

## Create Activity: '25 Words or Less'



*"the ability to put parts together" (Kennedy et al., n.d., pp. 11). Essentially, this is bringing parts together to make a meaningful whole (the opposite of Analyse).*

### Learning objective:

Students represent the essence of a complex theory, concept or idea in 25 words or less.

### Overview:

This task asks students to explain a concept or idea in 25 words or less. This is a great way to practise the art of summarising!

You could add a competitive element by providing a small prize or bonus point for the best entry/entries (as happens with many online competitions). This makes a good weekly activity. If you document the best '25 words' in some way over time, students can use them as a study aid.

This task could be group-negotiated or individual. In group scenarios, provide opportunities for individual 25 word descriptions to be shared and/or compared amongst groups. The groups then have to present a final negotiated '25 words' to the class. In the case of individual work, you could share individual ideas OR pick a selection of the best and share those along with feedback to the group.

Salmon (2002) recommends a similar game called 'Half-life' (p.133), in which there are five rounds. Students are given a question and must respond in 32 words, then 16 words, then 8 words, then 4 words and finally, in 2 words.

**Reference:** Salmon, G., 2002, *E-tivities: The Key to Active Online Learning*, Kogan Page: London.

### Example:

Over the past few weeks we have been attending a short course on the concept of corporate sustainability. Your employer is a busy person who doesn't have much time for chit chat. He has asked you to summarise what you have learned in 25 words or less, so that he can make up his mind about how important it is to the business going forward. What 25 words will you send him?

**Reference:** Kennedy, D., Hyland, A. & Ryan, N (n.d.). *Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: a Practical Guide*. Retrieved, June 4, 2015, from [http://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/academic-development/assets/pdf/Kennedy\\_Writing\\_and\\_Using\\_Learning\\_Outcomes.pdf](http://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/academic-development/assets/pdf/Kennedy_Writing_and_Using_Learning_Outcomes.pdf) (from Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Teaching and Learning)

<b>FACE TO FACE VERSION*</b>	
<b>Activity Description/Steps</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Briefly explain the purpose of the task and how students will complete the task.</li> <li>To further motivate students, you can offer to collate the '25 words' so that students can use them for study and review purposes. This will be especially enticing if your unit includes examinations.</li> <li>If you have several concepts to cover, you may wish to issue each to individual students or to small groups to tackle.</li> </ul> <p><b>SCAFFOLDING TIP:</b> It could be useful to model the '25 words or less' idea in an earlier class, or, started the session with something like 'So, last week we discussed....If I were to explain it in 25 words or less, this is how I would do it...'</p>	<p>Slide or handout with basic instructions.</p> <p>Model '25 words or less' (see SCAFFOLDING TIP in left column)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can either provide students with time to do this in class (allow around 20 minutes), or as homework for sharing in the following class.</li> </ul> <p>In class, students could tackle this task in pairs or quads. As homework, it is probably best if they approach this task individually.</p>	<p>If students do this as homework, you could get them to submit their '25 words or less' to a <i>Survey</i> or <i>Discussion</i> topic on MyLO by a specified deadline. This lends a sense of urgency to the task, especially if students know who has done what! It also makes it easier to pick out certain examples to share in class. Finally, it makes it relatively simple to share the '25 words' as a study resource.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Either:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask for volunteers or choose students to share their '25 words'; OR</li> <li>Get students to share/ compare their 'explanations' with those generated by other students; OR</li> <li>Get small groups to share '25 words' and then, as a group, come up with a group '25 words'.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Encourage students to ask questions, point out potential gaps and provide feedback to their peers.</li> </ul>	<p>If your students have submitted to MyLO, you could put the submissions up on screen.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow at least 10 minutes at the end of the activity to summarise what has been learnt. You may wish to select some exemplary '25 words' to share with the class, or focus on some of the similarities between '25 words'.</li> </ul>	

**\*NOTE:** In a blended delivery mode, students could complete the task before class, then share their '25 words or less' in class or in an *Online Room* session.

<b>ONLINE VERSION</b>	
<b>PREPARATION IN MYLO</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you would like students to work together in pairs or small groups, you should set up <i>Groups</i> accordingly. If you have a large number of students, you may wish to create sharing <i>Groups</i> so that individuals can share their 'explanations' with a smaller group of students.</li> <li>Create one <i>Discussion Topic</i> for students to share their '25 words', OR create several <i>topics</i> and assign them to individual <i>Groups</i> to facilitate team work or sharing.</li> <li>If you prefer, you could require students to share during a synchronous session in an <i>Online Room</i>.</li> </ul>	
<b>Activity Description/Steps</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Briefly explain the purpose of the task and how students will complete the task.</li> <li>To further motivate students, you can offer to collate the '25 words' so that students can use them for study and review purposes. This will be especially enticing if your unit includes examinations.</li> <li>If you have several concepts to cover, you may wish to issue each to individual students or to small groups to tackle.</li> </ul> <p><b>SCAFFOLDING TIP:</b> It could be useful to model the '25 words or less' idea, perhaps in a video or as a short text introduction to the task. For example, 'So, last week we discussed....If I were to explain it in 25 words or less, this is how I would do it...'. Conversely, you could put up a 25 words or less statement and ask students to comment (in a <i>Discussion Topic</i> or <i>Survey</i>) on whether they feel it sufficiently covers the concept and, if not, what is missing? Once they have been able to decipher a '25 words or less', students will then have a better idea of how their own might be constructed.</p>	<p>You could introduce the task with a brief video or a well written piece of text, perhaps in the form of an <i>HTML Page</i>.</p> <p>Model '25 words' (see <b>SCAFFOLDING TIP</b> in left column)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide students with some time to work on their '25 words or less'. Allow at least 1 week, especially if students need to work together.</li> <li>Give students a deadline by which they need to share their '25 words' online (e.g. by attaching it to a <i>Discussion</i> post or by sharing it in a scheduled session in an <i>Online Room</i>).</li> <li>Visit the <i>Topic/s</i> occasionally. Encourage contributions by making note of some of the things that have been posted so far (e.g. as part of your weekly <i>News</i> item summary of the unit) or by emailing students who have not yet posted the day before the deadline.</li> </ul>	<p>At least one <i>Discussion Topic</i> will be required so students can share their work.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask students to view at least five '25 words' (or all the '25 words' contributed by people in their <i>Group</i>) and vote on the best '25 words'. They cannot vote for their own; or</li> <li>Ask students to work with their team members to pull together a jointly create a final '25 words', which must be posted to their topic by a set deadline.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Ensure you put a deadline in place to discourage tardiness.</li> </ul>	<p>Voting could be facilitated by a survey. Students would need to record the name of the '25 words' owner in their survey response. Alternatively, you could enable ratings (out of five stars) in <i>Discussion Topics</i>.</p> <p>Team members could work together using a <i>Discussion Topic</i>, <i>Chat</i>, <i>Online Room</i> or other means.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a summary of the submitted work, flagging the best '25 words' and also pointing out elements that may have been missed. If you encouraged voting, acknowledge the '25 words' with the most votes as well.</li> </ul>	<p>A <i>News Item</i>, or short video embedded in a <i>News Item</i> is a useful way of doing this. If all activity occurred in a single <i>Discussion Topic</i>, you could post your summary to the <i>Topic</i>.</p>