

Strategies for Adding Novelty and Interest to Instruction

The human brain learns quickly when faced with change or unexpected stimulus. Educators can utilize these tools to increase attention and retention during instruction. A rush of adrenaline helps to re-engage the senses and promotes better focus. Too much routine lowers the brain's interest and engagement while it searches for something of interest elsewhere.

The use of novelty does not require great acts of magic. Small changes in your instructional presentation and the processing of information and concepts produces a bounty of curiosity and creative thinking.

- **Music** is a small change that can catch the interest and prepare the minds of learners.
 - Think about a commercial or program with a theme song. That song can stick in your head and create a pathway for information to flow.
 - Music can relax or excite the brain. Find the type of music that works for **your** learners!
 - Helping learners to use memory strategies to retain and recall information will benefit them throughout their lives.

- **Humor** is engaging; however, humor is a double-edged sword.
 - Finding humor or irony within a text or movie can lead to analysis of the situation.
 - Laughter releases endorphins which aid the learner to focus and retain details that otherwise might be missed.
 - Using catch phrases that learners find clever can set the brain in motion before the actual instruction begins.
Example: "Well, Class, are you ready for some science?" This simple phrase, spoken in a sportscaster's voice and some appropriate sports music, can increase the flow of endorphins promoting a positive mindset for the information to follow.
 - **Remember: never allow sarcasm or put-downs to be viewed as humor.**

- **Movement** is a great tool for stimulating focus and interest.

- **Grouping learners** for a pre-lesson activity can create curiosity about the subject and promote many questions that will aid learners in making the lesson personal and engaging.
- Processing information can also be enhanced by movement or change of location. This allows the information to flow throughout the body and additional memory pathways are brought into the process.
- **Quizzes and Games** are another way to add novelty, movement, and engagement to the learning process.
 - Whether the quizzes are expected or not, the brain perceives a sense of urgency and the brain receptors are more engaged.
 - Take care to prepare the learners with adequate information and resources to feel confident answering the questions.
 - Using games and quizzes creates excitement and active involvement.
- **Multi-Sensory Activities** can meet the needs of a variety of learning styles.
 - Offering visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic approaches to a lesson brings about greater engagement and recall of the materials presented.
 - Using these activities for centers or projects give added benefits for your learners by reinforcing the concepts being learned.
 - **State Changes** offer a variety of options for chunking information and keeping learners engaged in the learning process.
 - **Modeling desired behaviors** will help all learners in developing a clear standard for concepts and skills.
- **Timing** can make or break a lesson.
 - If too much time is used in presentation of the materials without processing, learners' attention can diminish or be redirected through other events happening in the room.
 - If too little time is used in presentation of materials without processing, the learners' may feel unprepared to accomplish any work assigned.
 - Research suggests that even adults have difficulty processing materials for more than 7 minutes at a time. Chunk the lesson into 5-7-minute mini-lessons for optimal processing and retention.

“The more often you stir the sauce, the creamier the gravy!”

Think about the way you enjoy learning and relaxing! These tools may be just the thing to liven your instruction and to create great memories!

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