

ELA Strategies for Grades 7-12

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Instructional Strategies

Buzz Groups

[Buzz Groups](#) involve students engaging in short, informal discussions, often in response to a particular sentence starter, quote from a text, or question. At a transitional moment in the class, have students turn to 1-3 neighbors to discuss any difficulties in understanding, answer a prepared question, or react to a quote. The best discussions are those in which students make judgments regarding the relative merits, relevance, or usefulness of an aspect of the lecture. Reconvene as a class and have a general discussion in which students share ideas or questions that arose within their subgroups. This method is very flexible: it is easy to implement in any size of class and in most classrooms.

Circle of Voices

[Circle of Voices](#) involves students taking turns speaking. Students form circles of four or five. Give students a specific and relevant topic. Allow a few minutes to organize their thoughts. The discussion begins with each student having up to 3 minutes of uninterrupted time to speak. During this time, no one else is allowed to say anything. After everyone has spoken once, open the floor within the subgroup for discussion. Specify that students should only build on what someone else has said, not on their own ideas or introduce new ideas.

Assessment Strategies

Post-It Note Critique

[Post-it Note Critiques](#) are a one- to three-word written critique on a Post-it note which allows students to move around and give brief feedback on multiple works without having to verbalize their opinion. Post-it note critiques can be a great way for students to build confidence around sharing their opinion. These critiques also help students practice their interpretation and analysis skills.

Five steps:

1. Arrange your students' work around the room so that each student can walk around and have the space to critique each piece.
2. Each student needs a stack of Post-it notes to match the number of peer works.
3. Keep the critiques brief -- one to three words.
4. Share a clear critique goal with your students.
5. Have each student gather their Post-it notes and read through them so they can then apply the feedback to their work.



Classroom / Time Management Strategies

Bell Ringers

Also known as warm ups, bell work, do-now, openers, entry-tickets, or jump starters, a [bell ringer](#) is the short activity that students do upon entering the classroom. They may be standards-driven, spiral review-orientated, inspirational, challenging, or even game-like. Introduce the topic of the day, review yesterday's work, word play, etc. [Name each day of the week](#) so the students know what to expect.