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From a faculty user:

"Overall I think clickers increased student satisfaction and participation in the course. It also allowed me instant feedback on student comprehension. They also seem to engage students more fully in a large lecture course. They can also stimulate discussion in a class where that does not occur often."

Grant Collaboration

The UW System Grant project that explored the impact of clickers on teaching and learning was a collaboration among 4 UW campuses:

[UW-Milwaukee,](#)

[UW-Whitewater,](#)

[UW-Eau Claire, and](#)

[UW-Oshkosh.](#)

Best Practices

Tips on effectively integrating and using clickers in the classroom

Best practices are lessons learned throughout our first year using clickers. The following information was created by input from faculty, faculty development, and support.

Debriefing Information

We gathered information from faculty for our [Faculty Debriefing Session](#) (follow link for presentation) . The information we gathered included, what worked, what didn't, recommendations for new faculty, and challenges. First, we would like to share this information. Below, you will find more formal "best practices."

Faculty found the following pedagogical uses effective:

- Asking Questions, discussing with Peer(s), & re-polling; Conducting concept tests (assessing knowledge from current lecture module, previous lecture, or previous course)
- Conducting opinion surveys (using anonymous mode)
- Converting paper/pencil case studies to clicker questions. Students receive immediate feedback rather than having to wait a week for my feedback.;
- Collecting demographics, including major, career goal, and math preparation; and,
- Creating clicker slides for students' group presentations to review material presented.

General advice from faculty for their colleagues included:

- Make time in class for clickers. They cannot be an add-on. You need to significantly redesign your course to accommodate them;
- Have low expectations for the first semester; increase your expectations in the future semester;
- Understand student perspective (clicker purchase, registration process resulting in tpp file, clicker programming);
- Be flexible in planning for the semester;
- Be prepared! Have a back up plan, if they don't work;
- Partner with an experienced user;
- Have a support person accompany you on the first day (or more);
- Don't be afraid - be creative!;
- Do not assign point for the first few weeks - use it for training;, and...
- For one class, have student revert back to show of hands in order to gain appreciation for the technology.

Best Practices

We strongly recommend that you assign course credit for clicker use, but that you not use clickers mainly for taking attendance and quizzing. The best results are typically obtained when points are awarded for participation irrespective of whether students have provided "correct" answers. Being flexible about assigning points also makes your students a bit more relaxed about using clickers!

Use clickers for low-stakes assessments. Assign points for clicker use but recognize that technologies sometimes malfunction. Clicker use should be non-threatening and should be advertised to the students as fun.

From the very beginning, explain to your class the pedagogic benefits of class participation (student engagement, collaborative learning, instant feedback, etc.) using clickers. The literature on clickers is wholly consistent that you should not promote the use of clickers mainly as an attendance taker or a quizzing tool.

Clicker questions engage student attention and participation. A common mistake is to use too many clicker questions during a class. On average, it is suggested that clicker questions should be spaced at 10-20 minute intervals to bring students back to attention! That means 3-4 per typical class session.

Use clickers often; it has been reported that student attention begins to drift after 10 minutes of traditional lecturing. Therefore 3-4 well-paced clicker exercises per 50 minute class session are reasonable.

Learn how to perform basic troubleshooting of your students' clickers and the software. Read our handouts and ask questions whenever you need to. From time to time, you will probably lose some data (most likely through simple human error), so get used to the idea: plan for it, and know how to respond! Better, learn how to prevent it.

File management is really important when you're using clickers. In particular, make sure that you learn how to use your roster file and how to save your session files. We know this sounds like unpleasant clerical work (though it actually isn't), but if you don't learn how to manage your roster and session files properly, you risk losing your data!

Export your reports on a regular basis - preferably after every class - to be certain that you are producing the results that you intend. Don't wait till halfway through the course to find out that you haven't been getting the right data!

Do **not** use clickers to keep attendance. No matter what students pay for their clickers, students will resent it if instructors use them only to record attendance. Do use clickers often and in different ways to engage students and keep their attention.

Use clickers with confidence, but manage students' expectations. Make clear how you will handle technical glitches at the podium, and how students should deal with individual clicker problems. Explain how your grading procedure takes account of these problems, and that students will not be penalized for them.

When "too many" students answer a question incorrectly, go over the material again. Better yet, have students discuss the question among themselves. Then allow them to re-answer (i.e., re-poll) the question(s). Students enjoy the "lighter" moments of peer discussion in a big lecture class.

Start and end a class or topical unit with a key conceptual question. Such pre- and post testing tells you how well you got the information across, and lets the students see what they have learned. Students appreciate the instant feedback that clickers provide.

If you assign homework readings, use the first 5 minutes of class to ask a few (5-10) questions to see if students have read and understood the assignment. This is a great chance to be sure all students start your class session with the same prior knowledge.

Try ask students' opinions about issues relevant to your course and use their responses to present new information and correct misinformation or misunderstanding.

Some advanced pedagogic uses of clickers depend on which SRS package you are using. After gaining experience with basic use, feel free to experiment as far as your comfort with the technologies will allow. As always, have reasonable expectations at first, until you are thoroughly familiar with how your SRS system works.

Faculty found that by using their own laptops in the classroom they bypassed many classroom computer problems other experiences.

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