellphones and laptops in class.

List the main points in logical order of importance

When students must decide the most important points about a subject and how they connect, it means they are thinking deeply about it.

What you can do to help:

- Bullet point key terms so your students can identify them easily.
- Ask for feedback from your students about what they think the most important points are.
- Create a group activity where students make a study plan.

Explore the subject in a way that is physical

Kinetic learners can sometimes find it helpful to make a simple model to understand the subject better – or even act it out.

Some learners find it easier to think a problem through while they are walking, running or moving about.

For other subjects, it may be more appropriate for the student to write brief notes on cards and put them into a sequence that feels right. It's a way to sort out their thoughts physically.

What you can do to help:

- In long sessions, plan for time to move about and stretch to keep your students engaged.
- Plan for activities where students visit various places in the room to read and take notes or to solve a problem.
- If the topic is abstract, but relates to a real system, show a photo or model of that system.
- Encourage students to break long lists or glossaries into flash cards. Assign a part of the list to groups of students.

Decide how the subject fits with what they already know

By relating and comparing what is new, to things they already know, students build on existing knowledge. It helps them make sense of the subject.

What you can do to help:

- During a topic introduction, explain how this topic fits with previous topics or courses.
- Give concrete examples of applied use so students can make natural connections.
- Revisit previously worked problems, but build in new complexity so students can see the new portion in context.
- Plan for 10 minutes at the beginning of a new topic so students can feedback what they already know about the topic. Explain how this topic will relate to that knowledge.

Write a song or jingle or rap to summarise learning

Most people know the words to dozens of songs without consciously trying to learn them. Students may like to use this natural skill to produce a rhyme, or even a song, that summarises some key elements of the subject

What you can do to help:

- Share any mnemonics that you know relating to the topic at hand.
- Ask students if they would like to share any rhymes, jingles or mnemonics with the class.

