

4 Corners

Overview:

The facilitator poses a question or prompt, and the students must stand in the corner of the room that represents their response: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. Once in their corner, students discuss with others who are there why they chose that position and are then prepared to share with the large group.

Purpose:

The purpose of this discussion protocol is to help students hear, understand, and explore differing perspectives on the same topic or issue. Students must physically get up and move to the corner of the room that best represents their position which has the added benefit of getting some blood flowing to the brain and requiring 100% involvement of everyone in the room. By knowing where your students are coming from, relative to particular issues or controversial topics, you as the teacher are better able to honor their thinking and perspectives and scaffold the learning appropriately.

Application: When and where can I use it?

The 4 Corners routine can be used in any lesson where you want students to explore different opinions or perspectives or take a stand on a topic or controversial subject. You can use it as a pre-assessment activity to see what students already know about a topic, as an engaging warm-up to a lesson, as a pre-writing strategy, to prepare students for a debate, or as an opportunity for students to consolidate their thinking at the end of a lesson.

Getting Started: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

Start by writing one or more statements that you want your students to react to. The statements should be ones that students may have different opinions about or different perspectives on but should also be directly connected to your learning content.

Place signs in each of the "four corners" of the classroom: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

Read the statement and give students a couple of minutes to think about it and process it. Then direct students to stand in the corner of the room with the sign that most closely reflects their thinking or feeling about that statement. Encourage students to do this without thinking about, or looking for, where their friends are going. Remind them that it's OK to be the only person in any given corner of the room. (If that happens, you will want to go to that corner to engage in the next step with the student.)

Once students have taken their position, direct them to spend some time sharing with the others in their corner their own, personal, reasons for why they chose to move to

that corner. What, specifically did they agree, or disagree, with? (You can choose to appoint one student from each group to be a recorder, responsible for capturing the thinking of the group.) Students can choose to move to a different corner as new information/perspectives are shared by their peers.

After an appropriate amount of time (varies, depending on age level and the statement), engage the students in a large group share out so that everyone has a chance to hear and understand the reasons given for each perspective.

Variation: You can use this as a pre- and post-learning activity by using the same statement(s) at the start of a unit and again at the end of the unit. Have students reflect on whether and how their thinking changed as a result of the learning.

Variation: If using this as pre-writing or a debate preparation strategy, each student should record the thinking of others in their group as well as other groups to incorporate into their work.

See this Instructional Move in action:

[Four Corners - LEARN Strategy - YouTube](#)

Read more about this Instructional Move:

[Engage Students With a Four Corners Debate \(thoughtco.com\)](#)

[Four Corners Protocol 1.19.22.pdf \(systemimprovement.org\)](#)