

TEACHING TIP OF THE MONTH

Theme: Experiential Learning - Concrete Experience

Experiential Learning is learning through experience or learning by doing. Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning presents four components: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation (Institute for Experiential Learning, 2024). Each issue of Teaching Tips of the Month for Spring 2024 will focus on one of these components.

Concrete Experience involves immersing the learner in a new experience or a new version of a previous experience. "At this stage, the learner shows personal involvement with others in everyday situations. In concrete situations, learner tends to depend more on feelings, open-mindedness, and adaptivity to change, rather than on a systematic approach to situations and problems" (Main, 2022, Stages of Kolb's Learning Cycle section). See the examples below for concrete experiences in different formats.

Tip 1: Concrete Experiences for the In-person Class

- Role Play/Simulation – Develop a scenario students might encounter in the real world in your discipline. Have them work in teams to apply course skills and knowledge to problem-solve and make decisions. As the scenario unfolds, add new details or challenges that require students to adapt and complete the task. See [Simulations and Role-Play – CTE Resources \(bc.edu\)](#) for more details about this strategy.
- Object-Based Learning – Present students with an object or artifact relevant to the concept or outcome addressed in the lesson. The object should be something unfamiliar to them. Direct students to explore the object using their senses, gather data about it, and document what they experience. See [Object-Based Learning | Academic Technologies \(miami.edu\)](#) for more information about Object-Based Learning.

Tip 2: Concrete Experiences Around Campus

- Scavenger Hunt – Create tasks for students to complete around the campus or in a specific space on campus (such as the library) to gather information about people, places, and things related to a course concept. For example, in a nutrition class, students might be asked to interview passing students about what they are eating, inventory items in the food pantry to plan a meal, compare nutrition information in the café, photograph the campus garden, etc.
- People Watching – Observing people engaging in everyday activities can be a segue to discuss disciplinary concepts and theories about human behavior, identify ideas for creative or research projects, formulate hypotheses, or gather data for analysis.

Tip 3: Concrete Experiences for the Virtual Classroom

- Real Time Demo – Using features of the virtual platform (such as the whiteboard), have students write, draw, or demonstrate something in real time based on a prompt or stimulus. Fellow students can contribute feedback and input to support their classmates' work.
- Everyday Items - Direct students to create something relevant to a course concept using items found around their home/environment. Have them explain the new item, its purpose, and how it relates to the course concept.

References:

(n.d.). *What is experiential learning?* Institute for Experiential Learning. Retrieved January 7, 2024, from <https://experientiallearninginstitute.org/what-is-experiential-learning/>

Main, P. (2022, September 9). Kolb's Learning Cycle. Structural Learning. Retrieved January 20, 2024, from <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/kolbs-learning-cycle#:~:text=Concrete%20Experience%20%2D%20At%20this%20stage,approach%20to%20situations%20and%20problems>

More Info on Teaching Tips

"Teaching Tips of the Month" began as a project of Program for Active Learning in STEM (PALS) and Teaching to Increase Diversity and Equity in STEM (TIDES) grants. Many thanks to Ray Gonzales and Alla Webb, who served as Principal Investigators of the TIDES grants. You can view archived Teaching Tips of the Month on [The Hub](#). We welcome feedback and invite you to submit ideas for this publication to Angela Lanier, angela.lanier@montgomerycollege.edu

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