

# 4 Ways to keep your students engaged

It may start with doodles on a piece of paper, glazed eyes, or a half-completed homework assignment on a crumpled sheet of paper. But eventually, a lack of student engagement can lead to a student being late to class, chronic absenteeism, and eventually dropping a class altogether.

Student attrition, or the number of students who leave a course or drop out of school, can have a real economic impact. Lost revenue from government funding and financial losses in tuition and fees are just a couple of the economic high consequences of attrition rates. But ultimately, it's the students who suffer the most. Take a moment to consider how closely linked a well-paying job is to graduating high school or completing an associates or a bachelor's degree.

So how can you keep your students engaged enough to get through the required assignments and complete the course? The following are features we offer through our OpenStax Tutor software platform, which engages a whole new generation of students.

## 1

### Free-Response questions

Free-response questions are usually referred to as long-form questions and are used in classroom settings. The majority of free-response questions ask the student to state a belief or opinion and then write a short essay supporting the belief with facts. Free response is the most common approach to assessing a student's understanding of a concept or content.

To keep your students engaged, especially when they're working through a reading assignment, it's helpful to have assigned questions within the reading. This can help your students focus on the content that they're reading and recall the material they've just read. Traditionally, teachers choose multiple choice questions, which offer the opportunity for quick scoring. However, if you want a greater understanding of your students' learning, try a combination of multiple-choice and free-response questions.

At OpenStax Tutor, we've developed a hybrid, two-step answer format that allows students to enter a free-form response in addition to selecting a multiple-choice answer. First, students must answer the free-response question in their own words before being shown the multiple-choice options. This encourages them to process and absorb the material, helping to commit it to memory.

## 2

### Digital reading

How often has this scenario happened in your classroom: You ask a question in class, but all you see are blank stares. It's a straightforward question about the reading, but nobody in class has done it?

Unfortunately, this is a common scene in many college classrooms. The question is, how do we get students to read what's assigned? And how do we get them to read at more than just a superficial level?

With OpenStax Tutor, we've taken several different approaches to the traditionally lengthy and often arduous university assigned readings. First off, we've broken them down into smaller sections. The more digestible segments contain intermittent questions, which act as a checkpoint for students to ensure they understand the content they're reading.

Secondly, we've added visual stimulation in the form of videos and simulations.

Thirdly, we've interspersed a few more extensive readings with conceptual questions.

Together these elements are used to check students' understanding of what is being read. The goal is to ensure students are not merely reading the words but are genuinely comprehending the concepts so that they can fully engage in conversations during class.

## 3

### Personalized homework

Every student learns material differently and at his or her own pace. Research has shown that personalized learning is the most effective way for students to learn. When assignments are customized, students are more engaged in the material, which will result in a faster learning pace. But, we know creating a personalized experience in a crowded classroom remains a challenge, especially if that classroom is online and there are many students.

At OpenStax Tutor, we have taken the personalized homework concept up a notch by creating a database of assessments and questions that educators can use for assignments. They have the option of assigning personalized questions to each student or allowing OpenStax's algorithm to assign work based on the student's performance in the course.

Our homework feature asks students questions in areas where they are struggling, getting them to spend more time on these "weaker" topics.

## Analytics

Many post-secondary institutions are under pressure to offer the proper support to their students. The traditional “one size fits all” approach no longer works and they’re looking for ways to create an engaging and impactful learning experience for every student, which can ultimately help them graduate. Utilizing software that keeps you up-to-date on your students’ progress can help you better support their unique needs.

OpenStax Tutor has a feature called the Performance Forecast. Its analytical capabilities allow students to view how they’re progressing, particularly concerning specific subjects or assignments.

## Student engagement

Student engagement is increasingly being seen as one of the defining characteristics of high-quality teaching in high school and college students’ education. This is because research indicates students who are fully engaged in the material are scoring higher on tests and are more likely to graduate. So whether it’s AP® Biology or College Physics, it’s important to find ways to engage your students as much as possible.

That’s where OpenStax Tutor can help. We offer many different high school and college courses online that include the features mentioned above. For more information on how OpenStax Tutor can help engage your class, contact us at [openstax.org/openstax-tutor](https://openstax.org/openstax-tutor).