



ENGAGE TO ACHIEVE MORE

Less Prep, More Connections: Fun, Formative Assessments in No Time

iClicker polling activities are a highly effective, yet easy-to-implement way of making your course more engaging, interactive, and beneficial to students. Here are some proven tips for making these types a part of your classtime.

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Introduction

Assessment is a huge component of any college course, and while there are many ways to gauge how students are doing, in-class activities—either instructor-to-student or peer-to-peer—can both inspire and engage.

Incorporating iClicker polling activities is one way to make class sessions more interactive. It is beneficial for instructors as well—adding polling won't take up a lot of your valuable time either in preparing questions or running them in class. Additionally, iClicker won't interfere with the lesson plans you've already established.

Inserting just a few polling questions per class can help create a habit of learning and transform your students from passive observers into active learners. The trick is to utilize iClicker polling in different ways, taking questions beyond basic comprehension to engage students in more personal, reflective ways.

Through quick and simple polling practices, and question templates that work for any discipline, iClicker polling can become a routine part of your class.



1

Using Polling Beyond Comprehension

iClicker polling questions can go beyond simply testing whether students know something or not. You can use polling to ask students to share reflections and to make them feel more comfortable asking questions.

And by getting away from simply looking for a correct answer, these questions can also help keep students' minds from wandering.

iClicker—it's an attention grabber

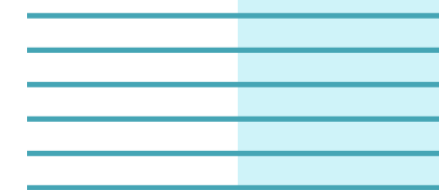
It's a typical school day. Students arrive and settle into their seats, and you've got their attention for about five minutes before the risk of distraction hits. After that, you could lose that attention pretty quickly, especially if all you're doing is lecturing from the front of the room.

Switching things up—even for a minute or two—can help keep your students focused. Here's where iClicker polling comes in. And the polls are even more potent when they really drive a student to think rather than simply asking for a correct answer.



To make iClicker a more dynamic tool:

- >> **Use it to drive classroom discussion.** Make questions that aren't about a specific answer, but rather why students picked what they did. You can even do an open-ended question to drive a back-and-forth conversation for a few minutes.
- >> **Generate questions to drive self-reflection.** In addition to starting a discussion, the polling questions can ask students to think about their own classroom experiences and how the material you are covering affects them.
- >> **Create questions that inspire a growth mindset and connect students with each other.** Maybe you require them to answer a series of questions in pairs or small groups, giving them a minute or two to discuss and agree on an answer.
- >> **Test if students are in fact paying attention.** Pop up a question that relates directly back to the topic you just covered in class. Do students get it or do you need to modify your lecture to provide additional review?



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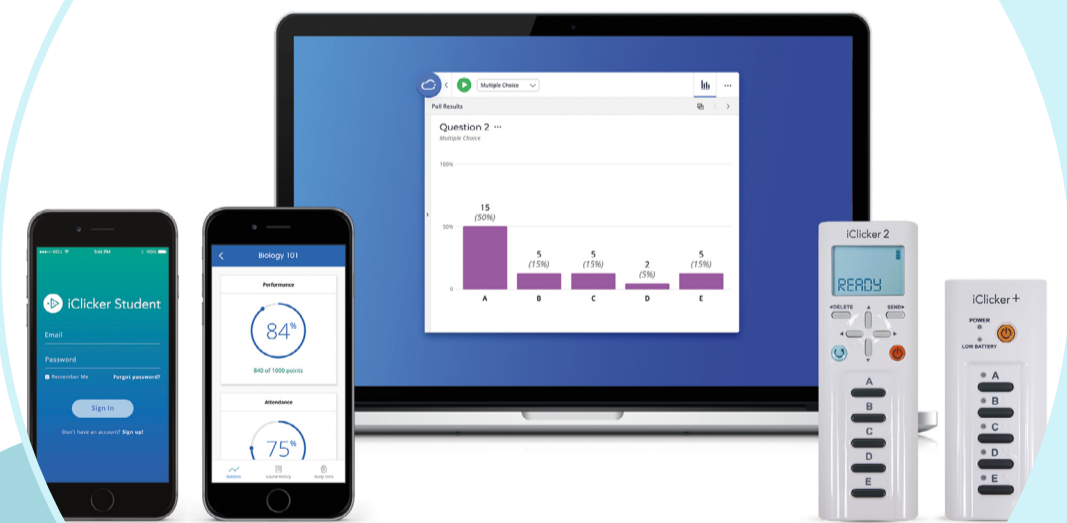
Making Polling Quick and Simple

When thinking about your next term, are you anxious or excited? Ready or unprepared? Stressed or optimistic? Most likely, you're feeling a combination of these emotions. But whether you've got it all together or find yourself struggling, it's always a good thing to find quick and easy ways to liven up your classroom.

With iClicker, the "ask" should never feel like it's too much. You shouldn't have more than 3-5 questions within a 50-minute class, and there are plenty of strategies that make inserting polling questions fast and easy.

Tuck 1-2 polling questions into your lesson plan.

- » **Use iClicker as the bookend activity to your class session.** Start with a question and end with one. Setting up this routine also helps with student expectations. They'll engage more since they know the questions are coming.
- » **Insert polling questions any time you make a transition to a new topic or activity.** This is a natural opportunity to fit a question in, and helps make sure you don't lose anyone as you move along.
- » **Add a question, at least some of the time, when you're about to engage in a discussion.** This can help you center the classroom conversation in the direction you want it to go, and make it easier for the students to start talking.



Make polling habitual

Creating a routine for your students—by making polling a regular part of class time—can help them stay in both a learning mindset and a growth mindset throughout class.

Also, the more regularly you poll, the less time it takes to create them. You get the hang of it, and suddenly crafting any type of polling question is quick and simple.

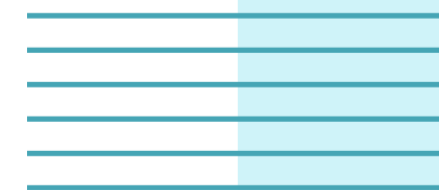
Reuse questions

When you create a question that works for your students, don't treat it as a one-off. Reuse what works. These strategies will save you time:

- » **Maintain a list in a Word or Google doc** so you can cut and paste questions into your presentation as necessary.
- » **Create a polling presentation deck** so you can easily slide a slide into a presentation you're working on for class.

Keep questions simple—at least some of the time

Yes, there are times when you need to craft a multiple-choice question that has the perfect set of answers. But sometimes it's okay to simply ask students if they feel prepared for the upcoming final exam. Keeping it simple keeps students engaged—but you spend less time thinking through what to ask.



Finding the Right Activity

One hurdle to overcome with iClicker is finding the right type of activity for your class. You may see examples that align to a science curriculum, but you teach literature. There are plenty of examples though that are discipline-agnostic, fitting into any classroom.

The Entrance Ticket

Set up a question for students to answer at the start of class. Have it up when students come in and sit down, to engage them from moment one. This isn't a question about specifics but rather a way to reintroduce them to your class, such as:

- » What do you remember most from our last class meeting?
- » What part of the homework was most difficult?
- » What do you already know about [insert] topic (what you're covering that day)?
- » What do you think today's class will focus on?

You can ask the same entrance ticket question at the start of each class, or change things up, but all these questions have one thing in common: they ask students to use their memory. This ties class sessions together and solidifies information in students' minds. You're teaching students to reflect on what happened previously as a way of preparing for what will happen next. It's like automatic studying, all guided by a single iClicker question.

How are you preparing for the upcoming exam?



The Focus Question

We've already discussed how a well-placed iClicker question can help maintain student focus, but what it also does is ensure everyone in class participates. These questions don't just appeal to extroverted students, the ones always raising their hands, but they also drive those quiet students, who definitely have something to say, to share.

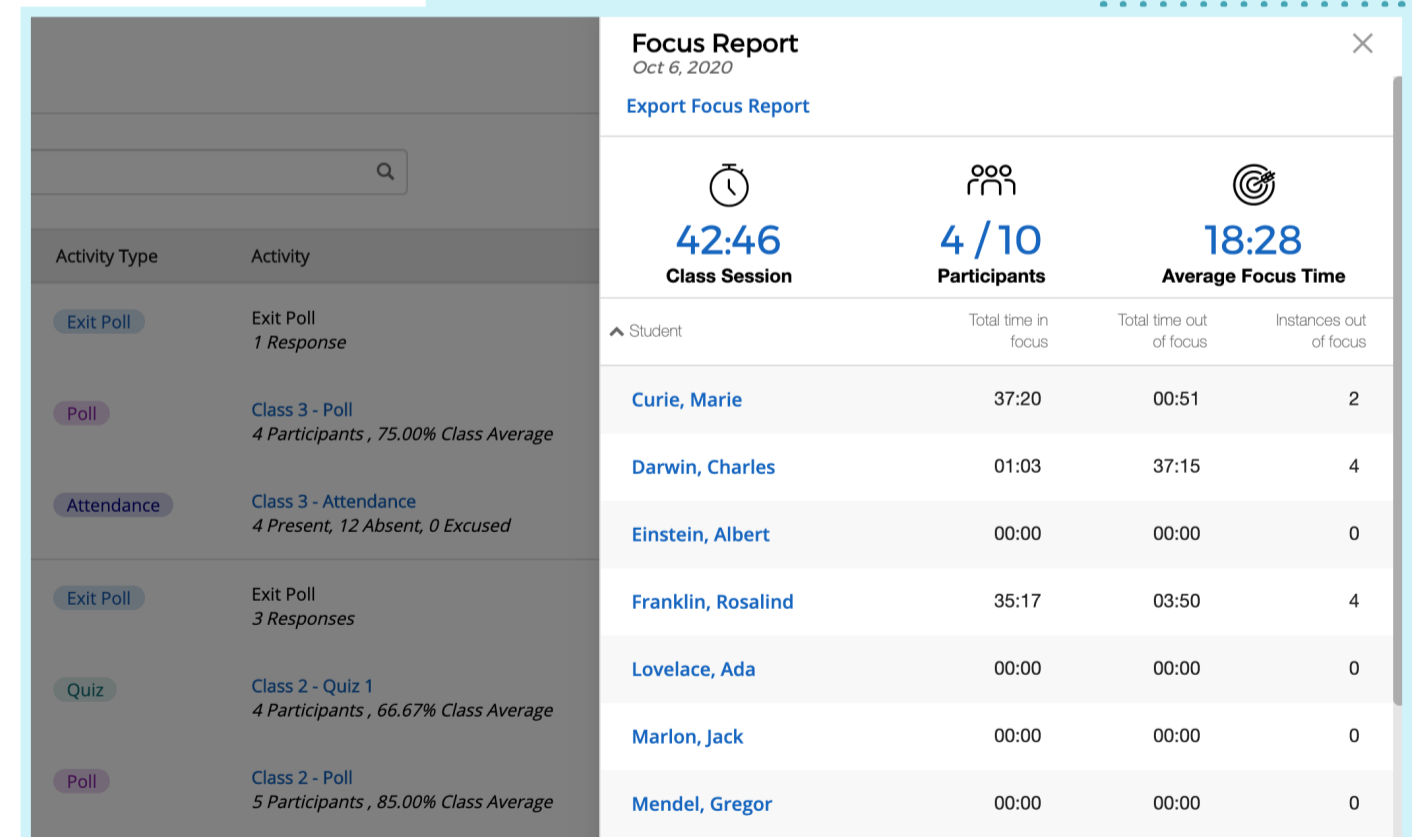
To get this specific activity going, provide a problem as a prompt, and ask students what the first step to solving it would be. This allows you to use their answers and keep going with the solution, creating an engaging conversation.

You can also use leading questions that link back to specific concepts like:

- » What's the one word that comes to mind when you hear "_____ "?
- » Identify the purpose of "_____ "?
- » What's the case and effect of doing "_____ "?

Consider displaying answers as a word cloud so every response gets counted and acknowledged, and students can see they're not necessarily alone in their thinking. Remember, the goal of these questions is to get students thinking (and talking) about concepts.

You can also keep answers anonymous so students never feel like they're being singled out. This feature in particular helps students provide honest answers, and the whole class will still benefit from considering every student's response.



The Check-In Question

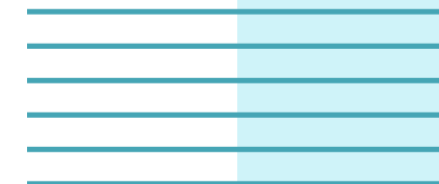
Further utilizing the anonymity feature of iClicker, you can also insert polling questions that check in on student performance. Ask confidence questions students know they can answer honestly since you're not connecting the response directly back to them. Instead, let students know this honest feedback helps you adjust your lecture to ensure everyone really gets everything you're trying to teach.

- » How well do you understand “_____”?
- » How are you feeling about “_____”?
- » Have you started that assignment due in “_____” weeks?
- » How's studying going?
- » How's the pace of the class for you?

Promoting Peer Instruction

Giving students an opportunity to work together is highly beneficial. However planning peer instruction activities and setting aside time to complete them can be extremely difficult. Doing a little peer instruction on the fly with an iClicker question though is not.

A way to accomplish this without having to formally announce what's happening is to ask a question that has a clear right answer, but may have choices that make it harder for students to find it. Collect responses, but don't share them. Instead, have students pair off and compare their answer choices. If they're different, ask them to convince the other as to why their answer is correct. Next, ask the question again and show how the percentage who got the question right changed. Most likely your correct answer response rate will go up.



The Exit Ticket

Providing a question for students to answer at the end of class lets students reflect on the class session they just had. It keeps them in a learning mode. When done routinely, it prevents them from checking out of your class before it's actually over.

Good exit questions to ask include:

- » How would you summarize today's class in one sentence?
- » Do you have a question about what we covered today?
- » What did we cover today that you're interested in learning more about?
- » What do you anticipate we'll cover next class?

Feedback

Rate your level of understanding of today's class.

1	2	3	4	5
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Low High

Is there anything from today's class you'd like explained further?

Please explain.

1000 Characters

[Cancel](#) [Submit](#)



Giving Your Students Something Different

However you get your students thinking, the main goal should always be about engagement. Whatever gets your students to participate benefits them in ways they may not even notice—until test time comes around and they are better prepared than they thought.

There is also the culture and climate of your class to consider. With engagement comes the element of fun. When students are having fun, they pay attention, and when they pay attention, they learn. You can set this vibe without upending your classroom routine and without rewriting your lesson plan. Consider implementing an iClicker poll (or two) in your course and see what kinds of results you get.

If you'd like to learn more, schedule a demo at [iclicker.com](https://www.iclicker.com).



**Natalie Dougall**

Before joining Macmillan as a faculty advocate and training specialist, Natalie Dougall spent over a decade teaching composition and literature using active learning techniques to engage community college students.

If you're looking for intuitive learning support solutions to help you engage all students regardless of level of preparation, wherever instruction happens, look to the breakthrough combination of Macmillan Learning's Achieve platform, and its fully integrated classroom response system, iClicker. Seamlessly integrated into your campus's Learning Management System, Achieve and iClicker deliver powerful media and assessment tools that give every student a voice.

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