The Religion Teacher's Guide to Lesson Planning
Revised and Updated

By Jared Dees
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Preface to the Revised Edition

More than 50,000 people have downloaded *The Religion Teacher's Guide to Lesson Planning* from The Religion Teacher website since I first released the guide in 2010. I remember spending hours on the guide, trying to put everything I knew about teaching into a short eBook to help religious educators prepare effective lesson plans. I shared the lesson planning structure that was working for me at the time and included the templates and tools I found most helpful.

The Religion Teacher website has grown a lot since 2010, and so have I. As time went on, I started to use a simpler approach to lesson planning. Then I started sharing this simplified approach in presentations at conferences, in the courses I created for the premium members of The Religion Teacher, and in my most recent book, *Christ in the Classroom*. That is why I am excited to finally update, simplify, and improve this resource to help tens of thousands more religious educators develop effective lesson plans that keep students engaged in class. The basic steps from the original edition are still here, but the approach and the templates I offer are much simpler and more effective.

This revised eBook is organized around a three-step approach (narrowed from four steps in the previous version) to lesson planning: first know the topic; then set the lesson objectives; and finally plug in effective activities that will help students reach those objectives. I also simplified the structure of the lesson plan template from the first edition's five-part PROCESS (**P**rior knowledge, **R**eceive new information, **O**rganize the new information with the prior knowledge, **C**larification and critical thinking, and Ass**ess**ment) to a three-part structure of Presentation, Practice, and Proof.

I hope you will use this new version of *The Religion Teacher's Guide to Lesson Planning* to lead your students into an encounter with Jesus Christ. This is our vision at The Religion Teacher: *Every Day, Every Class, Every Student, an Encounter with Christ*.

This eBook is only a short introduction to lesson planning. If you want to plan lessons that help students not only learn about Jesus but also grow in a deeper relationship with him, then I recommend you explore my book *Christ in the Classroom: Lesson Planning for the Heart and Mind*, which is available wherever books are sold. *Christ in the Classroom* will help you lead your students into an encounter with Christ in class through meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

Go make disciples!

Jared Dees
Founder of The Religion Teacher

The Religion Teacher's Guide to Lesson Planning

Lesson Planning Checklist

Step 1: Know the lesson topic.

☑ Read the section/chapter of the textbook you are going to teach.

☑ Make a list of all the most important topics for your students to learn.

☑ Narrow your focus to one unifying theme for the lesson.

☑ Identify the three most important ideas for your students to learn and remember.

Step 2: Set the lesson objectives.

☑ Describe what you want your students to be able to do (SWBAT) by the end of the lesson.

☑ Describe what you want your students to feel (SWF) at the end of the lesson.

Step 3: Find effective activities.

☑ Plan your presentation. Prepare a lecture or reading activity for your students to learn the three most important ideas in your lesson.

☑ Plan the practice. Find activities that will help students learn the most important ideas and demonstrate the lesson objectives.

☑ Integrate meditation, prayer, and contemplation activities.

☑ Plan the proof. What will your students do to show you they have met the lesson objectives?

Introduction

Every Day, Every Class, Every Student, an Encounter with Christ

This is the vision that the visitors, subscribers, and premium members of The Religion Teacher are striving for as religious educators. This eBook about lesson planning will help you make this vision a reality. It won't be easy, but nothing important is easy. If you feel overwhelmed or if you have ever wanted to create a more engaging classroom experience for your students, then the following pages will help you to plan lessons that lead your students into a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ.

I wish I had had this kind of clarity of vision when I was a first-year religion teacher. At the time, I was teaching three classes of religion and three classes of social studies to junior high students every day. I was in way over my head. I spent hours every night planning lessons for all six classes using a complicated lesson planning template given to us during a summer master's of education course at the University of Notre Dame. Because I am a perfectionist, I tried to make the perfect lesson plan for every class. I was overwhelmed, and the students were not that interested in what I was preparing for them.

I made many mistakes in those first few years—mistakes I hope I can help you avoid. I get a lot of emails from religious educators asking for help because their students are bored and unengaged in class. My students were bored, too, in those early years. My biggest mistake, by far, was something I see educators do again and again. Do you want to know what made the biggest difference? Do you want to know the simple switch I made in class to get the students more interested and involved in class?

I stopped talking so much.

When I first started out as a teacher, I thought teaching was talking and lecturing. That's the way I was taught, so I figured that was the way I was supposed to teach. I was wrong. The less I talked, the more the students learned. Why? Because the less time I spent talking in class, the more time I spent keeping the students actively working on assignments that made them think about and apply what I had briefly presented or what they had read. The result was a much more engaged and interested class—and I was a lot less tired and overwhelmed. I focused my preparation time more on planning effective activities than on crafting the perfect presentations.

As you get more acquainted with The Religion Teacher, you will find that I suggest a very simple three-step process for lesson plans:

1. Presentation: Students will learn new ideas and information by listening or reading.

2. Practice: Students will participate in activities that challenge them to make meaningful connections and apply what they have learned to their lives.

3. Proof: Students will show their progress toward predetermined lesson objectives through various means of assessment.

In my early days an educator, my 45-minute classes went something like this: Presentation (30 minutes), Practice (15 minutes), and Proof (no time for this).

Today, my 45-minute classes would look more like this: Presentation (10 minutes), Practice (30 minutes), and Proof (5 minutes).

We will look at activities for each of these three phases of a lesson plan in the appendix, but first let's back up and walk through the steps you can take to plan what your students will do during the presentation, practice, and proof parts of your lesson.

Step 1: Know the Lesson Topic

Start with the Textbook

In order to decide what you should teach, you have to choose the most important information for each lesson. Religion teachers and catechists can look to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. According to the *National Directory for Catechesis*, "Catechetical instruction in the Catholic school should be based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and thoroughly integrated into the curriculum and objectives of the school" (*NDC*, no. 54.9b). Thankfully, dioceses use the *Catechism* to create curricula, and catechetical publishers use it to create textbooks, so you do not have to read the entire *Catechism* yourself.

The simplest approach is to let the chapters of your textbook determine what you will teach each week. Many teachers and catechists will share my experience as a first-year teacher. I was given a textbook and told by my principal to "teach the book." Unfortunately, I took this literally and tried my best to do only what the book said (a practice I no longer follow). There was, however, some wisdom in this directive. Every Catholic textbook in the United States and elsewhere goes through a rigorous evaluation process to ensure alignment with the *Catechism*. This conformity process meticulously evaluates every definition and description of Church doctrine in the textbooks. This means you can feel confident in the accuracy of the explanations you find in the book.

Every teacher and catechist should consult their principal, DRE, or department chair first regarding their curriculum. If there is a curriculum that teachers or catechists are responsible to use, then you should reference that first and then turn to the textbook for help in teaching to those standards. If a curriculum does not exist or is not in use, then you should use the textbook as the guide to designing instruction.

List Important Topics

For simplicity's sake, assume that one chapter (or section in textbooks for older levels) will be covered during one lesson. As you read this chapter/section of the textbook, write down all of the most important ideas you come across. You can write these ideas down in the lesson planning templates found at www.thereligionteacher.com/templates or on a blank sheet of paper. You might find these ideas in the chapter's headings, vocabulary terms, or end-of-chapter/section review questions. Getting a firm idea from the book of what is most important is the very first step in deciding what you will teach. Plus, this time gives you the chance to know exactly what the students will learn by reading the textbook.

Narrow the Focus

Let me tell you something very important to remember as you plan: there is more information in your textbook than you could possibly teach in a year. Let me say that in another way: you will not teach everything in the book. If you try to teach everything, your students will remember next to nothing. If, on the other hand, you focus your time and energy on helping students learn the few most important ideas, then they will be much more likely to remember what you have taught them in the long term.

Identify the one unifying theme of the lesson. If you had to summarize the lesson (chapter/section) in a sentence, what would it be? This is your theme. It shouldn't be complicated and shouldn't include any details. It helps to have just one theme to help you remember what it is you want the students to learn.

Next, narrow the list of key topics you made while reading your textbook to the three most important main ideas. If your students learn nothing else, you want them to leave the lesson knowing something about these three ideas. Circle, star, underline, or bold these topics on your list. You will come back to them later. Now you are ready to start planning your lesson, but before you start thinking of or searching for activities, you have a very important step to take.

Step 2: Set the Lesson Objectives

In step 1, you created a list of the main ideas, vocabulary terms, and questions that could be learned during the lesson. You also identified the main theme and the three main ideas to be the focus of your lesson. In step 2, you will articulate the objectives you want your students to be able to achieve to show that they have learned the three main ideas that are the focus of the lesson.

This is a step too many teachers and catechists skip. The temptation is to take the topics and main ideas and immediately start thinking of and searching for activities that seem to relate to them. A much better approach is to identify goals that you want students to work toward in all of the activities that you plan. Before you can plan the lesson, you have to pick lesson objectives.

Students Will Be Able To . . .

Lesson objectives, also called learning objectives or learning goals, consist of three parts: SWBAT + learning verb + topic.

1. "SWBAT" (Acronym for "Students Will Be Able To")

You may have used or seen teachers use "Students will" in their lesson objectives. I prefer "Students will be able to" over "Students will" because the "be able to" is a reminder that the lesson objective is the goal the students are striving for rather than a set of activities to complete. What students *do* is not as important as what they *will be able to do* based on the activities they complete during the lesson.

2. Learning Verb

Your lesson objective will include an active verb that describes what your students will do with the information they have learned. You want to make sure you choose a verb that is active, not passive. "Learn" and "understand" are passive and hard to measure, while "summarize," "explain" and "compare and contrast" are actions that your students can show. Your verb should describe what your students will be able to do with one or more ideas they are learning.

In 1956, educational researcher Dr. Benjamin Bloom discovered through a series of classroom observations that most teachers were only challenging students to learn at the lowest level possible. The students were being asked to memorize and repeat rather than think, explain, and make connections to other ideas. To help guide teachers to challenge students beyond basic memorization, Dr. Bloom designed a taxonomy of verbs. More recently, Dr. Robert Marzano developed an updated list of verbs in his New Taxonomy. I

would like to simplify these taxonomies even further and suggest that you pick lesson objective verbs from one or more of these three levels of learning:

Retrieval
SWBAT • Recognize/Identify from a list . . . • State/Recall the definition of/Define . . . • Name/List the three . . . of . . . • Label . . . • Describe who, what, where, when . . .
Comprehension
SWBAT • Summarize . . . • Paraphrase . . . • Describe the key parts of . . . • Describe the ways in which . . . • Explain why/the meaning of . . . • Explain how . . . • Depict/Illustrate/Draw . . .
Critical Thinking
SWBAT • Compare and contrast . . . • Differentiate . . . • Categorize/Classify/Organize/Sort . . . • Create an analogy/metaphor for . . . • Critique/Revise/Analyze . . . errors/problems/misunderstandings • Create a generalization • Make a prediction • Create a rule/principle/criterion for . . . • Defend/Develop/Provide evidence for/Support an argument for . . . • Form a conclusion • Select the best way to . . . • Rate . . . according to . . . criterion • Develop a strategy to . . . • Test the idea that . . .

3. Topic

In this final part of the lesson objective, you will insert one or more of your main ideas into the lesson objective.

Here are some basic lesson objectives that only require **retrieval** of memorized information:

- SWBAT identify the colors of the liturgical seasons.

- SWBAT define *Magisterium*.

- SWBAT list the glorious mysteries of the Rosary.

Here are some examples of lesson objectives that call for **comprehension**:

- SWBAT describe the unique prayers and practices we perform to celebrate each liturgical season.

- SWBAT describe three ways in which the Magisterium articulates Sacred Tradition.

- SWBAT draw detailed pictures of the glorious mysteries of the Rosary.

Here are some examples of lesson objectives that encourage **critical thinking**:

- SWBAT select the best way to celebrate each liturgical season in their homes.

- SWBAT defend the role of the Magisterium in the Catholic Church against those who disregard the role of the pope and bishops of the Church.

- SWBAT create metaphors to explain the meaning and significance of each glorious mystery of the Rosary.

These objectives focus on intellectual mastery. As religious educators, however, we must also appeal to the heart—not just the head. Therefore, it is important to set another kind of lesson objective: what do you want your students to feel?

Students Will Feel . . .

Reality check: religious education is different from every other form of education your students will have. You don't want them just to *learn about* God, you want them to *love* God. You want them to encounter Christ in your classroom so that they can have a life-long relationship with him. That is why setting intellectual SWBAT lesson objectives is not enough. You also have to set objectives that speak to the heart.

Your lesson should therefore include a SWF objective. SWF stands for "Students will feel." Think about the topic you are teaching the students. In addition to inspiring the mind, the topic should also touch the heart. What will they feel in their hearts that will help motivate them to live what they have learned? What will this new heart knowledge inspire your students to do?

Here are some positive feelings and emotions you may want to aim to stir up in your students' hearts during a lesson. Students will feel (SWF) . . .

- *Happy:* joyful, fortunate, delighted, appreciation, grateful, thankful

- *Curious:* interested, concerned, intrigued, fascinated, absorbed, engrossed, surprised, astonished, amazed

- *Blessed:* calm, peaceful, comfortable, pleased, content, relaxed, patient, free

- *Inspired:* determined, motivated, resolute, passionate, animated, energized, excited, stirred

- *Love:* affection, compassion, empathy, mercy, devotion, admiration, sympathy, touched, comforted

For example:

- SWF determined to participate in the liturgical seasons at home.

- SWF fascinated by the writings of a pope.

- SWF joy when contemplating the glorious mysteries of the Rosary.

Now that you have in mind a clear set of goals for what you want your students to be able to do and feel at the end of your lesson, you can start to find and plan activities that will help them get there.

Step 3: Find Effective Activities

Before we begin step 3, I want to remind you not to skip step 2. Your lesson objectives will guide the picking and planning of activities. Once you have a clearly defined set of objectives for your students, you can start to design the presentation and find and plan the activities that will enable them to reach those objectives. As you read earlier in this eBook, the simplest way to design your lesson is in three parts: presentation, practice, and proof.

Plan Your Presentation

In this part of your lesson, you will introduce new ideas to the students. They will receive this new information in one of two ways: by listening or by reading. They can listen to you or watch a video of someone explaining a new idea to them, or they can read to learn something new.

Remember, we learn by making connections between what we already know and the new ideas that are presented to us. The best way to help students make connections between ideas is to give them a graphic organizer to assist them. A graphic organizer is a visual layout of ideas and how they connect to one another. When you give students a blank or partially completed graphic organizer, they can fill it out while they listen to you lecture or use it to comprehend better what they are reading in a textbook.

For example, imagine you are teaching a lesson on the Trinity. You could give the students a Triple Venn Diagram to describe the similarities and differences between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They could complete this graphic organizer by listening to you lecture, reading the textbook, or reading the Nicene Creed.

You can find and download a collection of graphic organizers at www.thereligionteacher.com/graphicorganizers.

Lecture

If you choose to teach students new information with a lecture, keep it as short as possible. The bulk of your lesson should consist of your students practicing and applying what they have learned so they can solidify those connections within their brains.

One of the best ways to do this, in my experience, is to follow The Rule of Three. The Rule of Three basically says that three is the magic number when it comes to learning and remembering new ideas. Once you accept this, you will start to notice excellent communicators using three all the time. There are three acts in a play, three meals a day,

three courses in a meal, and a Trinity—three Persons in one God. Organize your lecture by talking about no more than three main ideas.

Also keep in mind that your students' attention span in minutes will max out at their age. So a seven year old will be able to listen attentively for only about seven minutes. Even a high school senior will have the attention span of a little less than twenty minutes before their mind wanders to something else.

Reading

Just as you limit the amount of time your students must sit and listen to you or others talk, so too should you limit the amount of time the students sit and read or listen to someone read. Reading the textbook out loud is not an effective use of class time. It can be difficult for students to follow along in the textbook when another student struggles to read out loud. Limit this reading time as much as possible and instead focus your time (again!) on having students practice what they learn.

If you do use class time to read from the textbook, resist the urge to just read and explain. Help the students understand what they are reading by helping them complete a graphic organizer you give them while they read or while you read together. You can either create your own graphic organizer or use a more general one such as a Fishbone Diagram, Mind Map, etc. (Find examples at www.thereligionteacher.com/graphicorganizers) The graphic organizer will help them stay focused and comprehend what they are reading.

Plan Practice Activities

This part of your lesson will take the majority of your class time. Practice activities will keep students actively engaged rather than barely listening. They will be working, and you will be watching, coaching, and helping them along the way. Remember, the practice activities must help your students perform the objectives you set ahead of time. You will find a lot of fun activities, but if they don't help your students meet the lesson objectives, then they are a distraction. (The other option, of course, is to adjust the objectives. No one says you have to have your objectives set in stone before you find good learning activities.)

Here are some places you can go to find activities for your students to do in class:

Textbook Teacher's Manual: Look for activity ideas in your teacher's manual (if you have one). See if any of the suggestions or printouts match up with the objective you have set for your students.

Google: There are some great activity ideas online. Search for your topic + activities, lesson plan, worksheet, etc.

Pinterest: Think of Pinterest as a visual search engine. Perform the same searches you might run on Google inside of Pinterest, and you will discover some great suggestions.

The Religion Teacher: Since 2009, I have been creating and collecting activities, lesson plans, worksheets, videos, prayers, and teaching strategies for you to use in class. Type what you are looking for in the search bar at the top of the website, and see what is available to you.

The Religion Teacher Membership Website: Hundreds of printable worksheets are available to premium members of The Religion Teacher. These worksheets focus primarily on helping students make personal connections through meditation and prayer so that they can love and serve Jesus Christ, not just learn about him.

The Appendix of The Religion Teacher's Guide to Lesson Planning*:* The appendix of this eBook has 250 activity ideas and strategies to help your students actively practice what they have learned. This list focuses mostly on intellectual understanding of ideas (SWBAT).

Activities That Touch the Heart

You are reading this eBook because you are responsible for religious education. Religious education means more than just teaching *about* religion. It means more than teaching *about* God. Our responsibility is to help students meet and grow in a *relationship with* God. We want them to know God, but also to love and serve him!

To touch the heart, plan activities that give students the opportunity to encounter Christ. The best way I have found to do this is to use what I call Lectio Divina Lesson Planning. (You can read more about this approach in The Religion Teacher article, "Lectio Divina Lesson Planning," and in the book, *Christ in the Classroom*) The biggest difference between Lectio Divina Lesson Planning and what typical religious educators do is the intentional use of in-class meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

Don't be intimidated by those words! Think of them as activities in which students ask the following questions:

Meditation: What is God saying to me through this teaching?

Prayer: What can I say in response to God during this lesson?

Contemplation: What is God calling me to be or do?

To encourage **meditation** in class, find activities or resources with questions that encourage the students to make personal connections to what they are learning. Too often, religion has become something distant and irrelevant to young people in the world. As a result, Christ is an irrelevant idea to them. The more we invite students to make personal connections to the faith, the more likely they are to see the opportunity to personally connect with Christ in their hearts and not just in their heads.

By including **prayer** in the practice part of your lesson plan, you make talking to God an integral part of the learning process rather than something thrown in at the beginning or the end of the lesson. We learn through responding and talking to the Lord. Plan prayer experiences that help students form words to say to God in response to what they are learning in class.

Finally, **contemplation** in class can seem difficult. It simply means setting aside some time in class to spend with the Lord. St. Teresa of Avila is quoted in the *Catechism* as saying that contemplative prayer is "nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time to frequently be alone with him who we know loves us" (CCC, 2709). So give your students time to spend with God. This can be quiet, reflective prayer time at their desks or more intense prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in your church. This contemplative prayer time will help the students get comfortable being in the presence of the Lord. In many ways, that is the only goal to have for this time. It will feel like lost instruction time, but it may be the only time they take to pray like this in their everyday lives.

For a more detailed guide to applying Lectio Divina Lesson Planning to your work, check out my book, *Christ in the Classroom: Lesson Planning for the Heart and Mind*.

Plan a Proof Activity

Finally, pick one activity that will show proof that your students can effectively carry out the objectives you have set for them. This part of the lesson is properly known as assessment, which is typically a quiz or a test. You can certainly use Multiple-Choice quizzes and tests, but try to use other forms of assessment as much as possible.

The proofs (assessments) you plan should align with the objectives you set for your students. This could be as simple as asking students to respond to a question on a note card. (This is called an Exit Card, and it is my favorite form of assessment.) Or you can plan something that is more creative and that you can observe students doing in class.

You can find a number of alternative assessment ideas at The Religion Teacher and in the appendix of this eBook.

Unit Planning

Just as textbooks often organize chapters within units, so too should you group your lessons by broader themes into individual units. Doing so gives students a bigger purpose for the lessons of each class. Just as you established objectives for each lesson, think of a broader objective that you want your students to be able to do and feel at the end of a multi-lesson unit. This way, every lesson helps move students closer to that unit goal.

One way to frame your unit goal is to craft a central question that each lesson will help students toward answering. These questions should be difficult or impossible to answer without some critical thinking. Therefore, most central questions should start with "why" or "how" instead of "what" or "when."

At the end of a unit, students are often given a unit test that addresses what they have learned during many lessons. If you focus on a unit goal or central question, however, your students might enjoy the opportunity to complete a creative project rather than answering the central question in an Essay on the test. Essays are common unit assessments, but experienced teachers should attempt to assess student progress with Authentic Assessments or Performance Assessments. These complex, project-like assessments measure a student's ability to think critically about multiple parts of the many lessons leading up to the assessment. Unit planning can be challenging and time-consuming, but it increases student engagement and helps focus individual lessons for a larger purpose.

Time to Teach!

I hope you find this guide useful this year as you teach young people to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make an impact on the young people you serve. Your lesson plan is only the beginning. There is so much more to catechesis than a good lesson plan. The Religion Teacher is there to help you whenever you need additional ideas or help. I hope to see you there, and don't hesitate to email me anytime with questions or suggestions.

Jared Dees
Founder of The Religion Teacher
www.thereligionteacher.com

Appendix: The Religion Teacher's List of 250 Activities and Teaching Strategies

Present	Practice	Proof
2-Column Notes	Affinity	3-2-1
3-Column Notes	Alphabet Summary	Agree/Disagree Matrix
5 + 1	Apprenticeships	Agreement Circles
10 + 2	Ball Toss	Alphabet Summary
20 Questions	Blog	Analogies
Acronyms	Carousel Brainstorming	Authentic Assessments
Advance Organizer	Cartoons	Author's Chair
Anticipation Guide	Causal Map	Blog
APPARTS	Cause and Effect	Bluff
Audio Recording	Centers	Cartoons
Authentic Questions	Chalk Talk	Causal Map
Blog	Checklist	Cause and Effect
Cascade	Collages	Collages
Case Studies	Comic Strips	Comic Strips
Cause and Effect	Comparison Matrix	Comparison Matrix
Chants and Cheers	Concentration	Concept Map
Charts	Concept Fan	CROWN
Chunking	Concept Map	DEFENDS
Class Grid	Construction Spiral	Diorama
Clustering	Continuum	Directed Paraphrasing
Comparison Matrix	Corners	Discussion Board
Computer Simulation	Crawford Slip Writing	Dog Paddles
Concept Fan	Crossword Puzzles	Drawing
Concept Map	Cubing	Entrance Card
Context Clues	Dance	Essays
Continuum	Debate	Exit Card
Copying	Debriefing	Fill-in-the-Blank
Cornell Note-Taking System	DEFENDS	Fishbowl Discussion
Cueing	Devil's Advocate	Flowchart
Daily Outline	Diary	Forced Choice
Deduction	Diorama	Formative Assessment
Devil's Advocate	Discussion Board	Grab Bag
Diagram	Discussion Web	"I Can" Statements
Dialectic Journal	Discussions	Idea Spinner
Didactic Instruction	Double-Cell Diagram	Interviews
Didactic Questions	Dramatization	Inventory Questioning
Directed Reading-Thinking	Drawing	Jeopardy
Activity	ELVES	Jumbled Summary
Discovery Teaching	Facilitative Questioning	Justifying
Double-Cell Diagram	Fishbone Diagram	Knowledge Awards
Dramatic Reading	Fishbowl Discussion	Knowledge Rating
Drawing	Flash Cards	KWHL Chart
Exaggeration	Flowchart	KWL Chart
Examples	Forced Analogy	Learning Log
Expectation Outlines	Forced Choice	Letter Writing
Facilitative Questioning	Four Corners	Line-Up
Films	Free Association	Listing
Fishbone Diagram	Free Write and Share	Matching
Flowchart	Generalization	Meaningful Sentences
Focused Imaging	Grab Bag	Minute Papers
Free Association	Guesstures	Model Building

Free Write and Share	Guided Discussion	Models
Guest Speakers	Guided Imagery	Muddiest Point
Guided Questioning	Guided Writing	Multiple-Choice
Hand Gestures	Idea Spinner	Newscast
Highlighting	Ideatoons	Newspapers
Illustrated Talks	Important Details Mind Map	One-Sentence Summary
Induction	Inquiry	One-Word Summary
Inverted Pyramid	Inside-Outside Circle	Oral Response
Jigsaw	Inverted Pyramid	Outline
Jokes	Jeopardy	Pair Check
Keyword Memory Method	Jigsaw	Panel Discussions
Known-to-Unknown	Journaling	Paraphrasing
Lecture	Jumbled Summary	Peer Editing
LINK	Learning Centers	Performance Assessment
Listen-Think-Pair-Share	Letter Writing	Picture Map
Listening Center	Line Up	PMI
Mentors	Meaningful Sentences	Point-Counterpoint
Mind Map	Message Board	Position Paper
Mnemonic Devices	Mind Map	Possible Sentences
Non-examples	Model Building	Posters
Note Taking	Models	Pros and Cons
Note Cards	Negative Brainstorming	Quick Draw
Open Q&A	Newscast	Quick Talk
Outline	Newspapers	RAFT
Overhead Notes	Open Q&A	Raps
Pair Reading	Outline	Role Personification
Picture Map	Paul Discussions	RSQC2
Podcasts	Paragraph Shrinking	Rubrics
Popcorn Reading	Paraphrasing	Self-Assessment
Popsicle Sticks	Partner Discussion	Self-Correction
Posture	Peer Editing	Short-Answer
PowerPoint	Peer Questioning	Similarities and Differences
Prediction Pairs	Pictionary Vocabulary	Songs
Predictions	Picture Map	Spider Map
Prezi	Plays	SQ3R
PROP Advance Organizer	PMI	Storyboards
Reading Guide	Point-Counterpoint	Summarizing
Silent Reading	Possible Sentences	Think-Pair-Share
Skeleton Notes	Posters	Thumbs Up or Down
SLANT	Prediction Pairs	Time Line
Slideshow	Pros and Cons	Triple Venn Diagram
SMART Board	Quick Draw	True or False
Socratic Discussion	Quick Talk	Venn Diagram
Socratic Questioning	Quick Write	Want Ads
Spider Map	RAFT	Weblog
SQ3R	Raps	Write-Pair-Share
Storyboards	Reader's Theater	ZAP!
Storytelling	Reciprocal Teaching	
Talking Chips	Relay Summary	
Time Line	Rote Personification	
Transparencies	RSQC2	
Triple Venn Diagram	Share-Pair Circles	
Unknown Objects	Similarities and Differences	
Venn Diagram	Six Thinking Hats	
Weblog	Skits	
Wordsplash	Socratic Discussion	

Yes, No, Maybe So	Socratic Questioning	
	Songs	
	Spider Map	
	SQ3R	
	Storyboards	
	Stump the Teacher	
	Summarizing	
	Think-Pair-Share	
	Tic-Tac-Know	
	Time Line	
	Triple Venn Diagram	
	Value Clarification Discussion	
	Value Line	
	Venn Diagram	
	Want Ads	
	Weblog	
	Webquests	
	Word Chain	
	Write-Pair-Share	
	Written Music	
	Yes, No, Maybe So	
	ZAP!	

2-Column Notes: Have students fold a notebook paper in half lengthwise ("hot dog style") or draw a vertical line down the middle of the paper. Label the left column Topic and the right column Notes. Other heading pairs could include Main Idea-Details, Opinion-Proof, Problem-Solution, Vocabulary-Definition, etc. When students return to these notes to study, they should fold the paper in half and mentally or verbally elaborate on the topics in the left column before checking their answers in the right column. Download a 2-Column Notes template here.

3-Column Notes: This note-taking strategy is similar to 2-Column Notes, but includes an extra column for personal opinions, observations, and thoughts that relate to the topic. You might have students label their columns Main Idea, Details, and Observations. Download a 3-Column Notes template here.

3-2-1: This is an activity in which students write down three key terms or phrases from the day's lesson, two things they would like to learn more about, and one concept they have mastered. You might consider other variations of this 3-2-1 model.

5 + 1 (Five plus One): This direct instruction or lecture technique calls for teachers to present for five minutes and then have students discuss or reflect for one minute. The cycle repeats for the duration of the lecture. See also 10 + 2.

10 + 2 (Ten plus Two): This direct instruction or lecture technique calls for teachers to present for ten minutes and then have students discuss or reflect for two minutes. The cycle repeats for the duration of the lecture. See also 5 + 1.

20 Questions: This discovery teaching technique starts with a statement, activity, image, or video that students experience for the first time. Teachers then give students

the opportunity to ask twenty yes-or-no questions in an attempt to identify the purpose of the item in question.

Acronyms: In these words, each letter stands for a word or phrase to be memorized. Create or find acronyms to help students remember a list of related ideas and concepts.

Advance Organizer: Advance Organizers are agendas that give students an idea of what they will be learning that day or during a lecture.

Affinity: In this brainstorming activity, all members of a group write responses to a question on a note card or slip of paper. The responses are spread across a shared table or desk. Group members then silently examine the responses and group similar ideas together. After the responses are arranged in an agreed-upon organization, group members can discuss their responses.

Agree/Disagree Matrix: This handout helps students take a stance on select statements and issues before and after the lesson. On two sides of the handout, write or type a list of statements with the words "Agree" and "Disagree" next to each statement. Have students circle "Agree" or "Disagree" before the lesson then again at the end of the lesson.

Agreement Circles: Students stand in a circle. The teacher reads a statement, and those who agree with the statement step into the circle while the rest of the students remain on the outside of the circle. Students should be able to support their choice to step into the circle.

Alphabet Summary: Assign each student a letter of the alphabet, and have them come up with a word beginning with their letter that relates to the topic of the lesson.

Analogies: Analogies are a critical thinking skill where students can give an example of something similar to the topic of the lesson to help describe its meaning and significance.

Anticipation Guide: This reading strategy encourages students to self-assess their opinions about a text before (to activate prior knowledge and encourage interest) and after (to encourage critical thinking) reading it.

APPARTS: This is a strategy for reading primary documents. APPARTS is an acronym for **A**uthor, **P**lace and time, **P**rior knowledge, **A**udience, **R**eason, **T**he main idea, and **S**ignificance. Discuss each aspect of the reading with the students, or have them write a description of each aspect and share it with the class.

Apprenticeships: In Apprenticeships, also known as Mentorships, students can be paired up with other students or adults to encourage learning new tasks or procedures.

Audio Recording: Record a lecture for a lesson, and send it to the students and parents to listen to outside of class. This is a great way to help students review what they have learned in class.

Authentic Assessments: Also known as Performance Assessments, these assessments have students complete meaningful tasks that call for a developed understanding of the material. These assessments are usually done at the end of the unit and after the test.

Authentic Questions: Invite students to ask questions out of genuine curiosity about a topic. Though these questions can often be deliberate attempts to get a teacher off topic, the discussions they spark can give rise to excellent teachable moments.

Author's Chair: This is a creative way of asking students to present something they have written at the front of the class.

Ball Toss: To add a little fun and excitement, use a soft ball (or rolled up sock) to designate the single person who is permitted to speak during a class discussion. When another person wants to participate, they can raise their hand and wait for the ball to be tossed to them. The teacher should also request the ball before speaking.

Blog: Class Blogs can be excellent ways for you to share ideas and progress with students and for students to share ideas with each other in the comments section.

Bluff: This is a fun review game that challenges students to think critically about questions they are not sure they know the answers to. Students are divided into teams and stand to answer questions asked to their team. A team scores points equal to the number of teammates standing when the student who is called on answers correctly.

Carousel Brainstorming: Create a series of stations around the room. Each station should be focused on a specific topic and have a word or phrase, question, short reading, or picture to incite discussion. Divide the class into groups, and assign each group to a station. The groups will spend a predetermined amount of time at each station, during which they will discuss the topic and record their ideas on a large paper or poster board. At the final station, have each group select the two to three best ideas from their station.

Cartoons: Drawing Cartoons can be a creative way for students to activate prior knowledge, demonstrate reading comprehension, or show understanding.

Cascade: The teacher teaches something to a small group of students or has the students watch an informative video lesson. This group of students, in turn, teaches it to another group of students. That group teaches another group, and so on, until the teaching cascades down to the rest of the class.

Case Studies: Providing real-life situations to which students can apply knowledge is an excellent way to encourage critical thinking. Create relevant situations or pull from real-life events to pose cases for students to consider, analyze, and discuss.

Causal Map: This is a form of Concept Map in which cause and effect are illustrated.

Cause and Effect: Identifying Cause and Effect is an important thinking skill in which a pattern can be found showing a relationship between two or more events. Present new information to students in the form of cause and effect, or have them show the causes and effects in activities and assignments.

Centers: Centers allow teachers to offer a variety of activities, integrate multiple subjects, and encourage intrinsic motivation. Students are divided into groups and assigned to certain Centers, or Stations, around the room, where games, crafts, and other creative activities are placed to help students organize, practice, and clarify lessons.

Chalk Talk: Write a word or phrase on the board. Warn students that there is no talking during the activity, only writing. Give a few students markers (chalk) to write on the board words or responses that they associate with the word or phrase you proposed. Once they have finished, they can give the markers to other students. To ensure that it stays quiet, have the students without markers copy what students write on the board and record their personal thoughts.

Chants and Cheers: Chants and Cheers are effective for the same reason that the psalms are so memorable. Create a chant, cheer, or song to help students remember certain key definitions or main ideas.

Charts: It can be helpful to create a Chart or Grid to help students organize in specific ways the information they are reading or hearing.

Checklist: Typically used as a self-assessment tool, Checklists provide a series of to-dos or procedures that will help students accomplish a certain task.

Chunking: It is cognitively easier to remember things that are "chunked" or "bunched" together. This is why phone numbers and social security numbers are broken apart in small sets (e.g., 555-555-5555). One reason why the Rosary is such an excellent catechetical tool is that we memorize essential events in the life of Christ and Mary through chunking them in the sets of mysteries.

Class Grid: This tool comes in handy for larger classes. Divide your seating chart into four quadrants by drawing two perpendicular lines intersecting at the center of the room. Make check marks or dashes each time you call on a student in that part of the room. This will ensure that you are calling on students in each part of the room and not just the front (or side).

Clustering: This is a note-taking and brainstorming technique that connects a cluster of ideas to one central concept. See Mind Map, Concept Map.

Collages: These artistic representations of concepts or stories, made of magazine clippings and photographs, can be used to show comprehension.

Comic Strips/Books: Students can create comic strips as an artistic way of representing their understanding of key events or topics.

Comparison Matrix: This chart compares a series of items according to various categories. The categories typically go in the left column, while the items being compared form the top row of each column. Students must fill in the boxes to show similarities and differences.

Computer Simulation: A simulation is a computer-generated, interactive, representation of events or places that can help students visualize what cannot be seen.

Concentration: Students match pairs of cards that may have a name and a definition or a picture and a title. All cards are placed face down, and students must match the correct cards and keep them as points.

Concept Cards: In this reading strategy, students are given (or choose) certain vocabulary words. Whenever they encounter these words in their reading, they must write both the word and the sentence in which it appears in the text on the same side of an index card. After they are finished reading, students will write the definition of the word on the blank side. You can also have students write additional characteristics, examples, or new sentences using the words on the blank side of the card.

Concept Fan: Similar to a Concept Map, but more linear, a Concept Fan is a graphic organizer used for problem solving. Three or more solutions are written to "fan" or radiate out on lines stemming from a problem. From there, students can take step back to a broader view of the problem and create a series of other solutions.

Concept Map: This is quite possibly the most popular format for brainstorming. Start with a concept and write it in the middle of the paper. Write a few ideas related to the main concept in circles that surround it. Then record additional subtopics in circles surrounding the supporting concepts. See also Mind Map.

Construction Spiral: Very similar to Think-Pair-Share, this brainstorming technique is a three-step process in which students record their thoughts on a piece of paper, share them in a small group, and then list the group's ideas on the board.

Context Clues: Train students to use Context Clues to help remember the meaning of certain words within a text. Students can understand completely new words by examining their function in a sentence and discussing adjoining words that are more familiar.

Continuum: Students take a series of words, phrases, people, or events and arrange them in a Continuum based on set criteria. For example, students might list whether a sin is a venial sin or a mortal sin based on whether the matter is grave.

Copying: Copying is possibly the most popular form of note taking, yet often the least effective. Students copy overhead notes or PowerPoint slides or listen and write down what the teacher says in their notes during a lecture.

Cornell Note-Taking System: Similar to the 2-Column Notes strategy, the Cornell Note-Taking System divides a page into three boxes: main ideas in the left column (the "cue column"), details in the right column, and a summary in a box at the bottom. Some educators suggest taking notes based on the "Five *R*s": Record, Reduce, Recite, Reflect, Review. The summary portion is the most important part of the system. Download this sample Cornell Note-Taking Graphic Organizer.

Corners: Post four possible responses to questions—such as strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree—in the four corners of the room. Students must stand in the corner that aligns with their response to certain opinionated statements. The teacher should then ask students to justify their responses to the class.

Crawford Slip Writing: This brainstorming technique is used to help a group quickly create a number of ideas or solutions to a problem. Students should be given a stack of slips of paper. Each student should write down as many ideas or solutions as possible on individual slips of paper. Collect the papers by class or group, and discuss both similarities in the ideas and some of the unique thoughts.

Crossword Puzzle: Crossword Puzzles are fun ways to use fill-in-the-blank or direct questions. Clues to some answers can be found using the intersection of words in the puzzle.

CROWN: CROWN is an acronym that stands for
    Communicate what you learned.
    React to what you learned.
    Offer a one-sentence summary.
    Where could you use this?
    Note how well you did today.
Responses should be written on a blank sheet of paper and collected at the end of the day.

Cubing: Cubing is a pre-writing exercise that encourages critical thinking. Construct a cardboard cube or find a large set of dice. On the six sides of the cube, write the following six instructions: describe it, compare it, associate it, analyze it, apply it, argue for/against it. Roll or throw the cube like a die, and have students respond according to the side facing up.

Cueing: Use cues to let students know that certain information is especially important and should be remembered. This could be as simple as an announcement to students that "this will be on the test!" or highlighted text in a slideshow presentation.

Daily Outline: In this advance organizer, a teacher outlines an overview of the day's lesson, including a list of the activities that will need to be done in class or as homework, on the board or in a handout.

Dance: Dance can be an excellent memory technique as well as a way to creatively demonstrate understanding of certain concepts.

Debate: There are many forms of debate in classroom or catechetical settings. In whatever form, debates can be excellent ways to encourage students to take stances on issues and support them with meaningful facts and evidence.

Debriefing: Take some time at the conclusion of an activity or lesson to discuss why students did certain activities. This can sometimes be the most important time for clarification of learning objectives and better organization of knowledge.

Deduction: To use this presentation technique, start with general ideas and move toward more specific ideas about a certain topic during a discussion.

DEFENDS: This writing strategy is an acronym that stands for **D**ecide (on a position), **E**xamine (the reason for the position), **F**orm (a list of supporting points to explain each reason), **E**xpose (the position in the opening sentence), **N**ote (the reason and supporting points), **D**rive (home the position in the concluding sentence), and **S**earch (for errors by proofreading).

Devil's Advocate: To spark debate and discussion, pretend to defend a statement that is outrageous or controversial. Make the students really believe that you mean what you say, and they will be much more likely to discuss, debate, and defend what they believe. Rehash the discussion afterward to clarify the truth about your position.

Diagram: Find visual representations of concepts, and share them during your presentation.

Dialectic Journal: In this variation of 2-Column Notes, quotes or text is written on one side, and reflections and reactions are written on the other.

Diary: In this common reflection technique, students record their daily experiences and thoughts.

Didactic Instruction: This is the most common form of direct instruction, in which teachers tell students what to think about a certain topic.

Didactic Questions: Ask a question with a specific answer, and have students respond at random. (This is a very common practice among teachers.)

Diorama: This is a three-dimensional scene that students can create to summarize events in a miniature model. Dioramas are classically created using shoeboxes. See also Model Building.

Directed Paraphrasing: Have students orally paraphrase concepts to the teacher or to the class. This is sometimes called putting students "on the spot."

Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA): While reading, students are asked questions that activate prior knowledge and allow them to make predictions.

Discovery Teaching: Use an object, song, story, or metaphor to introduce a topic. Then encourage a student to reach certain conclusions and understand certain concepts about a topic through discussion. For an example, see 20 Questions.

Discussion Board: Online Discussion Boards (also called Message Boards) can be used to encourage student interaction about a topic or to assess responses to questions outside of class.

Discussion Web: Similar to the basic Think-Pair-Share activity, a Discussion Web starts with students working individually and then individuals pair up; in this activity, the pairs then join another pair, and then these groups share their thoughts with the entire class.

Discussions: Class discussions start with open-ended questions posed to students. Guide the students during the discussions, and respond when clarification is needed, but allow them to feel welcome to share what they feel is pertinent to the conversation.

Dog Paddles: This quick assessment technique requires that students have paddles labeled with two possible responses to questions. For example, the paddles might be labeled with "yes" or "no" or with more specific responses like "Matthew" or "Luke," "Sacraments at the Service of Communion" or "Sacraments of Healing," etc.

Double-Cell Diagram: Double-Cell Diagrams are Concept Maps in which two ideas are compared. Supporting ideas that are similar connect to both items being compared, while differences are listed on the outside.

Dramatic Reading: Assign students roles from a story—for example, people in a story from the Bible (Jesus, Mary, Moses, the lost son, etc.). Read the text as the narrator, but when the text reads "Jesus said . . . " or "Moses said . . . ," then the student with that role should join in as a dramatic reader.

Dramatization: Students act out roles from a story or historical event. Provide guidelines to ensure that they act out the important parts of the story.

Drawing: Invite students to show comprehension by drawing images to summarize what they know or remember about a certain topic. You can also use Drawings to teach during your presentation.

ELVES: This brainstorming acronym stands for **E**ase, make **L**ists, **V**ary the lists, **E**ureka, and **S**elect. Have the student make lists to solve a problem then make more lists

to branch off from some of the initial ideas. Circle the ones that seem best (Eureka) and Select a solution.

Entrance Card: To check for prior knowledge or to assess their memory of previous lessons, have students answer a certain question written on a card in order to "enter" the classroom.

Essays: One of the most common forms of assessment, Essays are typically evaluated based on a student's ability to form an argument and support it in writing.

Exaggeration: Exaggeration can be used in a presentation to highlight important concepts.

Examples: When introducing a topic or concept, present multiple Examples to which a concept can be applied or which illustrate and prove the concept.

Exit Card: Get quick responses to questions as students exit the class. Have them share half-sheets of paper or use note cards to quickly answer your question and hand it in as they leave the room.

Expectation Outline: Have students skim through the textbook reading and either write down questions they expect to answer or outline statements that correspond to the reading. Have them return to their outline during the reading to answer, correct, or fill in what they originally wrote down in their outlines. See also KWL Chart.

Facilitative Questioning: Using a predetermined list, ask open-ended questions that encourage critical thinking or emotional reflection about certain topics. The intent of the questions is to encourage students to come up with their own solutions to problems.

Fill-in-the-Blank: More challenging than a Multiple-Choice or Matching question, Fill-in-the-Blank statements require students to recall words or phrases that fit into a particular context.

Films: Using excerpts from Films can be a great way to differentiate instruction through a medium that students enjoy. Make sure to provide viewing guides for lengthy use of video in class.

Fishbone Diagram: This graphic organizer helps students visualize concepts and details or cause and effect. It is similar to a Mind Map, but resembles the bones of a fish. Try this sample Fishbone Diagram with your students.

Fishbowl Discussion: Select a group of students to sit in the front of the room in chairs arranged in a half-circle (shaped like a bowl) facing the class. Pose questions to the students in the front of the room, and allow them to discuss. The rest of the students in the audience may raise their hands to pose a questions or take the place of a student "in the fishbowl," but they may not speak or engage in the discussion while at their

desks. Often, the students need to have learned/researched a lot about a topic before they can have a meaningful discussion such as this.

Flash Cards: This is the most popular way to take notes on vocabulary terms. On one side of the note card, students write the name of the term or concept. On the other side, they write definitions or details about the topic. You may have students draw pictures with the word or phrase as clues to jog their memories and connect to prior knowledge.

Flowchart: Flowcharts are similar to Time Lines in that they are sequential, but they are used to display a series of cause-and-effect events or topics.

Focused Imagining: Lead students through guided reflections to help them form mental images about a certain concept or story.

Forced Analogy: Select two vocabulary words. Have students create an analogy that compares two vocabulary words together.

Forced Choice: Scatter a small number of answer choices or responses to questions throughout the room. Students must examine each choice, stand next to the one they agree with, and be prepared to justify their decision.

Formative Assessment: This type of assessment is meant to allow teachers to check understanding and adjust instruction before moving on to the next lesson objective. Formative Assessments are quick and give you immediate feedback. Many of the strategies in this list are Formative Assessments.

Four Corners: See Corners.

Free Association: In this brainstorming technique, have students list everything that comes to mind when they hear certain words or sentences or see certain images.

Free Write and Share: Give students a piece of writing, a picture, or a video. Have them respond by writing everything they can think of about the topic until they run out of things to write. Then, have them share what they wrote with the class.

Generalization: Generalizing is a critical thinking skill in which students take information and create ways of describing it in simpler ways. Generalizations show the ability to categorize and classify information.

Grab Bag: Fill a bag with a conglomeration of objects related to the lesson. To assess comprehension and encourage critical thinking at the end of the lesson, have students draw an object out of the bag and explain how it relates to the lesson.

Guesstures: This review game is based on the popular family game Guesstures. Students are given vocabulary words and must act them out for other team members to guess the word.

Guest Speakers: Find experts on a certain topic, and invite them to join your class for a short presentation and question-and-answer session. Your parish pastor or priest or members of the local community could be speakers. Consider using Skype or other video conferencing technology to invite guest speakers from outside the local community.

Guided Discussion: Guide discussion with leading questions that encourage students to interpret the information they have learned and react to what other students have said.

Guided Imagery: Guide students to visualize a series of images that relate to a certain topic. See also Focused Imaging.

Guided Questioning: Guide students with a series of questions that offer clues about the lesson or reading and then become less revealing as comprehension increases among the students.

Guided Writing: Invite written responses to certain questions, statements, topics, or issues.

Hand Gestures: Various Hand Gestures can help students remember definitions and meanings of words or phrases. When you define a word, for example, use additional hand gestures that will help the student recall the words of the definition. When students repeat the definitions, they can also repeat the hand gestures.

Highlighting: Highlighting is a popular way to mark important information on a page of a book. Make sure you help students recognize that the purpose of highlighting is to help in reviewing the information later, so they should highlight only the information that is most important to remember and avoid highlighting entire pages of text.

"I Can" Statements: Write on the board a list of "I can" statement that corresponds to the lesson objective. (The simplest way to do this is just write the lesson objective and replace SWBAT with "I can.") Have the students self-assess their understanding of the statement or question, showing you their level of understanding with a smiley face or frowning face.

Idea Spinner: Create a spinner/spindle marked with four quadrants labeled Explain, Summarize, Predict, and Evaluate. Spin the spinner, and have students respond to a topic, either verbally or in writing, with the selected prompt.

Ideatoons: This is a brainstorming and problem-solving technique in which students draw ideas on index cards and then combine them with other students' ideas to spark discussion. With the cards laid out, students can choose the best options or common solutions.

Illustrated Talks: Present with charts, graphs, diagrams, or photographs related to a certain topic. Some theology teachers use religious artwork or architecture as the foundation of their illustrated talks.

Important Details Mind Map: By adding "important details" to "mind map," encourage students to record only the most important details in their Mind Maps rather than everything they read, recall, or brainstorm.

Induction: As the opposite of Deduction, Induction starts with specific facts or ideas that are used to infer more general principles and conclusions.

Inquiry: In this method, students solve problems by generating possible solutions or hypotheses and then test them by doing additional research.

Inside-Outside Circle: Students form two circles, one inside the other, facing each other. Give them a set amount of time to quickly quiz each other; then ask them to rotate the circle by any number of people, and have the new partners quiz each other.

Interviews: One way to assess students is to interview them orally through question and answer. Students can also interview other people knowledgeable about a certain lesson topic to gather more detailed information and present to the class.

Inventory Questioning: This form of questioning activates students' prior knowledge and helps them assess their own opinions or beliefs about certain topics prior to a lesson.

Inverted Pyramid: This is a presentation or writing technique in which the most important information is presented first, followed by less important information in order of importance.

Jeopardy: Based on the popular TV game show, Jeopardy games award increasing levels of points for answering questions of increasing difficulty in a set of five or six categories. There are numerous PowerPoint templates on the Internet that can be used for Jeopardy.

Jigsaw: This is a form of cooperative learning in which students divide into groups to research, read, or watch a video about a certain topic. They then join members of other groups that researched different topics and combine their research like jigsaw puzzle pieces combining to form a puzzle.

Jokes: Use humor to grab students' attention during a presentation.

Journaling: Providing students with the opportunity to reflect through writing is a classic technique in religious education. Students often have a specific notebook for journaling so that they may look back and reflect on the journal entries at a later date. You can easily check these notebooks for effort throughout the semester, but try to ensure that what students write in their journals is kept confidential.

Jumbled Summary: Present a selection of randomly ordered vocabulary words or phrases, and ask the students to assemble them in a logical order and make connections based on their understanding of the lesson.

Justifying: When students take a stance on an issue, they should be able to justify their positions with evidence and support. This can be done either verbally or in writing.

Keyword Memory Method: This is a type of Mnemonic Device in which students break apart phrases by the words they contain. For example, if they are trying to remember the phrase "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible" from the Nicene Creed, they could visualize the number one with a father standing on top of it, making clouds and a globe and having one eye covered.

Knowledge Awards: At the end of a lesson or unit, give students the opportunity to vote on an award for the most useful (or most important) piece of knowledge they learned.

Knowledge Rating: In this pre-reading strategy, students rate their understanding of certain terms or concepts from a reading assignment. Provide students with a list of words or concepts, or have them find them on their own.

Known-to-Unknown: Begin a presentation with information that students know, and proceed into the unknown while drawing upon the prior knowledge you have reviewed with them.

KWHL Chart: This is similar to the KWL Chart, with an added column labeled "How I will find out . . . " Have students write everything they **K**now about the topic they are studying under the K column, everything they **W**ant to know under the W column, and strategies for **H**ow they will find the answers to their W questions under the H column. They should leave the third column (the L column) blank to come back to at the end of the lesson to write what they **L**earned. This can be used either as a pre-reading activity or at the start of a lesson. Download this sample KWHL Chart.

KWL Chart: Use a pre-created KWL Chart, or have students create a KWL chart by folding a piece of paper into thirds as if they were sending a letter. Have students write everything they **K**now about the topic they are studying under the K column and everything they **W**ant to know under the W column. They should leave the third column (the L column) blank to come back to after the lesson to write what they **L**earned. This can be used either as a pre-reading activity or at the start of a lesson. Download this sample KWL Chart.

Learning Centers: See Centers.

Learning Log: Students record what they have learned or what they still do not understand as a form of self-assessment and to inform the teacher about what information needs to be revisited.

Lecture: Give a simple presentation on a topic while students creatively take notes.

Letter Writing: Whether it is writing a real letter to a living person or role playing to write a letter between historical or imaginary persons, this can be an excellent way to encourage critical thinking and assess understanding about a topic. For example, students could write a letter to the bishop of their diocese, or they could write a letter to St. Paul from the perspective of the Corinthians.

Line Up: In this group activity, you can assess understanding of cause and effect or encourage students to make predictions. Give each student a large card or paper bearing a concept or an event, and have them work together to line themselves up in the correct order. For an added challenge, have them line up without talking.

LINK: This is an acronym that stands for **L**ist, **I**nquire, **N**ote, **K**now. Students list keywords or phrases they think are related to a topic. They inquire by asking questions about aspects of the topic they do not completely understand. They note what they know about the topic before the lesson. Then students listen to a presentation or read from the textbook. Finally, they write what they know after listening or reading.

Listen-Think-Pair-Share: This activity is similar to Think-Pair-Share, only students are asked to focus on listening to their partner. Once partners have shared ideas, they present their partner's ideas to the rest of the class rather than their own.

Listening Center: This is a center or designated part of the room in which students can listen to audio presentations or resources related to various topics.

Listing: From memory, students should be able to recall lists of concepts they read or heard about in your presentation.

Matching: Like Multiple-Choice questions, Matching questions ask students to identify the correct answer from a list of many possible choices, which sometimes allows students to use a process of elimination to determine the correct answer.

Meaningful Sentences: Create and provide Meaningful Sentences with vocabulary words to help students understand word meanings, or have them construct Meaningful Sentences with a set of vocabulary words as an assessment.

Mentors: Students pair up with members of the school staff or community to learn specific skills or ideas.

Message Board: This is an online tool that allows students and teachers to post messages or ideas for the entire class. Students can respond to one another there as well.

Mind Map: This is the most popular brainstorming technique. It is also a great way to summarize information in hierarchical categories. Write a concept in a circle in the

middle of the paper, and then draw lines out to circles containing supporting ideas or evidence that also have additional details in circles around them. See also Concept Map.

Minute Papers: At the end of class, give students sixty seconds (or just a little more) to summarize the day's lesson or write questions they still have on a scrap sheet of paper.

Mnemonic Devices: These techniques (Acronyms, Rhymes, Chunking, Imagery) help students remember or memorize words, names, phrases, or prayers.

Model Building: Building three-dimensional models can be a great way to promote hands-on learning in which students visually show in some way what they have learned. See also Diorama.

Models: See Model Building.

Most Important Word: To use this reading strategy, give students a list of the most important words they will come across in their reading. Then, after the reading assignment is completed, have the students decide on which word they think is the most important. This can also be a group discussion assignment.

Muddiest Point: Asking students to identify the "Muddiest Point" is a creative way of asking them to identify the concept they understand the least.

Multiple-Choice: Classic Multiple-Choice questions ask students to identify the correct answer to a question from a list of possible choices.

Negative Brainstorming: Instead of brainstorming a list of solutions to a problem or supporting ideas to a concept, students work in groups to brainstorm ideas and solutions that are non-examples or oppose the concept. The act of thinking through the negative examples will solidify their understanding of the correct understanding of an idea.

Newscast: Students show their understanding of certain topics by creating a Newscast, either in radio form or in television form, about events or concepts they have learned about.

Newspapers: Having students take on the role of newspaper journalists and editors allows them to creatively summarize events they have learned about. If time is short, have students create descriptive headlines related to the day's lesson.

Non-examples: Just as examples are important in illustrating concepts, giving students non-examples in a presentation can be great ways to help students organize and categorize topics in their minds.

Note Taking: Though it takes many forms, Note Taking is any way (e.g., on paper, in a computer) in which a student records new information.

Note Cards: Use Note Cards (or Popsicle sticks) with the students' names on them to call on students randomly. Students will keep listening to the questions if they know they might be called on to answer. You can also use these to make sure all of the students have participated on a certain day.

One-Sentence Summary: As a form of assessment, ask students to write a sentence to summarize the lesson of the day or answer a specific question. This is also called a Gist Sentence.

One-Word Summary: Provide for the students or have them choose a word that summarizes a lesson, and then have them write two or three sentences supporting the selection of that word.

Open Q&A: Give students the opportunity to ask the teacher or guest speaker questions about anything that sparks their curiosity or needs clarification.

Oral Response: This is a very common way for teachers to check understanding during direct instruction. Teachers ask questions, and students answer orally.

Outline: Whether students create a formal Outline or a list of main ideas and bullet points, outlining is an excellent skill that helps students categorize information.

Overhead Notes: Overhead projectors allow teachers to present notes, images, or writing on a large screen. Many classrooms have a more modern interactive whiteboards.

Pair Check: Students check their answers to an assignment with a partner or series of partners.

Pair Reading: In groups of two, students take turns reading aloud to one another.

Panel Discussions: Students sit in the front of the room and act as experts on a certain topic. They can present what they know and then field questions from the other students, who are at their desks. Instruct the "experts" to improvise if they don't know the answer.

Paragraph Shrinking: During Pair Reading, one student reads a paragraph and the other summarizes the main idea of the paragraph in their own words. The students should alternate as readers and summarizers.

Paraphrasing: This is a comprehension skill in which students must put a concept in their own words either orally or in writing.

Partner Discussion: Students discuss certain topics or responses to questions in pairs.

Peer Editing: Students exchange papers, essays, or assignments with a partner and edit each other's work by giving feedback with comments, changes, or suggestions.

Peer Questioning: Students ask questions of other students during presentations or group work.

Performance Assessment: A Performance Assessment is an Authentic Assessment, usually taking place at the end of the unit, that calls for deep understanding and adequate skill to complete a certain meaningful task. This type of assessment extends beyond the usual Multiple-Choice test or Essay and asks students to think critically about the subject matter.

Pictionary Vocabulary: This review game is based on the classic game Pictionary. Students are divided into teams. One representative from a team draws the meaning of a vocabulary word, and the other members of the team must identify it.

Picture Map: This is a form of Mind Map for visual learners in which pictures, rather than words and phrases, are used to map out ideas or stories.

Plays: Students act out stories or scenarios in groups to show comprehension. It is important to add another form of assessment or reflection to this activity to ensure that each member of the group thinks deeply about the play and can summarize the purpose of how they presented the information.

PMI: This acronym stands for **P**lus, **M**inus, **I**nteresting. Students list positive, negative, and other interesting aspects of an idea or solution. Have them share their lists in pairs or groups and then with the rest of the class.

Podcasts: One of the most popular ways to consume audio content today is through podcasts. There are numerous podcasts about many topics. Point students to podcasts related to your lesson, or create your own recording and post it online.

Point-Counterpoint: Students take sides on a particular issue, developing arguments for and against it. This can be done in a number of different formats, including essays, verbal debates, and lists.

Popcorn Reading: In this popular form of in-class reading, students take turns reading paragraphs from the text. When they finish a paragraph they say "Popcorn—[Name]" (inserting another student's name) to indicate which student will read the next paragraph.

Popsicle Sticks: Use Popsicle sticks or note cards with the students' names on them to call on students randomly to answer questions. If they know they might be called on to answer, students will keep listening. You can also use these to make sure all of the students have participated in a certain day.

Position Paper: In this form of Essay, students take a position and support it with evidence.

Possible Sentences: Create a list of key terms and phrases from a reading. Have students use two words or phrases from the list to create possible sentences they might come across during the reading. After reading the assignment, have them evaluate the how their sentences related to what they read.

Posters: Visual learners enjoy making posters that summarize particular topics related to the lesson. These posters can be used in class presentations and are excellent for group settings.

Posture: In order to maximize the students' receptivity to a lecture, you should teach, model, and encourage good posture. Good posture will increase students' awareness of what is being taught.

PowerPoint: Teachers commonly create slideshows using Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, or Google Slides. These programs allow you to print out copies of your slides as handouts, on which students can add additional notes based on what you say during the presentation.

Prediction Pairs: Students sit in pairs as the teacher reads from a text. Periodically, the teacher pauses and asks the students to brainstorm predictions with their partners about what will happen next in the text.

Predictions: Predictions are an essential reading skill in which students make educated guesses about what will happen next in a story or about the point of a lesson or reading.

Prezi: This interesting alternative to PowerPoint presentations, found at Prezi.com, enables you to create a visual presentation that is not constrained by the structure of a slideshow.

PROP Advance Organizer: This is a structured form of Advance Organizer based on the acronym PROP: **P**rior knowledge, **R**elationships, **O**rganization, **P**lan. Describe for the students the knowledge they should have, the relationship between that knowledge and the new things they will learn, the organization of the new information, and the plan for instruction.

Pros and Cons: Students create a list of ideas for or against opinions, positions, statements, beliefs, etc. They can generate these individually or in groups. This is an excellent first step toward a class debate.

Quick Draw: Give students a short amount of time (less than a minute) to draw everything they know about a certain topic using only symbols and no words. Give them the opportunity to share their drawings with and explain them to a partner, group, or the class.

Quick Talk: Have students work in pairs to share everything they know about certain topics in under a minute. This is a great way to review before a quiz.

Quick Write: Give students less than a minute to write everything they know about a certain topic.

RAFT: Use RAFT as a post-reading activity to help students analyze stories according to the four characteristics that make up the acronym: **R**ole of writer, **A**udience, **F**ormat, and **T**opic. RAFT is also a helpful tool in creating a piece of writing.

Raps: A popular form of expression since the 1980s, rapping can be a fun way to teach important information or for students to summarize what they have learned.

Reader's Theater: Students work together in groups to summarize a reading assignment in the form of a play. See also Plays.

Reading Guides: It is often a good idea to create a Reading Guide with questions to be answered or sentences to be completed as students read. These can be a simple list of questions or more visual worksheets for the students to complete.

Reciprocal Teaching: Students work in groups and take turns acting as the teacher on certain topics. This is an excellent way for them to review a lesson or prepare for a quiz or test.

Relay Summary: Students break up into groups, usually according to rows. Give the student in front a piece of paper. Have them write one sentence on it that summarizes the reading and then pass it back to another member of the group. That student adds more detail with another sentence and passes it on. This continues until every group member has contributed a sentence to summarize the given topic.

Role Personification: Students take on the role of a specific person or character in a story and respond to questions and make statements based on how that person would respond. Do this in groups, as a class, or as a written assignment.

RSQC2: This summarization strategy is an acronym that stands for **R**ecall, **S**ummarize, **Q**uestion, **C**omment, and **C**onnect. Students recall and list the key points, summarize them in a paragraph, write some questions they still have, connect what they have learned to the lesson objective, and write a comment as a personal response.

Rubrics: These assessment scales are meant to provide students and teachers with guidelines for scoring many types of assessments.

Self-Assessment: Encourage students to reflect on their performance or mastery of concepts or skills.

Self-Correction: Students check their own work or correct themselves while performing a particular skill.

Share-Pair Circles: See Inside-Outside Circle.

Short-Answer: Short-Answer questions require students to show comprehension of concepts in just a few sentences.

Silent Reading: Students read an assignment individually and quietly during class.

Similarities and Differences: This is a basic form of comparison in which students list the similarities and differences between two topics.

Six Thinking Hats: In this discussion technique, students are asked to take a certain perspective on a discussion according to the color hat that they are given:
       White Hat = information, facts, data
       Red Hat = feelings, emotions, instincts
       Black Hat = judgmental, critical
       Yellow Hat = positive attitude, benefits, optimistic
       Green Hat = creative, growth
       Blue Hat = overview, decision, agenda, thinking about thinking

Skeleton Notes: Skeleton Notes are pre-created handouts that have sentences missing parts, which students fill in as they listen to a lecture or complete a reading.

Skits: Another word for Plays, Skits are short dramatic representations of a certain story or scenario.

SLANT: SLANT stands for **S**it up, **L**ean forward, **A**ctivate your thinking, **N**ote important information, and **T**rack the talker. Remind students to SLANT when they stop listening or slouch in their seats.

Slideshow: Present slides of notes and images using PowerPoint or alternative methods.

SMART Board: SMART Boards allow teachers to write on the screen and save what they would have previously erased off a whiteboard or chalkboard. Teachers can also load worksheets or guided notes on the SMART Board and fill them out along with the students.

Socratic Discussion: This discussion technique (also called a Socratic Seminar) is modeled after the way Socrates taught his students. You offer a perspective on an issue and allow students to discuss and debate freely while you remain silent. When it becomes important to clarify ideas, step in to offer essential insight and to steer the discussion toward the argument and thesis you want students to understand.

Socratic Questioning: This discussion technique encourages students to think critically about statements you have made. Ask questions that encourage students to take a stance on statements, draw conclusions, give support, consider some consequences, or consider the questions themselves. This is an excellent method of helping students to think critically about their faith and challenge their own opinions and ideals to strengthen their personal faith.

Songs: Songs can be excellent ways to remember new information or for students to show understanding of a certain topic in a creative way.

Spider Map: This graphic organizer is similar to a Mind Map or Concept Map, except the supporting ideas and details are written on lines as in a spider web instead of in circles.

SQ3R: In this reading strategy, students **S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite, and **R**eview:
> Survey—Have students preview the title; any pictures, graphs, or captions; and the first and last paragraphs of the text. Then have them make a list of the main points or objectives they find.
> Question—Have students write questions based on their survey of the text.
> Read—Have students read the text, answering the questions they wrote down as they read.
> Recite—Have students look over their questions and be able to recite the answers without looking them up.
> Review—Have students summarize what they wrote.

Storyboards: Storyboards are a series of pictures that represent how a story plays out. Movie producers use them to develop films. You can use them to present new information or have students create their own Storyboards to show what they have learned.

Storytelling: People of all ages love stories and find them much easier to remember than plain facts. Use stories to illustrate certain points or add a level of depth to concepts and mysteries that need to be pondered.

Stump the Teacher: This is a fun form of review or preparation for a new lesson in which students may ask any questions related to the topic of the lesson or chapter in an attempt to "stump" you.

Summarizing: Summarizing is a great way to review notes and organize them in a way that is memorable. It is helpful for you to give students an organizing principle they can use to help them recall the main ideas and details in notes.

Talking Chips: Distribute poker chips or tickets to students to use as payment in order to participate in class discussions. They must hand in a poker chip each time they speak. This ensures that certain students do not dominate the discussions.

Think-Pair-Share: Give the students some time to formulate their answers to questions by working on them individually (**T**hink), then discussing their responses with a partner (**P**air), and finally sharing with the class what they discussed (**S**hare).

Thumbs Up or Down: This is a quick way to check for understanding during a lesson. Pause at various moments during a presentation and ask students to put their thumbs up if they understand or down if they are unsure about a topic or question. This works well if you prepare a list of questions for the lesson ahead of time (especially if these questions will be asked later on a quiz or test).

Tic-Tac-Know: This review game is based on the classic game tic-tac-toe, only students must answer a question correctly to earn a square. This game works well when students are on teams with their row.

Time Line: A Time Line is a line with incremental dates marked to indicate important events during a set period of time.

Transparencies: These are clear plastic sheets that can be used on overhead projectors. Make copies of worksheets on transparencies and complete them in class with the students, or write on blank transparencies when lecturing to be able to save and share the content with students who were absent or as review.

Triple Venn Diagram: Similar to a Venn Diagram, which compares two topics, a Triple Venn Diagram compares three topics. Similarities between all three topics overlap in the middle of all three circles, and similarities between two topics belong in the three intersections between two circles. Differences go in the parts of circles that are separate from the others.

True or False: Present statements to the students that they must evaluate as are true or false. One way to assess comprehension accurately is to have the students rewrite false statements to make them true or circle the parts of a statement that make it false.

Unknown Objects: Display objects that are relatively foreign to the students, and ask them to make educated guesses about what they are and what they do. Students may ask yes-or-no questions or write in their notes a description that predicts what the objects are.

Value Clarification Discussion: Using this method of moral education, ask open-ended questions that have no right answer to help students take stances on issues and recognize what values they have.

Value Line: Have the class or a group of students arrange themselves in a line along a spectrum (usually 1–10) of agreement with certain issues. Put students into groups with other students who differed in their opinions, and ask them to make lists of shared opinions and beliefs. They can also make lists of similarities that only two of them have in common, three of them, four, or as many members as there are in the group.

Venn Diagram: This is the most popular way to compare two topics. Two intersecting circles are labeled according to the two topics. Students list the similarities between the topics in the middle, inside the intersection of the two circles, and the differences in parts of the circles that do not overlap.

Want Ads: Have students create "Want Ads" or "Help Wanted Ads" to show the characteristics of certain people or types of people they are studying.

Weblog: See Blog.

Webquests: These e-learning activities became very popular when the Internet first began to be used by teachers and students. They usually involve a problem that students go on an online quest to solve.

Word Chain: Propose a certain category, and state a word in that category. A student must then come up with another word in that category that begins with the last letter of the word you offered. Then another student must add another word to the chain, and so on. For example, if the category is Books of the Old Testament: IsaiaH, HoseA, AmoS, SiracH, etc.

Write-Pair-Share: Using this variation of Think-Pair-Share, invite the students write a response, share it with a partner, and then share it with the class.

Written Music: Give students copies of lyrics to read and discuss. The written music in a hymnal, for example, can be an excellent resource for new information and perspectives on God and the Church.

Wordsplash: Arrange a collection of words from a reading assignment in a random way on a piece of paper or on an overhead. The random arrangement makes the collection of words a Wordsplash. Have students make predictions about what they will be reading based on the Wordsplash.

Yes, No, Maybe So: Write a vocabulary term or concept on a note card or piece of paper. The students must ask questions about the topic on the card, to which you can answer "Yes," "No," or "Maybe so." Once a student thinks he or she can define the term or concept, they can share it with you and the class. Students can also play this game together in groups.

ZAP!: ZAP! is a fun review game in which teams of students take turns gaining points by reading and responding to questions written on cards they pull from a bucket or bag. When a student pulls the wild card (ZAP! card), that student's team loses all of its points.

About the Author

Jared Dees is the creator of the popular website The Religion Teacher, which provides practical resources and effective teaching strategies to religious educators. He is a respected graduate of the Alliance for Catholic Education program at the University of Notre Dame, where he earned master's degrees in education and theology. Dees has served as a Catholic school religion teacher and volunteer catechist for more than a decade. He is the author of *31 Days to Becoming a Better Religious Educator*; *To Heal, Proclaim, and Teach*; *Praying the Angelus*; and *Christ in the Classroom*. His articles have appeared in *Momentum, CATECHIST, Catechetical Leader*, and *Catholic Digest* and on numerous websites. Dees lives near South Bend, Indiana, with his wife and four children.