Active Learning Session Planner

Faculty and facilitators | Session Design Tool

Course / module: _____ **Session title:** _____

Facilitator: _____ **Date / delivery mode:** _____

Total time: _____ **Learner group / size:** _____

Plan backward from the evidence you need. Active learning is not activity for its own sake: each learner action should help learners retrieve, explain, decide, practice, create, compare, or apply something tied to the stated outcome.

Outcome, Starting Point, and Evidence

Learning outcome: _____ **What learners should already know / be able to do:** _____

What evidence will show progress today: _____ **Likely misconception or sticking point:** _____

Short Session Planner - 15 to 25 Minutes

Phase	Minutes	Learner action	Instructor move	Evidence / decision
Launch / retrieve				
Engage / decide				
Practice / compare				
Feedback / correct				
Debrief / exit evidence				

Full Session Run of Show

Phase	Time	Purpose	Learner action	Instructor move / prompt	Evidence to collect
Before class					
Opening / readiness					
Model / orient					
Engagement round 1					
Practice / application					
Compare / explain					
Engagement round 2					
Feedback / revision					
Debrief / transfer					
Exit evidence / next step					

Participation and Group Roles

[ ] Give individual think or preparation time before requiring public responses.

[ ] Define group roles when the activity can otherwise be dominated by one participant: facilitator, analyst, operator, recorder, skeptic/reviewer, reporter, or timekeeper.

[ ] Offer more than one meaningful response channel when speaking aloud is not the learning outcome: chat, shared document, poll, written response, diagram, command transcript, or instructor check.

[ ] Make the participation expectation explicit: what every learner must do personally, what the group may do collectively, and what evidence each learner must retain.

[ ] Do not use surprise public performance, speed, or competition as a proxy for understanding unless those conditions are part of the intended outcome.

Remote, Low-Tech, and Failure Fallbacks

Risk / dependency	Primary plan	Fallback that preserves the outcome	Trigger / owner
Platform or video failure			
Lab / virtual environment unavailable			
Low bandwidth / device limitation			
Learner cannot use planned interaction mode			
Time runs short			

Illustrative Example - Suspicious Message Triage

Example only: a 50-minute cybersecurity session in which learners practice deciding what evidence matters before acting on a suspicious message. The example is sanitized and does not require opening live malicious links or using real credentials.

Phase	Time	Learner action	Instructor move	Evidence
Retrieve	5 min	Individually list three signals that would make a message worth verifying.	Collect responses without judging them yet.	Initial reasoning
Decide	8 min	Pairs classify two fictional messages as act, verify, report, or ignore and identify missing evidence.	Ask “What would change your decision?”	Decision + evidence gap
Practice	15 min	Groups inspect sanitized headers, sender context, and link text from a fictional scenario.	Reveal one additional fact halfway through.	Updated claim with cited indicators
Compare	8 min	Groups exchange decisions and challenge one assumption.	Surface disagreement between evidence and intuition.	Revised rationale
Feedback	7 min	Learners compare their process with the course triage criteria.	Correct unsafe shortcuts; emphasize verification path.	Self-correction
Debrief	7 min	Write the first safe action and one question still unanswered.	Connect the process to future incident decisions.	Exit evidence

Debrief and After-Action Check

- What did learners have to retrieve, decide, practice, or create rather than only listen to?
- What evidence showed the intended outcome and what evidence was ambiguous?
- Which misconception appeared and did the feedback actually change it?
- Did the timing and group structure create avoidable participation barriers?
- What should be shortened, moved before class, practiced again, or assessed differently next time?

Next-session adjustment: _____ **Learners needing follow-up:** _____

Material / activity revision owner: _____ **Review date:** _____

Source and use

Bare Metal Cyber Educators Hub, Dr. Jason Edwards. Faculty Delivery & Accessibility Toolkit - Active Learning Session Planner.

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