The Pause That Refreshes

Here are some techniques to use to help students process information during your pause every 15 minutes. These are designed as exercises for individual students, but they can also be done in pairs or groups. (You can give individuals time to work, and then they compare their answers with their peers in the pair or group to produce a consensus answer.) You can have students report back (so you can check their understanding) or simply move on to the next step in the lecture.

You will probably want to sometimes collect this data to check their understanding so you can see what misunderstandings you need to clear up.

**Minute Paper**

This really takes 2-3 minutes. Students address an open-ended question that forces them to review and check their understanding of the lecture:

What’s the most important point made in the last 15 minutes?

What’s the most important thing that you don’t yet understand?

How does this connect to our course’s Big Idea?

Come up with an example of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Problem Solving**

Give students a problem to solve or question to answer that is based on the 15 minutes of lecture. This would be an application question—they would apply the knowledge just learned to answer the question—rather than a recall or comprehension question.

**One-sentence Summary**

Students produce a long sentence summarizing the discussion. The classic version of this summary answers the question “Who did What to Whom, How, When, Where, and Why?” You could adapt this format for your science classes: for example, a biological process might be “What did What to What, How, When, Where, and Why?” You’ll probably need to practice this with your students once or twice till they get the hang of it.

**Directed Paraphrasing**

Students paraphrase their notes for a different audience (e.g., their roommate who isn’t taking the course). This works well when you don’t want students to get lost in the technicalities—e.g., when they might be missing the basic structure or logic because of all the details.

**Quiz Question**:

Students design possible quiz questions based on the important concepts in their notes. (This means they have to identify the important concepts first.) You can also have them identify the question as easy, medium, or hard.

**Categorizing Grid**

Teacher provides a grid with categories on it. Students sort concepts into the appropriate categories on the grid.

**3-2-1**

Students have to respond to 3 prompts that match the title: e.g.,

3 most important concepts

2 mistakes that are easy to make in understanding these concepts

1 question I have