

Marking the Middle: Involving Learners in the Middle of a Lecture.

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You know that the opening and closing are the two most powerful parts of your lesson or lecture. Learners usually remember the first and last things they hear. So what do you do about all that information in the middle? How do you get your listeners to remember the “message in the middle?”



Easy! ***You “mark the middle” with mini-openings and closings.*** You decide where to include a break in your talk. Then you decide if the break signals the beginning of new topic-

related information or the end of the information you’ve just covered. In other words, you choose a learner-centered activity for the break that would be a memorable mini-opening or mini-closing.

Marking the Middle Activities

The following six Marking the Middle activities serve three purposes:

- They are great short, quick, review activities that give learners a chance to repeat the information they’ve learned;
- They help learners move information into long-term memory;
- They can be used as either a mini-opening or a mini-closing activity.

Suggested Time: From 30 seconds to 3 minutes depending upon the activity.

Materials Needed: None

Group Size: From 6 to 600 (size is relatively unimportant).

Room Set-Up: Any set-up will do.

Activity #1: Nudge Your Neighbor

Stop your lecture and say:

“It’s your turn. Look at your neighbor - the person sitting to the left or right of you. Make sure no one is left out. Nudge your neighbor and tell him/her the most important fact you’ve just heard in the last ten to twenty minutes. Find out what your neighbor thinks is the most important fact. You have sixty seconds to talk to each other.”

When the minute is up, resume your presentation.

Activity #2: All Together Now

When you’re using a list of bulleted points written on charts, overhead transparencies or slides, invite your learners to read each point aloud with you. Vary the “choral reading” by directing

only certain people to read aloud each time:

People with long hair/short hair.

People who are male/female.

People who are younger than/older than (name an age).

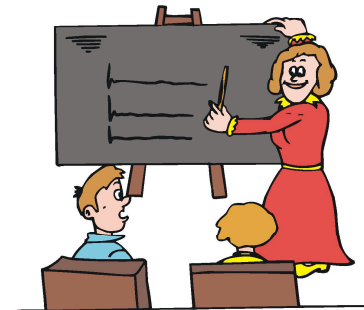
People who are wearing red/blue/yellow/etc.

People who are wearing a watch, earrings, etc.

People who were born in the winter/summer.

People who have old/new shoes.

People who have a long first/last name.



Activity #3: Signals

Stop your lecture and ask your learners if they agree or disagree with the points you’ve just made by showing you a “thumbs up” signal if they agree or “thumbs

down” signal if they don’t. Thumbs sideways can stand for “undecided” or “need more information.”

Signals do three things:

1. They keep your learners awake and interested.
2. They give your kinesthetic learners (the ones who learn through physical movement) something to do.
3. They help you check for understanding. If many learners show you the wrong signal, or if they seem unsure about what signal to use, you know that they didn’t “get it” and you need to review what you just presented.

Use a variety of signals to keep the interest high:

Clap for “yes” and stomp for “no,”

Shout “Of course!” for “yes” and “No way!” for “no.”

Nod and shake heads for agree and disagree.

Show the “okay” sign (thumb and forefinger circled) to signal agreement.

Activity #4: Shout Out

After presenting some information, you ask the group to shout out a number between five and ten (between any two numbers will do).

Say someone shouts out the number “seven.” Now tell the whole group that it’s their job to come up with seven facts about the topic that they’ve just learned (or seven facts about a certain topic point, seven things they remember from your lecture, seven bulleted points from your written information or slides, etc.) They shout out the facts and you count them until the number has been reached. Then you add any important pieces of information they may have forgotten – or correct any erroneous information. Have them give themselves a round of applause and continue with your presentation.



**Activity #5:
Stand Up, Sit Down**

If your learners have been sitting for a long while, it's time to get them up and moving. Direct them to form standing cluster groups of 3-5 people. Each person in the standing groups tells the others one thing they remember or have just learned from the lecture. That person then sits down. The activity continues until everyone in each group is seated. Call time after about three minutes, even if some groups haven't finished.



**Activity #6:
Micro-Macro Stretches**

Maybe your learners have just eaten a meal, or maybe it's early morning or evening – whatever! Your learners need a big dose of physical movement immediately, but you don't want to waste any of your presentation time on an activity that doesn't have anything to do with the topic. So you do the following:

Explain to the group that micro stretches mean moving a small part of the body (example: a finger, toe, mouth, eye, etc.) Macro stretches mean moving a large part of the body (leg, arm, torso, etc.).

Direct the group to stand. Tell them you will model a micro or macro stretch and they are to do it with you. While everyone stretches, you verbally state one fact you covered that's topic-related.

Then you call on another person in the group to model a micro or macro stretch. While the group repeats the stretch with that person, he/she states another fact learned about the topic.

That person then calls on someone else – or you can do the naming. After three or four micro/macro stretches, the group sits down and you continue your presentation.

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Author and traveling teacher Sharon Bowman helps educators and business people “teach it quick and make it stick,” - fine-tuning their information-delivery skills and turning their passive listeners into active learners.

Sharon is the author of six popular teaching, training, and motivation books, including: “*Preventing Death by Lecture*,” “*Presenting with Pizzazz*,” “*How To Give It So They Get It*,” and “*Shake, Rattle, and Roll*.” She is a member of the National Speakers Association and the director of The Lake Tahoe Trainers Group.

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