Passive vs. Active Learning

The **passive** learner allows information to be brought to them. They are often described as empty cups that are waiting to be filled by information. Passive learners simply take in information without thinking about what they can do with it.

The **active** learner seeks out information and engages with it. They have an intention to learn, and choose to participate in the learning process by reaching towards new information. They can be described as a trees seeking out new information with their branches. Active learners have been shown to have improved learning outcomes compared to passive learners (Michael, Carter & Varella, 2009).

### Passive Learning vs. Active Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive Learning</th>
<th>Active Learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening to a lecture</td>
<td>Asking questions and participating in discussions during a lecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading a textbook</td>
<td>Highlighting, taking notes, doing practice questions while reading a textbook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watching an experiment</td>
<td>Doing an experiment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading over your notes</td>
<td>Reading over notes while highlighting key words, predicting test questions, thinking of questions to ask next class</td>
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Created by Joey Faria (Learning Resources Intern), Isabella Scurfield (Learning Resources Intern) & Patricia Diaz del Castillo (Learning Resources Advisor)
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HOW TO BECOME AN ACTIVE LEARNER

1. Prepare
   a) Before each class, do the assigned readings. Take notes and actively engage with the reading material by relating it to everyday life
   b) Review the lecture material from the previous class
   c) Hypothesize about what will be discussed in the next class

2) In Class
   a) If lecture slides are available, print them out/download them before class. You can use them as a guide, which will allow you to better follow the lecture.
   b) As your professor lectures, do the following:
      i) Take notes (either on the lecture slides, or on your computer/in a notebook)
      ii) Think about how to relate the information to everyday life
      iii) Ask questions during class, or write them down so you can ask the TA/Professor afterwards
      iv) Relate new information to what you already know
      v) Keep a list of things you want to know more about and take the time to look them up after class

3) In Labs/Tutorials
   a) Review relevant notes and readings before
   b) Come up with a list of questions to ask your TA – should be focused on what that lab/tutorial is about
   c) Throughout the lab/tutorial, take notes, ask questions, write down ideas and relate what you are learning to material discussed in class and to your readings

4) When Studying
   a) Hypothesize possible exam questions as your go through the material
   b) Come up with your own practice problems to solve
   c) Discuss course material with friends/classmates – relate it back to your own life or experiences
   d) Practice teaching the material to others (friends/classmates/family members)

References:

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