

# Lesson 4

## Using Variety in Your Lesson Plans



### Key Terms

cooperative learning  
strategy  
team-building exercises

### What You Will Learn to Do

- Incorporate a variety of strategies into a lesson plan

#### Linked Core Abilities

- Communicate using verbal, nonverbal, visual, and written techniques
- Apply critical thinking techniques

### Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Assess the benefits of using cooperative learning strategies in the classroom
- Select cooperative learning strategies that encourage team building
- Select cooperative learning strategies that require students to respond to questions posed in the lesson
- Select cooperative learning strategies that help learners gather, share, and learn a great deal of material in a short amount of time
- Explain how incorporating a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences benefits learners in a classroom
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

## Introduction

In the lesson, “Delivering Instruction,” you learned a variety of teaching methods, some involving individual effort, and others encompassing group work.

In this lesson you learn how to structure group exercises into a cooperative learning experience for the class.

## Cooperative Learning Strategy

A **cooperative learning** strategy is one in which a team of students work with and depend upon each other to accomplish a common goal. Each team member is responsible for

- **Achieving an individual goal**
- **Instructing the other team members**
- **Receiving information from the other members**
- **Helping their teammates achieve their individual goals**
- **Reaching the group goal**

The team members work both independently and as a group to gather, disseminate, discuss, and incorporate information into a single cohesive element.

A cooperative learning strategy is best used when the learning goals are important, both mastery and retention are important, and the task is complex or conceptual.

As you progress through this lesson, you learn some strategies that can help build good teamwork, strategies that can help students respond to and discuss questions raised in the lesson, strategies that can help students learn the material quickly, and some benefits of cooperative learning.

## Team Building Strategies

Teams are composed of a group of individuals associated together in work or activity. Because you are going to form teams when using a cooperative learning strategy just as we do in sports (see Figure 12.4.1), it only makes sense to try and have the best teams possible. Table 12.4.1 shows **team-building exercises** that you can employ to help you foster good team spirit. What team-building strategies were employed by the team shown in Figure 12.4.2?

## Question Strategies

In a standard classroom, the teacher asks questions from time to time and calls on one or more students to answer the question. When a student wants to ask a question, he or she will raise a hand and wait for teacher recognition before speaking.

### Key Note Term

**cooperative learning** – a teaching strategy in which teams of students work with and depend upon each other to accomplish a common goal

### Key Note Term

**team-building exercises** – strategies that can be employed to help foster team dynamics; examples include team color, name, and logo



*Figure 12.4.1: Team building is an essential part of cooperative learning just as it is in sports programs.*

Courtesy of Craig Hammell/  
The Stock Market.

**Table 12.4.1: Team-Building Exercises**

Team Cheer	The team creates a cheer to be used when the group has accomplished a task and is celebrating.
Team Color	The team chooses a color that represents the personality of the group members.
Team Excellence Symbol	The team decides on a physical symbol formed by the group that indicates they have finished an assigned task and that they fulfilled the requirements of the task.
Team Food	The team selects a food (candy, fruit, gum, and so on) that the whole group enjoys and can be used as part of their celebrations.
Team Logo	The team designs a logo that visually represents the group.
Team Name	The group decides on an appropriate name for the team.
Team Song	The team creates a song or selects a song that reflects the group's personality.

*Figure 12.4.2: What team-building strategies were used by this team?*

Courtesy of Catherine Karnow/Woodfin Camp & Associates.



### Key Note Term

**strategy** – the art of carefully devising or employing a plan of action or method designed to achieve a goal

Group dynamics make the standard question and answer format difficult to use. Table 12.4.2 shows a series of **strategies** that you may employ in a cooperative learning situation to facilitate question response and discussion in a group setting.

## *Gather, Share, and Learn Strategies*

Despite the good intentions of teachers, events can occur that prohibit them from adhering to their lesson plans (special school assemblies, sickness, inclement weather, etc.). Table 12.4.3 shows several strategies that you may use when you are called upon to teach that will enable the groups to gather, share, and learn their lesson material in a relatively short period of time.

## *Benefits of Cooperative Learning*

There are benefits for using a cooperative learning strategy in the classroom. One of the most important goals in education is to promote constructive relationships and positive attitudes among the student body. The group dynamics of cooperative learning require a large amount of social interaction. Students share ideas and feelings. Team members get to know one another and develop a better understanding of other individuals. The students learn to trust, depend on, and respect one another as they strive to achieve a common goal. Teammates are appreciated for what they can do and are not simply rejected for what they cannot do.

Cooperative learning groups tend to be more creative than individual students or noncooperative learning groups because the group dynamics encourage and require all team members to actively participate. More ideas are generated, the quality of ideas is increased, and there is more originality in creative problem-solving activities.

**Table 12.4.2: Cooperative Learning Strategies**

Heads Together	Pairs of students get together to answer a question, solve a problem, review an assignment, react to a video, generate a discussion, and so on.
Numbered Heads Together	The team members count off (such as one, two, three, four), discuss a problem together, reach some conclusion, then randomly team members answer a question when the teacher calls their number.
Partner Interviews (PI)	Partners take turns interviewing each other to determine their level of understanding of a concept.
Round-Robin	Each team member takes a turn adding information or sharing an idea; each class member shares an insight or new learning; each team member contributes to the creation of a writing project; and so on.
Round-Robin Brainstorm	Team members take turns adding to a group brainstorm.
Squared-Shared-Partner-interviews	Pairs join with another pair to form a square and share what they gathered from their previous interviews.
Think-Pair-Share (TPS)	Individually, students think about a question, pair with another student to discuss their thoughts, and then share their thoughts with a larger group or with the class.
Team Brainstorm	Team members randomly and rapidly contribute many ideas.

**Table 12.4.3: Group Strategies**

Carousel	Teams work together to respond to different problems by moving from station to station or by sending their problem around the groups so other groups can contribute to the solution by responding on the chart or paper they receive.
Conversation Circles	Two circles are formed with one circle inside the other. One student from each circle faces another student. In these pairs, students discuss questions posed by the teacher. Circles rotate two to four times in opposite directions so students discuss questions with new partners.
Jigsaw	Material such as a chapter in a book, different Web sites, several articles, and so on is segmented and each team member is assigned a segment to study and/or review. Team members return to share their segment with the rest of the group.
Jigsaw and Expert Groups	Each team member is assigned a segment of information. Each member studies the assigned section independently. Members then find others from different groups who studied the same material. Together they review what they learned and reinforce the learning, clarify any misunderstandings, and fill in gaps. They become experts. They return to their original group and share their expertise.
Team Graphic Organizer	A team prepares a single graphic organizer of information.
Team Product or Project	Teams produce a product or engage in a project as a culminating activity.
Team Performance	Teams prepare a performance or presentation based on a synthesis of what they learned.

## Conclusion

Cooperative learning is based on the belief that all people are good at something, have the ability to help others, and can benefit from others' help. This cooperation among all students promotes an exciting and far-reaching way of including differently-enabled students.

By creating a classroom that is cooperative and inclusive, students' acceptance and success in the general education environment will be greatly enhanced. All students and all teachers have much to gain by structuring the classroom and school environment so that it provides generous support for learning, connecting, and caring.

The following lesson introduces you to thinking maps and graphic organizers. You will learn that these visuals provide a powerful picture of information and allow the mind to "see" patterns and relationships.

## Lesson Review

1. Describe how cooperative learning is beneficial to the student.
2. List the seven team-building strategies covered in this lesson.
3. Choose one question strategy and explain how you'd use this in a classroom,
4. Choose one gather, share, and learn strategy and explain how you would use this in a classroom.