

Create Activity: ‘Explanation for a novice’



“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 will create a method of explaining a specific concept/theory/idea to a novice.

Overview:

Students are asked to explain a particular theory or idea to a client (or their grandma!) who does not have the same academic background. They should be prepared to illustrate their explanation with examples. Mixed methods could be used: diagrams, short text explanations, drawings, role plays and so forth. To add an extra level of complexity and/or keep this task manageable, restrict the explanation to one page or 2 minutes.

This task could be completed individually or in a group. An element of peer review would provide more interaction in the case of individual tasks. For example, students could provide feedback to a couple of peers by responding to questions like: *Has anything really important been left out?*; or *Would this make sense to a person without a background in the same discipline?*

Example:

Your grandmother asks you to explain what you mean by the term ‘asset’ and why it should matter to her small cake decorating business. How do you make ‘asset’ make sense to her? You can use any method you choose: diagram, spoken voice, role play, infographic, text, etc, but keep it short!

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 (from Trinity College Dublin, Trinity Teaching and Learning)

FACE TO FACE VERSION*	
Activity Description/Steps	Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefly explain the purpose of the task and how students will complete the task. To further motivate students, you can offer to collate the 'explanations' so that students can use them for study and review purposes. This will be especially enticing if your unit includes examinations. If you have several concepts to cover, you may wish to issue each to individual students or to small groups to tackle. <p>SCAFFOLDING TIP: You may want to specify a specific client/s or individual/s that the 'explanation' will be targeted towards (e.g. Peter, the builder who has no knowledge of accounting; your grandmother; etc.) You could model the process first by providing a sample explanation for a related concept. You could specify one particular method of 'explaining', or invite students to choose one of several. For example: a metaphor; a diagram, an infographic, role play etc.</p>	<p>Slide or handout with basic instructions.</p> <p>Model 'explanation' (see SCAFFOLDING TIP in left column)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can either provide students with time to do this in class (allow around 30 minutes), or as homework for demonstration in the following class. 	<p>If students do this in class, you will need a range of materials for students to create their explanations with. For example, butchers paper, pens and pencils, computers etc. piktochart.com is an online service (requires sign up – free account) that students can use to create infographics.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for volunteers or choose students to demonstrate their 'explanations'; OR Get students to share their compare their 'explanations' with those generated by other students; OR Get students to share 'exhibition style', either via a speed-dating sort of arrangement, or using 'stalls'. Encourage students to ask questions, point out potential understanding gaps and provide feedback to their peers. 	<p>This will depend on the nature of the 'explanations' that students have been permitted to produce. Do you need an additional space? Could you cluster types of 'explanations'? For example, videos are on the PCS, charts and infographics are on the back wall etc. Do you need computers, bluetack etc?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow at least 10 minutes at the end of the activity to summarise what has been learnt. You may wish to select some exemplary 'explanations' to share with the class. 	<p>How will you share exemplary examples with the class? Will a document camera or screen be sufficient? Could you share them online, with the students' permission.</p>

***NOTE:** In a blended delivery mode, students could complete the task in before class, then deliver their 'explanation' to a small group or the whole class for feedback. This could be an assessable alternative to the usual 'presentation'.

ONLINE VERSION

PREPARATION IN MYLO

- If you would like students to work together in pairs or small groups, you should set up *Groups* accordingly. If you have a large number of students, you may also wish to create sharing *Groups* so that individuals can share their 'explanations' with a smaller group of students.
- Create one *Discussion Topic* for students to share their 'explanations' OR create several *topics* and assign them to individual *Groups* to facilitate team work or sharing.
- If you prefer, you could require students to share during a synchronous session in an *Online Room*.

Activity Description/Steps

Resources

- Briefly explain the purpose of the task and how students will complete the task.
- To further motivate students, you can offer to collate the 'explanations' so that students can use them for study and review purposes. This will be especially enticing if your unit includes examinations.
- If you have several concepts to cover, you may wish to issue each to individual students or to small groups to tackle.

You could introduce the task with a brief video or a well written piece of text, perhaps in the form of an *HTML Page*.

Model 'explanation' (see SCAFFOLDING TIP in left column)

SCAFFOLDING TIP: You may want to specify a specific client/s or individual/s that the 'explanation' will be targeted towards (e.g. Peter, the builder who has no knowledge of accounting; your grandmother; etc.) You could model the process first by providing a sample explanation for a related concept. You could specify one particular method of 'explaining', or invite students to choose one of several. For example: a metaphor; a diagram, an infographic etc. The product must be suitable for sharing online.

- Provide students with some time to work on their 'explanations'. Allow at least 1 week, especially if students need to work together.
- Give students a deadline by which they need to share their explanation online (e.g. by attaching it to a *Discussion* post or by sharing it in a scheduled session in an *Online Room*).
- Visit the *Topic/s* occasionally. Encourage contributions by making note of some of the things that have been posted so far (e.g. as part of your weekly *News* item summary of the unit) or by emailing students who have not yet posted the day before the deadline.

At least one *Discussion Topic* will be required so students can share their work.

Further *Topics* will be required if students are to work together to produce explanations, or to share their explanation with a small group of peers.

- Ask students to view at least two other 'explanations' posted by their peers. You could ask them to provide feedback or even a simple rating. Alternatively, get students to reflect on their own 'explanation' by comparing it to two other posts. You could get them to this by replying to their own original post, or by submitting a reflection to the *Dropbox*.
- Ensure you put a deadline in place to discourage tardiness.

You could provide students with a rubric to help them provide a mark/feedback to their peers.

Alternatively, use some prompting questions, like: 'Has anything really important been left out?'; and 'Would this make sense to ...?'

- Provide a summary of the submitted work, perhaps linking to some really creative posts (if you open up a post, you can copy the URL in the address bar, then use the URL to provide a link from a *News* item or your own post to the *Discussion*).