8 Ways to use Poll Everywhere in your Teaching

Use Poll Everywhere to make your teaching sessions more interactive and engaging. With Poll Everywhere you can incorporate questions into your PowerPoint presentation then students can respond using their mobile phone or computer. Responses are displayed live on screen and can be anonymous. It's a simple concept but, if applied well, Poll Everywhere can really enhance learning and teaching. Here are eight approaches to get you started.

1 Pinpoint what students need

Have you ever started teaching and found that students don't have essential underpinning knowledge? Did your class understand the last topic you taught? How do you know? In a large group how many students will speak out to tell you if they don't understand?

Diagnostic assessment: Use Poll Everywhere to check what your class needs most by starting or ending a topic with some questions designed to test what they know. You'll be giving every student a voice to give you the feedback you need and you'll then be in a position to teach exactly what is required for that particular group.

Backchannel: Provide a live Poll Everywhere question area during the lecture. By opening a short answer question, students can post questions as you teach. Pause at regular intervals to show and answer the questions.

Benefits:
- Allows all students to ask a question, regardless of how silly they think it is
- Ensures students have underpinning knowledge to move on to the next topic
- Provides feedback on learning for both the lecturer and the student
- Allows for clarification of points before moving on

2 Reflect and reinforce learning

Help learning by encouraging students to reflect on the content of the lecture or topic before moving on.

At the start of a session/topic ask:	At the end of the session/topic ask:
• Tell me three things you remember from last session/about x topic • Tell me what you found difficult about last session/topic	• Distil _____ into three main points • Tell me what you found difficult in this lecture • Today I learned _____ • Explain _____ to a five year old • I wonder why_____.

Benefits:
- Ensures students understand underpinning concepts before moving on
- Allows all students to ask their questions
- Give the lecturer feedback on where more teaching / support is required
- Gives confidence
- Helps students to retain new ideas
- Encourages students to come to the session well prepared

③ Get them thinking: Peer instruction

Some lectures, especially with large cohorts, can become a very passive learning experience. You may be doing all the work while students are not challenged and switch off. By asking a few questions with Poll Everywhere at intervals throughout a lecture and asking students to discuss their thinking in pairs before responding to a question, you can transform a passive lecture.

How?

| Pose a question | Students answer question individually first. Class response displayed on screen. | Given a challenging question, there will probably be a range of different answers. | In pairs/small groups, students explain the reasoning behind their answer. | Students respond to question for a second time and responses displayed again. | Lecturer decides whether more explanation is needed before moving on to the next concept |

Ideas for use:
Set an activity to be completed before the next session, e.g. reading, research, online activity, video. Tell students you'll be starting the next session with a quiz or problem based on this work. In small groups or teams students work out the answer before responding.

Benefits:
- Reveals misconceptions
- Students practise articulating and testing their ideas and thinking
- Students can be motivated to complete pre-session tasks
- Allows for just-in-time-teaching
- Gets students involved
- Students learn from each other
- They identify their own misunderstandings
- Encourages students to come to the session well prepared
  For more about Peer Instruction see Eric Mazur (1996)

④ Games for learning

Energise your class with a team competition or quiz. Students vote themselves into teams with Poll Everywhere; they might join a group by demographic, preference for something, seminar group, self-assessed prior knowledge, location in the room, or whatever you choose. Responses to questions are then displayed per team.

Ideas for use:
- Use results from different demographic groups to demonstrate learning points
- Split students into course groups to identify where extra support is required
- Explore ideas by giving each team an identity or asking each team to argue a set point of view
- Provide a change of pace by a quick 'pub quiz' in the middle of a session

Benefits:
- Increases student concentration and motivation
- Develops a desire to learn
- Explores alternative view points
- Encourages students to complete pre-session activities
- It's fun!

5 Gathering data

Take advantage of the anonymity of Poll Everywhere responses and use it to gather data about the group which can then be used in your teaching.

Ideas for use:
- Elicit honest responses to sensitive questions
- Brainstorm ideas
- Gather real data with which to teach
- Gather mid-point module feedback

Benefits
- Allows all students to give honest responses: especially useful in disciplines which cover sensitive subjects
- Identify consensus / opinion / differences in the group
- Present data in interesting ways, e.g. use a word cloud which reflects the number of responses by word size
- Allows for teaching with real data

6 Peer Feedback

Poll Everywhere allows free-text responses, giving all students a voice. This can be used to allow students to comment on each other's work, or to ask questions.

Ideas for use:
After student or group presentations:
- Using the pre-agreed assessment criteria, allow all students to give feedback on the presentation through Poll Everywhere. This feedback data can be saved and shared with individuals.
- Elicit questions from the audience for the presenter(s)

Benefits:
- Increases the amount of formative feedback a student receives
- Giving feedback develops skills students will need in the workplace
- Provides the opportunity for students to learn from each other
- Encourages self-evaluation

7 Revision

Ideas for use:
- Plan the content of a revision session by using Poll Everywhere to elicit the topics students need help with.
- Work through a bank of sample questions for students to answer in the session.
- Combining this with peer instruction could make a thorough exam preparation session.

Benefits:
- You identify where all students need the most help, not just those that shout the loudest
- They get practice at answering exam questions (multiple choice and short answer)
- Students identify where to focus their own revision

⑧ Outside the classroom

Poll Everywhere does not need to be confined to the classroom. You can publish a question for students, or indeed anyone, to answer at any time as long as they have an internet connection.

Ideas for use:
- Allow questions to be submitted between sessions: start your next session with the questions received.
- Elicit responses from the outside world as well as your students by sharing the question through Twitter.

Benefits:
- Encourage students to think about the lecture content outside the classroom
- Get input from subject experts and industry

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Get started

- ○ Start creating your own questions. Request a Poll Everywhere account from tel@uwl.ac.uk
- ○ Come to a workshop for hands-on practice and meet others who are getting started
- ○ Use the self-help user guides to get going on your own at uwl.ac.uk/telsupport

References

Mazur, E. (1996) *Peer Instruction: A User's Manual.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Addison-Wesley.

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