

Sample Activity (Navigating the Normal Swallow)

The purpose of this sample activity is to demonstrate one of the ways I incorporate active learning into teaching to promote the connection of the new knowledge to the real world. As speech-language pathologists, it is imperative that we are able to utilize the knowledge that we gain from our coursework to be able to effectively treat our clientele. This sample activity is derived from a graduate-level swallowing/dysphagia course and incorporates learning objectives and promotes engagement through the use of active learning techniques and various modalities.

The learning objectives for this lesson are as follows:

- Students will be able to visually or verbally depict the path liquids and solids follow during the normal human swallow.
- Students will be able to identify the key anatomical and physiological components involved along the pathway.

The goal of this lesson is to more fully grasp the normal human swallow. This activity will take place after the students have read about and then sat through an interactive lecture about the human swallow mechanism and the pathway that solids and liquids follow within that mechanism. Prior to this class, these students have completed comprehensive anatomy and physiology courses pertaining to upper anatomy. The active-learning technique that will be employed to further solidify this concept will be a hybrid approach and allow for student-to-student variability. The students will be placed in groups of three. The groups will be instructed to generate a 3-5-minute presentation detailing the path followed by a bite of food. They will be allowed to incorporate the use of the white board, visuals, narration, a simulation dummy, etc. into their presentation. They will be instructed to include key anatomical and physiological components into their presentation. The purpose of having three students per group is so that one student per group can address each phase of the swallow (oral, pharyngeal, esophageal) in their presentation. The students will be given roughly 20-30 minutes to construct their presentation. Then, each group will present for their classmates.

There are many reasons why this lesson would be structured in such a way. For one, by using small groups and ensuring every member of the group was assigned to a portion of the presentation, every student would be actively engaged in learning. The use of small groups would foster the use of teamwork and communication skills between each group member. Critical thinking would be employed as each student/group would have to dig deep to identify and incorporate all the details and components involved along the path of the swallow. Seeing as the students have previously learned about the anatomy and physiology of the swallow mechanism, they already possess the information necessary to complete this assignment, but it is likely that they have never synthesized the information to see how it all works together. By talking through it, creating a presentation, and then presenting to their peers, they should be able to attain the first learning objective. By identifying the anatomical structures involved along the way as well as highlighting the key aspects of physiology at play, the students will develop further understanding of the concept while they meet their second learning objective.

As a speech-language pathologist, we need to be able to articulate and explain a normal swallow in order to effectively treat our patients and train and educate patients, caregivers, family, and staff members. In order for patients and their family and caregivers to be able to fully understand the importance of what we are doing, we need to be able to comfortably and clearly talk about the swallow mechanism as well as how it can deviate from the norm. In doing so, we will be able to motivate and empower our patients and caregivers to engage in

our treatment sessions, follow our recommendations, and carryover their new knowledge outside of treatment.