

Four Corners

This technique stimulates student learning through movement and discussion, and it can also be used as a formative assessment. Students are presented with a controversial statement or are asked a question. In each of the four corners of the classroom, an opinion or response is posted. Students express their opinion or response by standing in front of one of four statements, and then talking to others about why they have chosen their corner. Four Corners promotes listening, verbal communication, critical thinking, and decision-making.

How to use

1. Prepare

Generate a controversial statement or a question related to your topic of study. Create four different opinions (often teachers use “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree”) related to the statement or four possible answer choices to the question. Post these on chart paper in four different areas of your classroom. The opinions/answers can also be shown on the overhead in multiple choice format, while each corner of the room is labeled as A, B, C, or D.

2. Present

Read the statement or problem to the class, without giving them choices. Allow time for students to independently think about an answer to the statement/question. You can ask them to write down their answer and reason for their choice. Then, provide the answer choices. Ask students to choose the option that comes closest to their original answer.

3. Commit to a Corner

Ask students to gather in the corner of the room that corresponds to their choice. In each corner, students form groups of two or three to discuss the reasons for selecting a particular choice.

4. Discuss

Allow two or three minutes of discussion. Call on students to present a group summary of their opinions. This can be done through an oral presentation or as a written statement.

When to use

Use Four Corners at any point in the lesson to structure meaningful conversation:

- Before introducing new material to tap into prior knowledge
- After watching a debatable film clip to gauge a reaction
- After reading a short text to begin a discussion
- In the middle of direct teach to help students process information
- When students are in need of movement
- As a test review after a unit of study

Variations

A-B-C-D

For a test review, place A, B, C, or D in each corner. Ask a multiple-choice question, and have students move to the answer they would choose. Upon arrival at their corner, pairs or trios discuss why they have chosen their answer. Groups share out their reasoning, and then students are allowed to change their corner after hearing the reasoning of each corner.