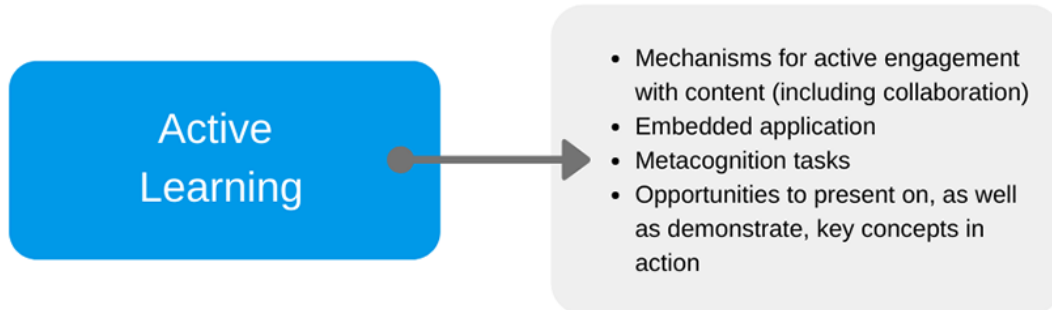


Active Learning




Active learning sounds a lot better than passive learning. The latter is akin to listening to the news while cooking dinner. No doubt, a skilled multi-tasker could recall something of what he heard, but it's unlikely that he would feel comfortable navigating the finer details of a foreign policy debate or offer well-informed opinions on a political campaign based on the news segment that played in the background. On the other hand, active learning requires the learner to engage more with content, not simply absorb it.

So, when it comes to learning, what exactly is the opposite of listening to the news while cooking dinner? Platforms that promote active learning provide opportunities and strategies to support the transfer of learning from the platform to practice. That means learners have an opportunity to engage with the material, perhaps stopping that news segment midway through to write a quick journal entry or discuss it with peers. Active learning also demands that learners reflect on their own experience of the learning—a process that neuroscientists call [metacognition](#). Metacognition helps learners retain knowledge, spurs motivation and promotes deeper engagement.

Active learning is an easy sell. What's not to like? Deeper engagement is a good thing. But just because a learner engages with the news more deeply doesn't mean he is better positioned to speak authoritatively about it during dinner conversation or around the water cooler. Fear not. Active learning also gives learners a chance to apply what they've learned to different situations—whether it's around the water cooler, at a dinner party or in a classroom.

On asynchronous learning platforms, this application element of active learning might involve specific assignments that ask an individual to take what she has learned and put it into practice in an authentic scenario. Or, it might be rooted in role-playing exercises or simulations that are embedded in the platform. Active learning also asks learners to teach learned concepts to others. Explaining learning to others can both solidify understanding and facilitate further learning.





Many platforms now allow learners to apply strategies to real-world situations. BloomBoard's learning platform is built around this concept, asking users to take what they have learned, apply it in the classroom and then collect evidence of their implementation to be submitted to a third-party reviewer. BloomBoard asks learners to submit videotapes of their classroom applications. Another platform, VRsatility, geared toward teachers, is still in the pilot phase. With VRsatility, learners engage in virtual reality simulations that are user-driven and provide opportunities for self-reflection. Participants use their self-reflection to improve future in-person student and adult interactions based on learned concepts and strategies.

Reflecting on learning experiences, applying learning to real-world scenarios and teaching others are all part of the active learning process. And a variety of asynchronous learning platforms are increasingly developing features to support learners through the process.

