

**PAL**  
**PEER**  
**ASSISTED**  
**LEARNING**  
**ACTIVITIES**

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## **3-2-1**

*You will need:* pens, paper

The PAL Facilitator asks each to participant come up with:

**3** topics they know well enough to teach to another participant

**2** topics that they need further assistance with

**1** possible test question.

Most of the time, the participants' topics will overlap, allowing participants to teach each other. Follow up with discussion of the possible test questions.

*Previous PAL Facilitators say:*

Great for the end of term

This can be very useful before an exam.

## **Before, Querying, After**

*You will need:* Pens, paper, whiteboard

Draw 3 columns on the board: Before, Querying and After.

Ask everyone to come up to the board and write something in the first two columns – what they already know about the topic ('Before'), and what they want to know about it ('Querying'); if there is an overlap then this can be the base for discussion.

Towards the end of the session, have participants go back to the two columns to see if any information needs to be corrected, then ask them to fill in 'After' at the end to see what they've learned during the session.

Can be used to help focus the session on particular concepts that participants are having difficulties with.

## **Bitesize!**

*You will need:* Pens, paper, whiteboard

This strategy is designed to help break down difficult reading assignments. Divide the assignment into bitesize sections and assign one to each participant or group. Ask the participants to read their section and summarise it on paper, then have each participant read aloud their summary. Encourage everyone to ask questions and be prepared to emphasise areas participants may have overlooked.

## **Clusters**

*You will need:* Pens, paper, whiteboards, markers, flipcharts

Divide everyone into small 'clusters' and give them a discussion topic related to their studies. Each cluster reports back to the whole group at the end of their discussion. You can make it an opportunity for a fun presentation, using whiteboards, illustrations and flipcharts, and allowing the clusters creative freedom on the presentation of their report.

## **Mind Mapping**

*You will need:* pens, paper, whiteboard/flipchart

Have the participants break into small groups and encourage them to identify with the central word, concept or question around which to build the concept map. Start with a circle in the middle of the board and include the main idea within.

Extend branches out from the central circle that includes all the subtopics from the main idea. Continue to add additional branches within related topics and circle groups of branches that are linked. This will look like a big spider web on the board when you are finished.

## Identify the Big Idea

*You will need:* pens, paper, Post-Its, whiteboard

Ask each participant to share with the group what they thought was the most important concept, idea or new information they had learned during a particular lecture or session. “If you could only take one thing, what would it be?” Ask each participant to offer a different take-home concept / idea.

Participants often feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information they have to deal with and this technique helps them identify and organise the information present.

*Previous PAL Facilitators say:*

Get everyone to write their take-homes on Post-Its and put these on the board.

## **In The Margins**

*You will need:* pens, paper

Ask the participants to make several sheets of paper like this:

- 1) Draw a vertical line about 1” from the left margin – call this column ‘Recall’
- 2) Draw a horizontal line across the page about 1” from the bottom – this is for your Summary

Participants can take notes in the main area of the page, leaving the left and bottom blank. When they’ve finished, they can write key points/terms they recall in the Recall section and summarise the notes in the Summary section. Ask them to use this method in their next lecture, as it’s a great memory aid for revision.

## **Informal Quiz**

*You will need:* pens, paper, pre-written questions, whiteboard

Read out 5-7 short multiple-choice questions, focusing on key study points. The participants should be encouraged not to talk or share answers but can refer to notes or textbooks. Give the answers, then move on to more in-depth discussion of them. Remember to give participants enough time to write their answers down! Maybe write the questions and answers on the board too.

## Matrix

*You will need:* pens, paper, whiteboard

A matrix helps participants organize information by showing relationships between similar categories of information. Some participants might know it as a 'Carroll diagram'.

Allow participants to design and fill in their own matrix relevant to their course, using the same structure as the example below.

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## **One Thing I'm Unsure Of**

*You will need:* pens, paper

This is quick and easy, just ask participants to jot down a quick answer to the question: "Tell me one thing you're unclear on in this activity / topic / lecture / course". You can compare answers at the end if participants are willing to do so.

## **Outline text chapter**

*You will need:* pens, paper

Have participants work in groups of 2-4 to make an outline using the headings from an important chapter from a text they are studying. After you have this outline of the chapter, have the participants read to determine the important points under each heading. If the participants have trouble determining the important points, have them turn the headings into questions and then read to find the answers. The answers are (most likely) the important. Who, what, why, when, where and how are good questions with which to begin. Have groups compare important points with other groups.

## Pair Quiz

*You will need:* pens, paper, whiteboard

This helps participants to think about content and encourages them to generate thought-provoking questions, as well as being a good revision aid.

Ask everyone to develop an individual list of questions and answers related to their course, and test each other in pairs. Encourage participants to ask more open-ended questions and to vary the types of questions. Maybe discuss the different questions and answers everyone came up with at the end.

## Peer Lessons

*You will need:* pens, paper, whiteboard, textbooks/course notes

Select several related problems or subject-specific questions. Divide the participants into groups, give each group one problem and have them write out the solution, using their textbook and class notes, on the board. Have each group come up and explain the problem in as much detail as they can. Have them show their thought processes and methods used in finding the solution. This is a great way to cover a broad range of content.

### *Previous PAL Facilitators say:*

This activity encourages participants to work together, consult the course material and pay attention to the methodology.

## Quick Quiz

*You will need:* pens, paper

Divide the participants into groups. Instruct each group to make a practice quiz for another group and provide answers to their quiz on a separate piece of paper. Be sure to provide examples but allow participants to be creative. Ask the groups to exchange quizzes, try each other's quizzes out and exchange answers at the end.

### *Previous PAL Facilitators say:*

- This helps establish participants' strengths and weaknesses
- Often, the questions that come up are similar to exam questions

## Step Ladder

*You will need:* pens, paper or mini-whiteboards and markers, pre-prepared questions

The Step Ladder is a great exercise to help participants understand the processes for answering a question or solving a problem. Divide the participants into groups and give each group a different question. Instead of actually answering the question, they must work together to write a list of the necessary steps in order to find the answer.

Once the groups have come up with their lists, they swap and work out each other's initial questions based on the list.

## **Stream of Consciousness**

*You will need:* pens, paper, stopwatch

This is similar to meditating or doing breathing exercises first thing in the morning. Ask the participants to take out a piece of paper and write on the topic presented by the PAL Facilitator for one timed minute. It doesn't need to be a polished piece of writing, just one minute's worth of thoughts in note form if they want. Then ask everyone to share their response with the group. The Facilitator may choose to have a more in-depth discussion about similarities and differences between participants' ideas.

*Previous PAL Facilitators say:*

Writing things down after learning consolidates information very well. Can be used as quiet, to get participants 'flowing' and focused on the session.

## **Summarise**

*You will need:* pens, paper, whiteboard

As a group, summarise the lecture from the previous class, both with and without notes. A good starter activity.

## **Think – Pair – Share**

*You will need:* pens, paper

The participants should be given a question, concept, or problem and then encouraged to think about it alone for a (short) designated time period. Then they pair with another participant and discuss what they found individually for an additional time period. Lastly, the pairs join the large group and discuss their conclusions as a whole. Ask them to write their conclusions on the board for everyone to see and make a note of.

## **Timelines**

*You will need:* whiteboard

Draw a timeline on the board and ask participants to come up and fill in relevant events/dates/ideas in the correct places.

## True or False?

*You will need:* pens, paper, whiteboard

Write a statement on the whiteboard and asking participants to debate its truth in pairs. They have to convince their partner whether is true or false. After participants have had a couple of minutes to discuss the statement, ask for a show of hands or hold a group discussion about the statement. It's best to use statements relevant to participants' courses.

### *Previous PAL Facilitators say:*

You could adapt this activity into a quick icebreaker by using more humorous or surreal statements (e.g. 'pigs can fly'), also allowing you to assess participants' argumentation skills.

Combine with **Two lies and a truth**

## **Two Lies and a Truth**

*You will need:* pens, paper, whiteboard

This is a spinoff of a well-known party game/icebreaker game where everyone states two unusual facts and one lie about themselves, and others have to guess the lie. Try it with old exam papers or statements relevant to participants' study.

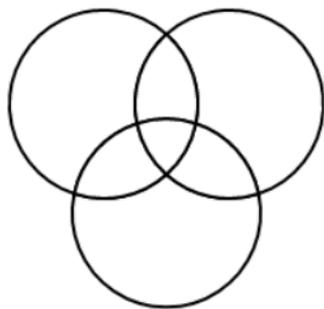
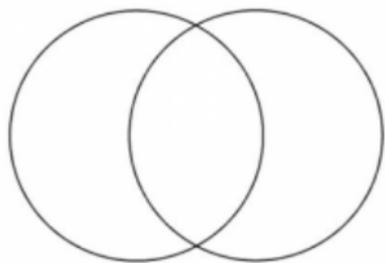
*Previous PAL Facilitators say:*

Good as an icebreaker if nobody knows where to start

Combine with **True or False?**

## Venn Diagram

A Venn diagram can be used to compare the similarities and differences between two concepts, systems or theories. Two overlapping circles are drawn on the board with each circle labelled as one of the two concepts. Participants will then write the similarities in the overlapping portion and then differences in the outer portion of the circles. This is a good visual technique for reviewing similar yet contrasting concepts.



## Vocabulary Development

*You will need:* whiteboard, pens, paper, pre-written list of key vocab and topic terms

Compose a list of key terms. Scramble the terms and then encourage pairs of participants to re-organise them into relevant categories, then have them define or give an example of terms where appropriate. Finally, have each pair discuss their categories with the entire group. Get the participants to check the spelling.

*Previous PAL Facilitators say:*

You could combine this with **The Matrix** when displaying the categories on the board.  
Good for exam revision

## **Yes, No, Maybe**

*You will need:* pens, paper

This activity begins with the participants making a list of topics relevant to that week's lecture. Ask them to classify the topics into Yes, No and Maybe, according to their level of understanding.

### *Previous PAL Facilitators say:*

Good icebreaker and gauge of participants' ability levels

Good for exam revision

Use the whiteboard – gets them out of their seats

Useful in identifying problem areas to focus on



Any questions email: [PAL@gold.ac.uk](mailto:PAL@gold.ac.uk)

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