

Increasing Student Motivation



This job aid is designed to help you increase your students' motivation. It will:

- describe internal and external motivation
- provide a way to rate your ability to activate motivation in your students
- provide ways to add motivational strategies to your course
- help you add motivational strategies to your lesson plans.





What is motivation?

Motivation is what causes people to behave as they do and research has found that motivation is very complex. Motivation is:

- an unconscious psychological process, rather than a logical one
- individual
- variable over time
- often a social process involving others
- often affected strongly by experiences from many years ago.

Internal and external motivation

Many educators think the best motivation is *self*-motivation or *internal* motivation. In the classroom, self-motivation operates independently of the instructor. However, learning can be improved by *external* motivation supplied by the environment or the instructor.

Research finds that if people are bored or passive learning is not efficient. Also, if people are insecure or scared, learning is inefficient and they make hasty, incorrect responses. Difficult learning tasks may require lots of motivating feedback from the instructor.

Are you an instructor who improves student motivation?

The following checklist will help you rate your ability to increase your students' motivation.

- I show enthusiasm for my subject and for teaching
- I communicate high expectations to my students
- I avoid sarcasm and put downs
- I listen carefully in order to understand my students' concerns
- When students have been absent, I let them know they were missed
- I connect students' current knowledge and skills to new learning
- I treat all students equally and fairly
- I make positive comments when responding to student work
- I communicate clear learning outcomes for students
- I use well-designed, open-ended questions to promote critical thinking skills
- I use visuals (overhead transparencies, models, videos) with lectures to stimulate interest
- I use brainstorming at the beginning of a lesson to get students involved
- I encourage students to apply what they have learned to situations outside the class
- I wait 5 seconds after I ask a question before I call on a student



Adding motivational strategies to your course plans*

Plan to include motivational strategies in your classes throughout the term.

—at the beginning

Most decisions to leave a course are made by the student in the first few weeks of the course. They then sit, unmotivated, through the rest of the term. You must pay particular attention to motivational strategies at the beginning of term. For example:

- Get to know the students individually through their transcripts, private interviews, or a non-graded paper.
- Be explicit about your expectations and classroom policies.
- Teach students the study skills they will need—they may not know how to do assignments, take notes, or work in groups. (Resources materials on developing study skills are available from the Learning Resources Unit.)

—in the middle

To maintain high motivation you can:

- Give assignments or quizzes every couple of weeks so students know where they stand.
- Offer help outside of class and make personal contact with students.
- Show students respect—be collegial and don’t “talk down” to them.
- Model high standards in all activities.
- Use visuals to clarify concepts and emphasize key points.
- Use examples and anecdotes to keep students mentally engaged with the subject matter.

—at the end

To maintain student motivation as they leave your classes, in the last week you can:

- Review what they have learned. Help them to pull together the concepts and issues.
- Show them how these concepts and issues can help them in their future.
- Inform them about related courses that follow yours.

Adding motivational strategies to your lesson plans*

To increase your ability to inspire motivation in your students you need not throw out all your old lesson plans. Strategies may be added to existing plans quite simply.

Use the following checklist to step through this process.

<i>I have:</i>	
1. Specified the learning outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Estimated the amount of class time to spend on each topic	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Reviewed my existing lesson plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Checked my plans against possible motivational strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Added motivational strategies in any areas not covered	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Checked that I have included motivational strategies at the beginning, the middle, and the end of my lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>

