



## CETL TIPS: Teaching Strategy, not Content

From the perspective of a learn through inquiry approach, the strategies that students learn are at least as important as the content itself. With such an approach, students learn skills such as problem solving and critical thinking as a way to work with and understand new material in any setting, in any topic matter. These skills apply to the real world and academia alike. In keeping with this emphasis, this month we offer tips for:

### Teaching strategy, not content

Alice MacPherson has compiled a list called "96 Ways of Learning (or Teaching) Anything", based on Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligences. These strategies are often an interesting reminder of what instructors already do, but in some cases offer new insight. Below is a list of 16 strategies (arranged alphabetically, not ranked). Hopefully you will find them useful.

"The process is often as important as the content."—anonymous

1. Abstract Symbols and Formulas—Learning through deciphering and extrapolation of symbolic representations of phenomena. Includes codes, calculations, number sequences, etc.
2. Analyzing Life Experience—Learning from the analysis of a significant life experience.
3. Case Study and Problem Based Learning—Learning by solving problems or discussing life dilemmas based on real situations.
4. Demonstration—Learning by observing and analyzing an expert performance.
5. Formal Debate—Learning by putting forward arguments from both sides of an issue, concern or question.
6. Group Discussion—Learning by verbal interaction with other learners.
7. In-class Writing—Learning by impromptu written reflection on a concept just presented in class.
8. Impromptu or Prepared Presentation—Learning by giving or listening to student presentations on a variety of topics.
9. Laboratory Method—learning from experimentation using social or science research models as well as action research and experience.
10. Lecture—Learning by listening to experts. Most common method of learning in education and one of the least effective as measured by enduring effect.
11. Poetry—Learning by reading or creating a variety of poem and prose forms.
12. Projects—Learning by completing individual or group projects, in or out of class.
13. Question/Answer—Learning from question-answer sessions with instructors or other learners.
14. Reading—Learning by reading books, pamphlets, magazines and other printed material.
15. Storytelling—Learning by listening to, telling or talking about stories or narratives.
16. Writing—Learning by writing down experiences of self and others including creative writing, journalism, documenting historical facts, etc.

### Reference:

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of Mind*. New York: Basic Books Inc.

### Additional Resources:

[General teaching best practices \(http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/resources/index.html\)](http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/resources/index.html)

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