



INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE



Teaching Technique 28

Dyadic Interviews

ACTIVITY TYPE

- Active/Engaged Learning
- Reciprocal Teaching

TEACHING PROBLEM ADDRESSED


- Low Motivation/Engagement

LEARNING TAXONOMIC LEVEL

- Caring
- Foundational Knowledge
- Human Dimension
- Integration & Synthesis

Dyadic Interviews

In *Dyadic Interviews (DI)*, student pairs take turns asking each other questions that tap into values, attitudes, beliefs, and prior experiences that are relevant to course content or learning goals.

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- 1** Clarify your teaching purpose and learning goals for using *DI*
 - 2** Identify the learning task's underlying problem and craft the prompt
 - 3** Set assignment parameters for completing the prompts
 - 4** Develop a plan for learning assessment or grading
 - 5** Communicate assignment instructions to students
 - 6** Implement the technique
 - 7** Reflect upon the activity and evaluate its effectiveness

Step-By-Step Instructions

In this section we provide you with guidance on each of the seven steps involved as you consider this technique.

STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS

In this peer learning technique, students share information from their personal lives to connect it to important course content or learning goals. This technique can be used across many different disciplines and fields. It could be modified and used as a writing technique instead of a discussion technique to give students time to process their idea.

Dyadic Interviews are a useful way to start a new learning module. They provide students with the opportunity to connect foundational course content to their own attitudes and experiences, which can be motivating and engaging to them as it validates their existing expertise and bridges the gap between the academic and the real world. The technique can thus increase their caring about the course and content. The collaborative aspect of this technique also tends to prompt them to engage in deeper exploration and connection with the human dimension of learning. It also encourages them to make a high degree of personal commitment to the learning task.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE LEARNING TASK'S UNDERLYING PROBLEM AND PROMPT

Students will find this technique most beneficial if you tie the prompt to a specific unit of content. Decide whether you want their impressions before they are exposed to the content, or after they have had exposure and can make specific connections between their experiences and the content.

STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS

Consider how long you anticipate the interviews will take, basing your decision on how complex the content is and how specific your responses are. Consider also how long students will need to write up a summary of their exchange, depending on how formal a write up you want; for an overview with bullet points, a few minutes will suffice, while for more formal writing, give them longer or consider allowing them to write the summaries as homework.

STEP 4: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OR GRADING

If you do a more formal version of this technique, you may want to assign a few percentage points to it. It is also useful as a formative assessment technique that is not attached to a grade, or as a technique that you consider within a participation grade.

Step-By-Step Instructions (CON'T)



STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS

While you can choose to deliver the instructions for this technique orally, it can also be useful to share a handout with students, both for their own note taking purposes and to ensure that your instructions are clear to all students.

STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE

- Develop a list of interview questions prior to the class session.
- Divide students into pairs.
- Explain the procedure:
 - › Emphasize that Student A will interview Student B for a designated time period, and then roles will reverse.
 - › Clarify that the role of the interviewer is to ask questions, listen, and probe for further information but explain that interviewers should not evaluate or respond with their own ideas.
 - › Tell students that they will be writing an essay summarizing their partner's responses.
- Ask students to interview their partners, reversing roles at your instruction.
- Ask students to write and submit their summary essays.

STEP 7: REFLECT UPON THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS

When reflecting on the activity and how effective it was, consider the following questions:

- Did the technique match the course learning goals and objectives?
- Did it meet my goals for this learning module?
- Was it appropriate for the students?
- Did the technique keep the students engaged?
- Did it promote student learning?
- Did it provide me with information about student understanding?

If you answer yes to all or most of these questions, next consider how you might improve the activity for the next use.

Support Materials

The materials in this section are intended to help you with the process of implementing this technique.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- **Experience Questions:** These are questions that elicit student prior experiences. For example:
 - › Have you experienced ...?
- **Personal Response Questions:** These are questions in which students consider their personal or emotional responses. For example:
 - › What did you find most surprising?
 - › What kind of emotion did ... evoke?
- **Position/Opinion Questions:** These are questions that encourage students to express agreement or disagreement. For example:
 - › Did you agree with the author's main point?
 - › What is your position on ... ?
- **Case/Situational Analysis Questions:** These are questions in which students have reviewed a situation or case and have to weigh in on how they would respond. For example:
 - › What would you do in this situation?
 - › What do you think is the most correct answer?

VARIATION AND EXTENSIONS

- Instead of creating the interview questions yourself, decide upon a general topic and then ask students to develop interview questions either individually or as a class.
- Use the interview as a warm-up for whole class discussion. Providing students with an opportunity to collect their thoughts and rehearse their responses in a low-risk situation before going public with the whole class tends to promote richer discussion.
- Have students take notes or even record and transcribe the interview, then use the information to write an assignment such as a biographical essay about the person they interviewed. Consider having interviewers write up their findings in a format appropriate for the course.

Support Materials (CON'T)



- Expand the time and the intent of the activity to foster more in-depth interviews. Form pairs and then ask them to spend the entire hour (or class period) going for a walk or having coffee so that they can gather information at a deeper level. When the group reconvenes, give pairs a task to do together that enables them to start working on a more complex and challenging course activity. Consider making the pairs long-term learning partnerships or encouraging students to follow up the activity by forming such a partnership (Silberman, 1995, pp. 56–57).
- Expand this to a larger group activity by using “Three-Step Interview.” In this activity, student pairs take turns interviewing each other and then report what they learn to another pair. The three steps are:
 - › Student A interviews Student B.
 - › Student B interviews Student A.
 - › Students A and B summarize their partner’s responses for Students C and D and vice versa.
- Have three teammates interview a fourth in depth; this variation is called a “Team Interview” (Kagen, 1992).
- Instead of requiring that the interviewee be a classmate, have students interview someone from their work, their neighborhood, or their family. Based on the interview, have students write a profile of the person. This activity requires students to encounter an “other” whose experiences, values, and attitudes may differ extensively from theirs and to try to understand this person at a deeper level. In the process, they may find surprising commonalities that could challenge stereotypes (adapted from Bean, 1996, p. 94).

Technique Template

Following are two templates to assist you as you think through how you might implement this technique in your own class. The first is a completed template, providing an example of how Claire Major adapted *Dyadic Interviews* in her course, *College and University Teaching*. The second is a blank template for you to fill out to tailor this technique for your course.

Technique Template

Sample *Dyadic Interviews* Completed Technique Template:

Content from Claire Major

College and University Teaching

Course Name

COURSE CHARACTERISTICS

What are the situational factors that impact this course? For example, is it on campus or online? How many students? Is it lower division or graduate? Are there student attributes such as attitudes, prior knowledge, reasons for enrolling, and so forth that should be taken into account as you consider this technique?

My course is a graduate level seminar, and it enrolls approximately 25 students per semester. These students are diverse in terms of their preparation for this course, but many of them are working as Teaching Assistants at my university but have had no formal training in education generally or college teaching specifically. The course is blended; we meet onsite once monthly and have weekly online discussions and activities in between session that student complete through a learning management system. They typically read one book focused on college teaching prior to each class session.

STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS

Why are you choosing this technique? What do you hope to accomplish?

My students are adult working students, and I find that they often engage most in activities in which they can share their personal experiences when connecting with course content. I use Dyadic Interviews as a springboard for class discussion.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE LEARNING TASK'S UNDERLYING PROBLEM AND PROMPT

What is the question you want learners to address, or problem you want them to solve?

I have a learning module on what makes college teachers effective. Prior to our class meeting, they read Bain's book on what the best college teachers do. I want students to think through their own experiences and connect them to what we are reading in class.

STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS

What are the assignment logistics? For example, will this be assigned individually or is it group work? How long will the assignment take? Will students be submitting a product? What materials, resources, or additional information do you anticipate needing?

In our first class meeting onsite, I will ask students to interview each other in class about their best undergraduate college professors. I will give them about 10 minutes to complete the interview portions of the activity. I then will give them about 10 minutes to write up responses. I won't require formal paragraphs but rather bullet points, as my goal is to springboard discussion.

STEP 4: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OR GRADING

If you decide to assess learning, how will you determine that learning has occurred? For example, will you use a simple +/check/- grading system? If you use a rubric, will you use an existing one or create one? What will be your criteria and standards?

I won't do formal grading for this assignment, but I will assess responses as students give them for completeness. I will consider this activity in their participation/engagement grade.

STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS

How will you communicate assignment parameters to students? For example, through a handout? A prompt on a presentation slide? Assignment instructions in your online course?

For this activity, I will use an unstructured handout. I will simply label it with "Dyadic Interviews." At the top, I have a prompt for interview notes, and about mid way down the page, I will have a prompt for the summary and analysis of the interview.

STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE

How will you adapt steps/procedures for your students? Are there any additional logistical aspects to consider?

I will follow the process for this technique fairly closely, with providing the handout, dividing students into pairs, telling them their task and then providing them with time to interview and summarize. One logistical issue I have is that my classroom is full, and it would be helpful to reserve another room nearby so that some students can go there to complete their interviews so that they have more space and to help with reducing the noise level.

STEP 7: REFLECT UPON THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Note: This step will be completed after you have implemented the technique.

Did this technique help you accomplish your goals? What worked well? What could have been improved? What might you change if you decide to implement the activity again?

I will think through what went well with the activity and what I can do in the future to improve it going forward.

Technique Template

This template is intended for use when planning to implement **Dyadic Interviews** in your class. Fill in the blanks below, and use the information provided elsewhere in the Instructor’s Guide to assist you in your thinking.

Course Name

COURSE CHARACTERISTICS

What are the situational factors that impact this course? For example, is it on campus or online? How many students? Is it lower division or graduate? Are there student attributes such as attitudes, prior knowledge, reasons for enrolling, and so forth that should be taken into account as you consider this technique?

STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS

Why are you choosing this technique? What do you hope to accomplish?

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE LEARNING TASK'S UNDERLYING PROBLEM AND PROMPT

What is the question you want learners to address, or problem you want them to solve?



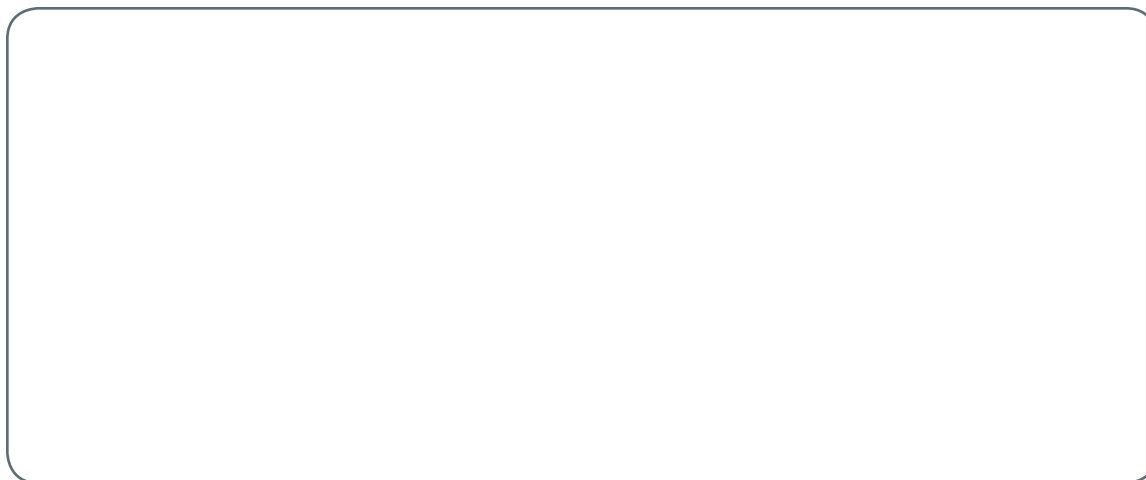
STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS

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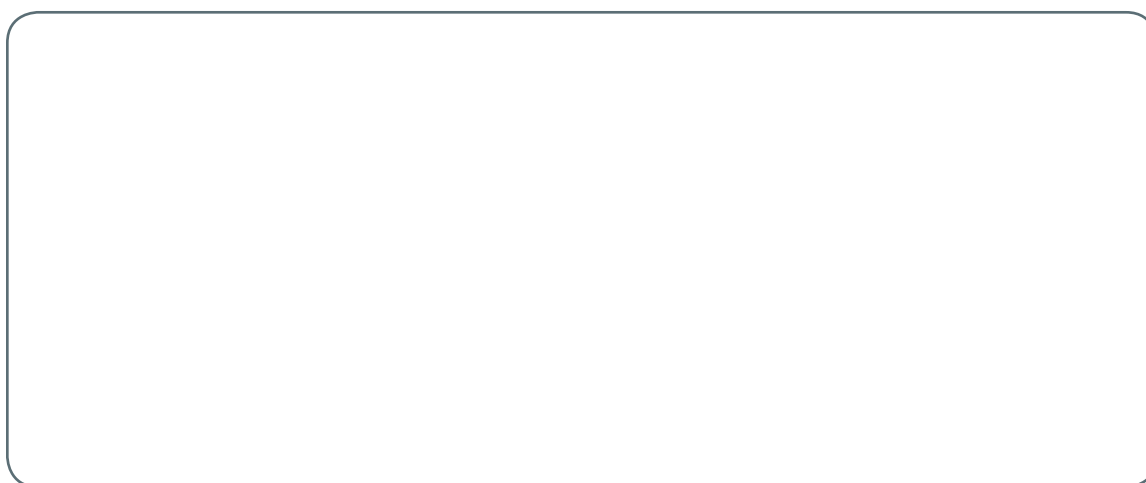
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STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS

How will you communicate assignment parameters to students? For example, through a handout? A prompt on a presentation slide? Assignment instructions in your online course?



STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE

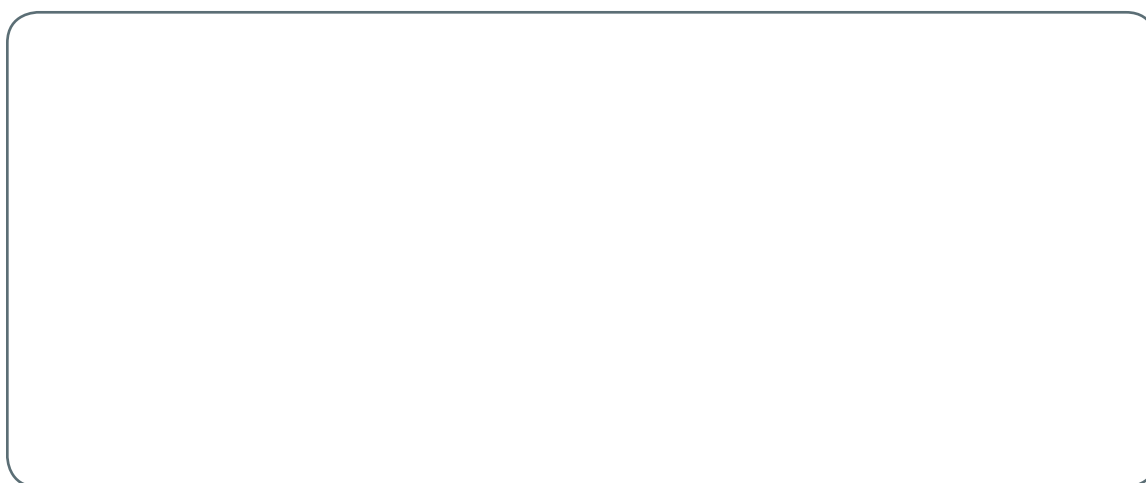
How will you adapt steps/procedures for your students? Are there any additional logistical aspects to consider?



STEP 7: REFLECT UPON THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Note: This step will be completed after you have implemented the technique.

Did this technique help you accomplish your goals? What worked well? What could have been improved? What might you change if you decide to implement the activity again?



References and Resources

PRIMARY SOURCE

Content for this download was drawn primarily from “Student Engagement Technique 36: Dyadic Interviews” in *Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty* (Barkley, 2010), pp. 305–309. It includes material that was adapted or reproduced with permission. For further information about this technique, including examples in both on campus and online courses, see the primary source:

Barkley, E. F. (2010). *Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

CITATIONS AND ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Barkley, E.F., Cross, K.P., & Major, C. H. (2005). *Collaborative learning techniques: A handbook for college faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 246–250.
- Millis, B. J., & Cottell, P. G. (1998). *Cooperative learning for higher education faculty*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.

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