



Offer Assignment Choice to Increase Equity

Students come to our courses with prior knowledge, cultural wealth, and various skill sets. Offering choice in the types of assignments they need to complete or the topic they will address gives students an opportunity to choose a format that might play to their personal strengths or a topic that they find compelling. Working to do this creates a more equitable learning environment (Posey, n.d.). In addition, providing students with assignment choice also encourages a greater level of ownership for their learning (Posey, n.d.). Although it is important to avoid overwhelming students with too many options and not enough guidance, allowing students the opportunity to choose among topics or assignments can provide them with an inspiring experience. Keep in mind that it is not necessary to offer choice in every assignment or task.

Assignment Choice and Retrieval Practice

Retrieval practice requires students to recall recent learning, which leads to stronger levels of learning (Brown et al., 2014). You may provide a variety of assignments throughout the course such that some assignments help learners learn new concepts and develop new skills while other assignments leverage retrieval practice in an effort to deepen their learning.

Varied Choices for Assignment Submissions

Consider the different ways students might show mastery of course learning outcomes in order to create assignment options that allow students to engage in and submit their learning in different formats. As you build your assignments, keep in mind the objective you are trying to meet. For example, if the learning objective is to synthesize the research on a specific topic, consider the following ways in which students might present their research and findings:

- Visual presentation (e.g., PowerPoint)
- Video
- Written paper
- Audio recording (e.g., podcast)

The following table includes examples of the variety of assignments that could be offered to meet a given learning objective.

Learning objective	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Describe the process of bacterial transformation.	Watch the video at bacterialcellchange.com and create a PowerPoint presentation of the process of transformation.	Listen to Dr. Ashari's podcast on bacterial cell transformation and create a PowerPoint presentation of the process of transformation.	Watch the demonstration of bacterial cell transformation and perform an experiment that includes bacterial transformation.
Identify the hallmarks of a variety of world architectures.	Read the book, <i>World Architectures</i> , and create a PowerPoint presentation of 12 key architectural hallmarks across varied world architectures.	Listen to a debate on the hallmarks of world architecture on Dr. Mosby's podcast and create a PowerPoint presentation of 12 key	Create a video presentation of 12 key architectural hallmarks based on the book <i>World Architectures</i> .



		architectural hallmarks across world architectures.	
Explain Shakespeare’s use of the word “love” in his plays.	Select a Shakespearean play discussed in class and study it closely in order to write your analysis of Shakespeare’s use of the word “love.”	Select a Shakespearean play discussed in class and listen to its audiobook version in order to write an essay on the impact of the word “love” in three specific scenes.	Select a Shakespearean play discussed in class and study it closely before writing an essay on how the meaning of the play would change if the word “love” was replaced with the word “like.”

Allowing students to choose how they will submit assignments can be engaging and can encourage students to try different approaches. You may also consider providing students with the option to combine formats for an assignment, such as a written introduction to an audio or video file.

Sources

Brown, P. C., Roediger, H. L., III, & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). *Make it stick: The science of successful learning*. The Belknap Press.

Posey, A. (n.d.). *Universal Design for Learning (UDL): A teacher’s guide*. Understood.
https://www.understood.org/articles/en/understanding-universal-design-for-learning?utm_source=google&utm_medium=paid&utm_campaign=evrgrn-may20-edu&gclid=CjwKCAiA8Jf-BRB-EiwAWDtEGpsbrJ3N2pP0FLtZ-gad4RzkY1e1bMkCw5dR0Abhal9mQHYYeXbMNB0Cx8EQAvD_BwE