

[Book review] 101 Ways to Make Training Active
by Mel Siberman

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101 Ways to Make Training Active. Mel Silberman assisted by Karen Lawson. San Francisco: Pfeiffer & Company, 1995. Pp. xiv + 303. ISBN 0-88390-475-6

When planning lessons, teachers want to use activities that engage the students in the learning process; however, coming up with ideas that involve "students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 2) can sometimes be difficult in the day-to-day routine of teaching. *101 Ways to Make Training Active*, a sourcebook of active learning techniques, may be just what some educators need to spark their creativity and help them incorporate active learning techniques into their classes. Although written from the perspective of human resource development, *101 Ways* contains practical strategies that can be easily transferred to an academic setting and teachers of all subjects will find many of these strategies helpful.

The book is made up of four sections. The first section, "The Nuts and Bolts of Active Learning," contains 160 tips on how to organize and conduct active training such as setting up a room, forming groups, facilitating discussion, and gaining control of the group. New or inexperienced educators may benefit more from this section than seasoned classroom instructors. Nonetheless, experienced teachers may still be able to find a fresh idea or a new twist to a familiar technique. The remaining three sections contain the specific 101 techniques referred to in the title. "How to Get Active Participation from the Start" contains 23 team building, ice breaking, and warm-up activities, many of which can be found in other teaching activity "recipe books." These activities are fine for the first few days of a class, but educators need a greater repertoire of activities over the course of a semester. Thus, the next section, "How to Teach Information, Skills, and Attitudes Actively," has more application for lesson planning. The 55 techniques are designed "to replace or to reinforce lecture presentations" (p. xii) by engaging the participants in studying ideas, solving problems, examining feelings, or applying what they have learned. Discussion stimulation, team learning, peer teaching, and individual learning are only a few of the techniques presented in this section.

One strategy suggested in this section that I have introduced in my classes is the use of response cards to get students thinking about a topic beforehand so that follow-up activities can be more fruitful. The instructor can ask the students to write anything—a question about the lecture, an expectation of a reading, a belief, a fact from the lesson material—on a response card (or a small slip of paper). The response cards can be worked with in a variety of ways depending on the instructor's goals. For example, the response cards can be: collected to provide the instructor with information on how much the students understood; redistributed to allow the students to share information in a low-risk setting; or compared to form the basis for follow-up speaking or writing activities.

The final section, "How to Make Training Unforgettable," focuses on 22 techniques that get the participants to review what they have learned, reflect on the learning experience, and evaluate changes in their knowledge.

All 101 techniques are presented in the same format. First, there is a brief overview describing the technique followed by a step-by-step outline of the procedure. Possible variations to the procedure are given and a case example rounds out each technique. I found the case examples, which describe how the technique can be used for a real-world training issue, to be extremely valuable. After reading the example, I had a better understanding of how I could adjust the strategy to a particular lesson or class.

In short, *101 Ways* is a "recipe book" that gives its readers adaptable active learning techniques to present information, concepts and skills as well as evaluate and assess learning. As such it is a good resource for any educator's bookshelf.

Reference

Bonwell, C., & Eison, J. (1991). *Active learning: Creating excitement in the college classroom* (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1). Washington, DC: George Washington University.

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