

The One-Minute Paper (also called the Minute Paper and Half-Sheet Response)

Description: The instructor stops the class two or three minutes early and asks students to respond briefly in writing to some variation of the following two questions: What was the most important thing you learned during this class (today)? What important question remains unanswered? (Or, what are you still confused about?)

Purpose: This technique allows faculty to assess the match between their instructional goals and students' perceptions of these goals and their own learning. Further, because the instructor knows what students perceive their own learning problems to be, the likelihood that the students will receive answers to those questions during the next class period is enhanced. The task asks students to evaluate information and to engage in recall.

Suggestions for Use: The task works well in small and large classes. It can be used frequently in courses that present students with large amounts of new information on a regular basis.

Using Information: Often it is sufficient for the instructor simply to tabulate the responses, making note of any especially useful comments.

The Muddiest Point

Description: The instructor asks students to jot down a quick response to the following question: What was the muddiest point in [the lecture, the homework assignment, the reading, the film, etc.]?

Purpose: This technique provides speedy feedback on what students find least clear or most confusing. Presumably, this information helps faculty decide what to emphasize (more) and how much time to spend on topics. Students must also quickly assess what they do not understand and must be able to articulate their confusion (which is itself a complex and useful skill).

Suggestions for Use: This technique can be used frequently in courses that present students with large amounts of new information on a regular basis, and it should be presented at the end of a lecture/assignment. The task should be used sparingly in classes that emphasize integrating, synthesizing, and evaluating information. (Often student responses to the muddiest point task consist of words or phrases.)

Using Information: Often it is sufficient to group responses according to the particular muddy point. An alternative is to group points according to whether they involve facts, concepts, principles, and so forth.

The One-Sentence Summary

Description: The instructor asks students to answer the questions about a given topic: Who does what to whom, when, where, how, and why? Then the student is asked to transform the responses to those questions into a single, grammatical sentence.

Purpose: Faculty gauge the extent to which students can summarize a large amount of information concisely and completely. Students are constrained by the rules of sentence construction and must also think creatively about the content learned. Students practice the ability to condense information into smaller, interrelated bits that are more easily processed and recalled.

Suggestions for Use: The task works well when there is information that can be summarized in declarative form, including historical events, political processes, the plots of stories and novels, chemical reactions, mechanical processes.

