

Using Emotions in the Classroom to Motivate Learning

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As teachers, we hope our lessons are not boring. But what we actually want is to elevate our lessons from “not boring” to “exciting,” “intriguing,” “inspiring,” and/or “rewarding.”

Here are a few suggestions that we can consider:

- Start the class with a real-world problem that requires a practical solution. Let students be curious and long for the answer.
- Let students learn by doing real tasks. If learning by doing is not always possible in your discipline, try to create realistic scenarios for the learning to happen.
- Promote various types of interaction in the classroom: student-student interaction, student-instructor interaction, student-content interaction. A traditional Harvard-style case study might be great to facilitate these interactions, but a role-play or simulation would be even better!
- Allow for healthy competition. If you are teaching the topic of Collective Bargaining, you might consider dividing the class into pairs of Management Team versus Union Team, letting them negotiate the items in the Collective Agreement, and updating their real-time negotiation results on the screen or a platform for all students to see. Quiz games will motivate groups to compete and learn in in-person classes, and Kahoot! could be a great option for online classes.
- Add the jaw-dropping moments. I know this is difficult, but it is feasible. I have seen professors sharing the ending (especially the plot twist) of case studies based on real incidents and left students immersed in the ensuing discussions for days.

What should we avoid?

- Focus too much on the fun elements and forget about the course learning outcomes.

Whatever we do in the classroom, they should not get off the track.

- Spend too much of class time to accommodate the activities that foster emotions. You might want to consider its impact on student learning against the time spent. On the other hand, make sure you allow enough time for each activity to reach its greatest impact on students.

What is your next move in using emotions to motivate students? You are welcome to visit [The Teaching & Learning Centre](#) and discuss!

Further reading

Drew, C. (2023, April 1). What is the Importance of Emotions in Education & Learning? *Helpful Professor*. <https://helpfulprofessor.com/emotion-in-education/>

Gotlieb, R., Hickey-Moody, A., Güroğlu, B., Burnard, P., Horn, C., Willcox, M., Saadatmand, M., Linzarini, A., Vandenbroucke, A. R. E., Albanese, D. L., Beyley, A., Blaise, M., Blanchet, P., Campos, A. L., Cavioni, V., Cefai, C., Collie, R. J., Dumontheil, I., Emery, H. F., . . . Zhou, J. (n.d.). *The social and emotional foundations of learning*. <https://doi.org/10.56383/yrhy1735>

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