Mark Your +1: How Adding Assignment Options Can Lead to Active and Meaningful Learning

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What is a Plus-One Assignment?

Research suggests that creating choices for students can enhance their learning.

Plus-Ones are simply allowing students to choose how they will present the material for an assignment and therefore contributing to a learning-centered environment.

While the standards for evaluation are the same, you engage different types of learners with different learning styles.

It also allows students to engage with the material in the way that is most meaningful for them.
Other Benefits of Plus-One Assignments

**Motivation:** Students pick an option they’d like to complete → ↑ probability they spend more time working on it → more learning

Requires the students to **confront themselves as learners.** With our guidance, they can be:

- Challenged to consider why they find some assignments preferable
- Encouraged to consider what skills the assignment involves and whether those are skills they have or need to work on developing

Moves students in the direction of **autonomy** and **maturity** as learners.
Ensuring a Plus-One Assignment is Successful

- Define the following for yourself:
  1. Why are you assigning this project, and what do you hope your students will gain from completing it?
    - For example: If you want your students to demonstrate critical thinking, asking them to summarize an article is not the best match for that goal
  2. What knowledge, skills, and abilities do you aim to measure with this assignment?
  3. What do your students already know, and what can they do when they enter your class?
    - Ultimately, the connection between the assignment (regardless of format) and its purpose should be clear to both you and your students to ensure that it is fulfilling the desired goals and doesn't seem like ‘busy work’
Assignment Options for Multiple Types of Learning Interactions

**Learner-to-Learner**
- Peer-evaluations
- Games
- Competitions
- Discussions
- Presentations
- Group projects

**Learner-to-Instructor**
- LMS announcements
- Discussions
- Assignments that require feedback

**Learner-to-Content**
- Multimedia
- Self-assessments
- Book reviews
- Textbook assignments
Examples

Remember: All projects must include many of the same parameters (use of sources, learning objectives, etc.)

Research Project
- Write a research paper
- Create a video as a critique reviewing the research
- Posterboard of research findings

Course Introduction Assignment
- Discussion post
- Video post
- Tik Tok

Diet Analysis Assignment
- Excel spreadsheet
- MyPlate online tool
- eText tool
Breakout Time!

- You will be broken up into groups of 3
- Each of you will choose one assignment you currently use in class
- As a group, you will create at least one but no more than two other options for that assignment
- Focus on coming up with a different way to assess the same knowledge
- We will come back in 15 minutes (5 minutes per participant)
Let’s Share!

• Raise your hand, unmute, or share in chat ways you or members in your group came up with some plus-one assignments!
Possible Challenges and Solutions

• Will the students make good choices?
  • Address this by looking at how the assignment options are designed
    • Example: Sally doesn’t like to write or doesn’t think she writes well enough to get decent grades, so she won’t choose writing assignments. She will then complete a course or a degree program without trying to redress this skill deficiency.
  • Possible Solution: Create four categories of assignments and students must complete an assignment in each category with one of the categories containing writing assignments.
Possible Challenges and Solutions cont’d

• Will the students just look for the easiest option?
  • Solution: Address this by starting first with the **desired learning outcomes**, then developing the assessment options based on the outcomes you want to achieve
  • Ensure the amount of work required to master content and develop learning skills is equitably distributed across assignments so even if students think some look easier, the amount of work required to complete them is approximately the same
Possible Challenges and Solutions cont’d

• If students are completing different assessments, can we compare their performance fairly to one another?
  • Solution: Evaluate students on how they are meeting the established criteria; how they are demonstrating the desired knowledge and skills
  • This is where rubrics are vital!

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
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Are there other possible challenges you foresee that we can address?

• Please unmute, raise your hand, or put in the chat if there are areas you are concerned regarding the plus-one assignment we can address as a group.
Questions?

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