

Successful E-tivities Handout & Reminders

Dr. Gilly Salmon G.K.Salmon@open.ac.uk
www.e-tivities.com

Why use E-tivities in online teaching & learning?

- They're cheap
- They're in the hands of the teachers
- They're easily changeable
- They utilise local, corporate, discipline sensitive & tacit knowledge
- They are focused on the application of learning
- They are customisable and personalisable
- They help to build communities of practice
- They use any platform with a bulletin board
- Evaluation for quality & effectiveness can be built into process
- You can use them for any topic, any level

E-tivities are:

- Structured participative group work online
- Motivating, engaging & purposeful
- Based on interaction between learners/students & active contributions
- Designed & led by an e-moderator (online teacher, tutor, trainer)
- Usually asynchronous (i.e. over time)
- Based on simple text based bulletin boards
- On or offsite, blended or online only
- One-off or built into a programme
-

Key features of e-tivities

- Illustrative title
- Small piece of information, stimulus or challenge (the 'spark')
- Online action which includes individual participants posting a response (the 'invitation')
- Interactive or participative element- such as responding to the postings of others (the Action & Interaction)
- Elapsed time allowed, posting times required
- Summary, feedback or critique from e-moderator

You'll need:

- Technology: bulletin board accessible from anywhere
- E-moderator trained in:
 - Designing e-tivities
 - Running e-tivities
 - A little technical support

Outcomes

- More involvement, by students
- the ability to scale up
- Lower costs
- Viable pilots
- E-learning more acceptable
- Visible knowledge/information transfer
- Purposeful impact of e-learning

On the bulletin board or forum:

Aim to provide just one instructional message, which contains everything a student will need to take part include:

- The purpose of the e-tivity (why the participants are doing it). If the e-tivity is assessed, indicate what might indicate success and how they can achieve it.
- What participants should do and how they can go about doing it.
- How long it should or could take in minutes or hours as well as when the e-tivity starts and when it should finish.
- How the participants should work together.
- What the e-moderator's role is and when s/he will post

Thinking Through E-tivities for Your Course

Your first ideas:

Check them out here:

1. Start with the End in Mind.

What do you want to achieve by this online activity?

How will it add to the students learning?

How will you assess/evaluate the activity?

2. First Thing First!

How will you introduce and start the activity off?

How much notice will the students' need

Can you design clear instructions?

3. Think win: win

Why will the students want to take part?

Will it add obvious and clear value?

4. Sharpen the Saw

How will you prepare yourself to make this activity a success?

What preparation will the student need to take part?

5. Be proactive

Plan your role and actions.

How often will you need to intervene?

What will you do about non-participants?

6. Seek to Understand

What happens if the activity doesn't go as you planned?

How can you get information to change it for next time?

7. E-moderate

Plan what you have to do to make this work!

Planning an e-tivity of your own to try

<p>Name of e-tivity (choose an enticing one)</p>	
<p>Purpose Really sell this to your participants. Check that you can use it too to evaluate for quality and outcome</p>	
<p>How many participants? Suggest 6-15 maximum first time</p>	
<p>Structure? Design.3 days on this, 4 days on that, 4 days for summary & feedback etc.</p>	
<p>E-lapsed time needed I.e. Calendar time, usually at least a week!</p>	
<p>E-moderators time Estimate your time (Then double...)</p>	
<p>E-moderator actions What you'll do and when...most important part is keeping participants going and providing summary 7 feedback</p>	
<p>Student time Asynchronous working needs plenty of time to work</p>	
<p>Student actions What will they DO, (don't forget to include responses to others)</p>	
<p>How Evaluated? Against what criteria will you judge success, and how will you get that information?</p>	

Action notes:

IDEAS!

Here are some ideas to get you moving. They are divided into 5 stages of online learning. For more information on the stages see <http://www.e-tivities.com/5stage.asp>

Stage 1: Access and Motivation

Icebreakers: Each of these will take around 2-3 weeks online. They can overlap with (easy) course related activities.

Quiz: Ask each participant to put up a maximum of one-screenful, which reveals a little about them. Build a little quiz so that each participants needs to read the contributions of others to take part. Publicise the quiz and offer a prize (piece of software?) for the most accurate response or the fastest, or both.

Images: Ask each participant to post a url into the conference that tells the group something about themselves

My brand: Ask each participant to mention a brand of something that they always use and what it says about them. Start a discussion on these brands.

Hall of Mirrors. Post five Web sites and call it "The Hall of Mirrors". Ask participants to take a wander round them and post a message saying:

- (i) What are the similarities between the Web sites?
- (ii) Which one would encourage them to buy online and why?
- (iii) Which one would put them off buying the product or service and why?
- (iv) Which one made them feel confident and which one made them feel nervous?

Run a discussion on the similarities and differences in responses.

Talents: "Give" each participant a fantasy \$200/1000/100,000 to 'spend' online. Allow them one week. They can investigate areas relevant to your topic. Start a discussion on the different choices

Wanderlust: Ask each participant to find and post a url showing a great location and start a discussion on them.

Our Contract: post a message making clear what you can offer as their e-moderator. Include number of times a week that you log on and how long you can stay online each time. Let them know any time you will be away from your computer. Indicate what your main role is. What they can expect you to do. Indicate what you would like from them. Ask participants to offer a similar message about their own commitments.

Do you get the idea? Here are some more:

- Explore the nature of success on the course.
- Each participant offers a contribution to the 'netiquette' of the group. Build a commonly agreed list of the contributions.
- Ask participants to look out of a window and relate a topic - say, critical path analysis, or leadership styles, or decision making - to natural objects such as trees or manmade objects such as traffic furniture. Go with the flow. This works!
- Offer a learning styles or team roles inventory (watch you don't infringe anyone's copyright). Ask participants to discuss their styles and how they think their styles will manifest itself in the online environment.
- Ask participants what single thing would improve the quality of their online communication. Who could help to achieve this?
- Set up a 'skills and knowledge' market. Each participant states some help that he or she would like from one other participant. In return, they agree to help one other person.
- Set up a 'discovery' area for participants to publish their own tips and tricks on the technology. But edit it so it does not become a 'whinge' area"!
- Offer key ideas (we call them 'footprints') developed by previous participants in the course. Ask new arrivals to explore the ideas.

- Ask each participant to acknowledge, congratulate or celebrate the contribution of one other participant.
- Ask participants to offer tips for 'surviving online learning'.
- Ask participants to say would they be doing now if they weren't working online?
- Ask pairs to interview each other by e-mail and intro each other publicly
- Ask each person to name a famous person from their locality (town, country) and tell us one significant piece of information about this person.
- Ask participants to mention when they first received a computer on their desk, or in their home and the circumstances. When did they first hear the term 'Superhighway' or 'World Wide Web' and from whom?

Stage 2: Socialization

Try to use innovative ways to enable participants to get to know about each other and to be able to form effective learning teams. The themes from some can be carried out at later stages.

- Introduce yourself using 6 descriptive words.
- What are the most popular given names in your culture? Ask each person to explain the origin of his/her name, the reason it was chosen and any special cultural significance. Ask each person to explain the origin of his/her name, the reason it was chosen and any special cultural significance.
- If you were an animal, what would you be? Can we make up a farmyard, zoo, circus or jungle?
- What musical instruments do you play? Can we form a band or orchestra with our skills and experience?
- Do you have any domestic pets? Why did you choose this kind of animal? What would happen if our pets met each other? How did you choose their names?
- If we were setting up a business, what could you contribute? What products would you like to make or what processes would you like to set in train?
- Give one URL that illustrates your favourite hobby.
- If you were leaving to go on holiday or business trip what three essential items would you put in your suitcase? What kind of packer are you? Do you throw everything in and sit on the case. Do you have one or two specially selected items, carefully folded...or what? Compare the similarities and differences.
- What's your favourite smell? Can you describe it online? Why is it important to you?
- What are the most important lesson life/being an e-moderator/ working in this company/ living in this place has taught you up until now?
- How do you relax?
- Offer a cartoon or humorous picture. Ask for reactions.
- In what circumstances do you behave 'safely' and when might you take 'risks'? Can we find common categories?
- What's your favourite town? Take us on a virtual tour of it. Each participant comments on whether they have visited for real or virtually
- What's your favourite journey? Take us along it. Start a discussion based on some feature you see along the way
- In XXX words, what's the plot of your favourite novel? Compare and contrast
- What items would you put in your virtual shopping basket and why? Are there similarities and differences in the group?
- What's your favourite word/expression, and why? Can we build them into a story?
- If we were to have a fancy dress party, what theme would you choose for this group? What would you come as? What periods of history/literature/continents of the world do we represent?
- Who's your favourite actor and why? Have we all chosen different people?
- Who's the person you'd most like to meet from your discipline and why? What would s/he say about working online?
- Who's the historical figure you most identify with and why? Would they like the Internet? How would they use it?
- If you were offered a soapbox, what would you talk about? Could you condense the points into 50 words?
- What's your favourite gadget and why? Will it help you communicate on this course?
- What would you like to see invented and why?
- What was your proudest moment? (Most embarrassing could be hilarious... but risky!)
- If I ruled the world...

- My favourite music. Explore sources and roots of different kinds. Offer web sites so participants can listen and exchange ideas
- My favourite food. If you could live on one dish only what would it be? What key food do you remember from your childhood? What special dishes are made in your home town?
- Online wine tasting. Each participant has a glass by his or her keyboard. They describe and discuss the taste, and the origin of the wine.
- What's the best excuse you've heard for the late submission of a piece of work that is to be assessed?
- If we were designing a physical classroom for our group, what features would be important? Where would it be located in the world and why?

Across cultures: If you have a wide variety of participants located in various locations, then you have special opportunities for exploring many aspects of culture and of globalisation.

- Where is your nearest branch of Starbucks, or McDonalds? What kind of buildings or streets are around it? What conclusions can be drawn?
- Do you drive on the left or right? Why? Should it be changed?
- What are the problems and benefits of the transport systems in your country? What is the preferred mode of transport? How is it funded?
- Does your country have a national dress or costume? Have you ever worn it and when?
- Everyone contributes the words 'please' and 'thank you' or 'hello' and 'goodbye' in their mother languages. Build a list and try using them out of politeness during the course.

Scenarios: Try offering little scenarios for discussion. These can prepare groups for more demanding case studies at stage 4. For example:

- You return from a vacation. Your car is parked in the street surrounded by policeman. What has happened?
- Highlight a topical issue that is relevant to your course. Ask participants to take positions as stakeholders.
- You are responsible for marking examination papers for this course. You notice that one candidate appears to have produced answers to completely different questions to those set. What might have happened here?

At this stage, participants will probably want to see photographs of each other. Don't be in too much of a rush to offer this. Run an e-tivity on how a fixed photograph may give a stereotypical view of a participant, or of their personality or mood. If you do go for photos at stage two, encourage people to post several in different moods and styles, with some personal commentary.

Stage 3: Information Exchange

At this stage e-tivities that gradually encourage participants to take more personal responsibility for their active learning and interacting are helpful and those that model strategies for handling online learning. Most participants will still need help to handle masses of messages and Web resources and to find and personalise who and what they wish to work with. The-moderator role shifts fast from the 'host' to the archive, summarising and feedback role. Note: portals kill participation.

- Offer great speeches. Participants condense them into 12 words and discuss the meanings.
- Use key concepts from great speeches to write your own speech.
- Send a postcard e-mail from one of the 'Greats' from your discipline, e.g. individual explorers or inventors. How would you respond?
- Considering the history of your discipline, are there more men or women mentioned in textbooks? Consider the implications and discuss them.
- Ask each participant to undertake a piece of research on a well-known figure. Ask participants to think of questions that they would like to ask and then to role-play interviewing each other as these figures, try this by e mail or through text chat. Post the results of the interviews for everyone to see.
- Find and try out Keyboard Tutors. See which increase typing speeds. Share the results of your research and see who can improve their typing speed.
- Practise summarising information, e.g. the theory of relativity in 12 words.
- Practise summarising sets of messages from stages 2 and 3.

- Undertake 'compare and contrast' research. Develop a set of criteria for good or bad sites for your course, or more or less relevant, or more or less useful. Then using the criteria each participant indicating a web site and indicates how they would evaluate it. Encourage discussion and challenge.
- Ask each participant or small group to undertake research on a topic and report back to the group. Lead a plenary discussion on the results.
- Investigate the best way for teams to work online, share ideas and evaluate them.
- If you were advising a well-known writer from your topic, what would you say about the layout and content of his/her book? What's missing? What's out of date?
- Are there any scenarios about the future for your discipline? What are they called? Who thinks they offer a likely or an unlikely view of the future?
- Ask one participant to identify three Web sites of use to the group and post an evaluation of each one. Another participant then visits each of the three sites and comments on the sufficiency of the evaluation, and adds their views and so on.
- Try 'reversal'. What would happen if we did the opposite of what's advised by some authority?
- What are the 'seminal' books or paper for your topic? Why do you think they became so important?

Techniques: Holding structured 'meetings to reach decisions are also worth trying, such as

- political debates
- mock board meetings
- lobby groups
- voting on issues
- discussion, buzz or focus groups
- simulations or role plays

Creative techniques:

- Brainstorming
- Delphi techniques
- Nominal group techniques
- Reversal
- Metaphors

Stage 4: Knowledge Construction

Your participants should be working well together by this point. You can explore structures of effective work teams and specific roles such as chair, resource finder, recorder, summariser, reviewer, critic, time keeper.

Concepts: Introduce new conceptual models, ideas, and theories for examination, exploration and application. Make it clear that the e-moderator is not necessarily looking for consensus or closure, but wide exploration of issues. Move beyond transmission!

- Take a key diagram, model or concept from your course or discipline. Ask each participant to apply it, or find examples. Compare and contrast between the examples offered.
- Take a key concept and apply it in a new way
- Take a key concept and demonstrate the extent to which it does or does not to a particular case example

Positions: Participants can very usefully adopt a variety of 'positions' online to cover multiple perspectives. Here are some ideas:

- Take a key concept or model and explore how different professions, such as that of physician, lawyer, politician or teacher, would apply it.
- Ask them to explain difficult concepts to each other
- Ask them to give examples
- Ask them to challenge perceived wisdoms
- Ask them what's missing from the theories

Cases: Case studies and problem based learning work well at this point.

- Introduce staged case study information with questions.
- Introduce challenging problems with a variety of solutions.
- Ask participants to produce plans for action based on limited amounts of information, e.g. marketing plan, a business plan, and a product launch.
- Use scenarios for the future. Offer two or three different cameos of how your discipline will look in the future, e.g. different types of schools, new technologies for medicine, virtual performing arts. Prompt discussion on the adequacy and implications of these scenarios.

Summarising: Encourage all forms of reviewing and summarising

- Ask individual participants teams or groups to undertake investigation of one topic or area to contribute to a whole piece of work or report
- Ask individual participants, teams or groups to undertake summarising, critiquing and combining information
- Offer e-tivities that rework ideas or discussions using techniques such as concept mapping

Stage 5: Development

At this stage, try to allow the maximum amount of choice. Ensure that all the summaries and archives are available for participants to use as resources. Accountability and responsibility are more important at this stage than 'content'. However, the usual approach to pacing and timescales should continue.

Footprints: Offer essays or reports from previous students on the course (with permission or disguised of course) and run an e-tivity on how participants would have marked, assessed and graded them

Review: Offer e-tivities to consider the evaluation of both the learning that has occurred and the knowledge that has been generated.

- Try 360 degree evaluations or assessment - each participant asks another three participants specific questions about their experience of working together. Encourage participants to explore how they judge their success.
- Go back to expectation at the beginning for the course. Would participants change them if starting again? To what extent have their expectations been met and why?
- Would the group have worked differently if they had also physically met? If so, in what way.

Technology: Exploring of the technology in use:

- If the group was designing an online environment what would they need?
- What one new feature in the technology would have helped with learning?
- How did they succeed in spite of a barrier created by the technology?

Reflections: Encouraging reflection on the overall experience:

- Ask participants to review one of their own messages and rework it how they would like it to appear now
- Try asking for examples of various concepts to be picked out, or summaries or further conclusions to be drawn from earlier e-tivities.
- Ask for action plans, offer some structure and feedback
- Ask for personal development plans, offer some structure and feedback
- Give masses of feedback and constructive criticism. Encourage participants to offer this to each other too.
- Ask individuals and groups to offer a 'footprint' (a piece of knowledge, new idea, special insight) to be offered to others starting the course afresh. Ask groups to agree the footprint statement between them.
- Ask participants to review all posted messages and to comment on what helped to move the discussion along and what did not.
- Ask participants to comment on the roles they each adopted