

# Instructional Methods

## Human Development and Sexual Health - Grades 4-12

### Instructional Methods

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Students engage when instructional methods emphasize active and experiential learning. Just as in other curriculum areas, using role play, small groups, class discussion and videos in sexual health education can bring the curriculum to life. It also helps students explore the content and understand how it relates to their own ideas, values and experiences. These activities will often encourage some great conversations and lots of questions. Remember to use ground rules during the session.

### Keep All Students Together

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Students of all genders should learn about sexual health together. When students in the class learn together, they gain a greater understanding and respect for different perspectives and experiences. This can promote empathy and reduce the potential for teasing, stigma and discrimination.

Learning about human sexuality together can help students develop the skills and knowledge they need to form healthy relationships. By communicating about sexual health in a mixed-gender groups, students are better prepared for conversations they may have in the future with partners, healthcare providers, or even their own children.

Keeping all students together is safer and more inclusive for students who are trans, non-binary, intersex, or gender nonconforming. Separating students into a 'boy's group' and 'girl's group' for sexual health lessons means that intersex, trans or non-binary students might not get all the information they need, or may force them into outing themselves.

Even if you are not aware of any trans, non-binary or intersex students in your class, keeping everyone together minimizes the potential harms, has benefits for everyone, and sets the tone for inclusion.

Students of all genders learn together for every other subject at school. Keeping the same students together for sexual health lessons normalizes learning about sexuality and sexual health. It also

reduces the misinformation that can be spread when students in the same class hear different messages because they are not taught the same information.

If students are reluctant to ask questions in a mixed gender group, using an anonymous **Question Box**\* allows a safe and private opportunity for students to ask questions. This provides anonymity while ensuring all students hear the answers to questions.

*\*(If needed, refer to the document: **Responding to Student Questions & Questions Box**)*

## Role Play

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Role play is learning how to best handle a situation by practising scenarios and trying out different ways to approach them. Acting out scenarios, problems and issues in a safe setting helps develop decision-making skills. Role play improves self-confidence and influences student behaviour in sexual health education. When preparing a scenario, it's important that the structure emphasizes healthy sexuality and reinforces the basic concepts you want the student to learn.

### Role play:

- allows students to assume other people's roles to help them learn and understand another person's point of view
- allows students to safely explore scenarios and solutions
- tends to motivate students to learn
- promotes and develops critical and creative thinking, attitudes, values and social skills

### Procedure:

#### 1. Prepare the role play ahead of time

- Decide whether to:
  - use student volunteers in front of the class (the teacher doesn't have to play a role)
  - use partners/small group, with every student playing a role
  - use small groups with role players and observers
  - model the skill with a scripted role play
- Create a hypothetical problem, situation or event that represents their reality.
- Define the problem, situation and roles clearly.

## **2. Give clear instructions**

- Include a short time limit for partners/groups to plan and rehearse their role play.

## **3. Act out role plays**

- Students follow the procedure outlined by the teacher.
- Unless the teacher is playing a role, it helps if the teacher walks around the room to watch how students are carrying out the role play and coach students who are stuck.
- Students may need to repeat the role play taking different roles or revising their responses.

## **4. Discussion (small group and whole class)**

- Begin by having students talk about the feelings they had during the role play.
- Have students identify the sexual health skills shown during the role play.
- Talk about what makes these skills stronger or weaker (e.g., body language).
- Talk about how this role play is or isn't similar to real life.
- Talk about ways the student can use these sexual health skills in real life situations.

## **Alternatives to Traditional Procedure**

- Have students write role plays as scripts but don't act them out.
- Have students write down responses and then role play in front of the class.
- Have students make a list of challenging lines, have a student read the lines to the class then have each student give a response.
- Have students develop and act out plays.

## **Tips for Using Role Play**

- To help build student confidence, try introducing readings before role playing to introduce new knowledge and experiences.
- Begin with fairly easy situations and work up to more challenging ones.
- Remember that some students may feel threatened or self-conscious. Using humour can help make students more comfortable. Hesitant or incomplete student replies, often due to discomfort or uncertainty, can be improved using humour, role plays, and supportive strategies.
- Don't make the topic so abstract or complex that the student misses the concepts.

- If students find it hard to figure out which skills model positive sexual health behaviours, have them watch successful role models or you could ask them to suggest another way of doing it.
- If trying an exercise that hasn't been scripted, be sure it's the right approach for your students' comfort level.

## Small Group

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Interaction is a powerful learning tool. The co-operation, problem-solving, negotiation and critical thinking skills needed for small group work are also part of the positive sexual health skills that students need to develop.

### Advantages of Small Groups

When students work in small groups, they think through an idea, present it to others so that they can understand and often exchange ideas and viewpoints. Students learn faster, remember what they've learned better and tend to be more positive about the lesson.

This will:

- encourage positive attitudes toward sexual health
- increase self-confidence
- promote intellectual growth
- add to students' personal and social development

### Procedure

There's no one 'right' way to approach small group activities when teaching sexual health. You have to choose models and methods that match your teaching style, your students and the lesson content. Following some basic steps at the beginning will help make the small group activities more effective.

### Positive Interdependence

Students need to work cooperatively with everyone in the group and contribute to the goal. You may need to set up an ice breaker before the lesson begins to help make the students more comfortable with the topic.

## Social Skills

Small group work means students have to listen to one another, ask questions, clarify issues and restate their point of view. You've been teaching your students these skills through demonstration and instruction all year, when you:

- listen when others speak
- maintain eye contact and positive body language
- encourage and show respect
- speak quietly and without hostility

When teaching sexual health, these skills become extra important. This is because students may cover their embarrassment about the content by acting out poor social skills. Clear and direct **ground rules\*** will help students remember to use their social skills when working in their small group.

*\*(If needed, refer to document: **Ground Rules**)*

## Group Processing

Just as in many other subject areas, students will have a wide range of reactions to the content. It's important that students feel safe to share their ideas and know how to disagree respectfully without hurting others. Have students think about the positive ways the group worked together to reach their goal. This helps make the process clearer and improves their cooperative learning skills, and also increases their positive sexual health skills. Example: We listened to each other and shared ideas without interrupting.

## Types of Small Group Activities

- **Think-Pair-Share:** Students work independently to write down thoughts or ideas about a topic and then share these ideas with a partner. Partners ask each other questions to make sure they fully understand.
- **Jigsaw:** Divide the class into groups. Assign each group a separate topic. Everyone in each group must become an expert on the topic by the end of a given time. Form new groups made up of one member of each original group. 'Experts' then share findings from various topics from their original groups with the new group members.
- **Group Investigations:** Students work to produce a group project—they may help select the project.
- **Circle of Voices:** Students are given a topic and a few minutes to organize their thoughts. Each student has uninterrupted time to speak to their small group. Each student should be assigned the same amount of time and have to stick to it. After everyone has had a turn, the group can talk about the topic. During that

time, they're only allowed to build on what someone else has said, not their original ideas.

- **Snowballing:** Students are divided into pairs, with each pair being given the same material on a sexual health topic. They then join with another pair to compare and contrast differences in their understanding. The groups combine again and repeat the compare-contrast process.

### Tips for Using Small Groups

- Direct work towards a clear goal or set of goals.
- Tasks should be specific and outlined in detail.
- Give each group member a specific task (leader, recorder, reporter, monitor, etc.).
- Groups need to be interdependent — relying on all group members to reach a goal.
- Give groups space where they can work face-to-face without being disrupted.
- Watch the group closely during group activities to make sure students stay on task and on track.
- Reinforce positive contributions and remember the ground rules.
- Give enough time for feedback and reflection at the end of each session.

### Question Box

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The Question Box is a tool that enhances learning by allowing students to ask questions anonymously. Using a Question Box gives you time to review the questions to make sure that you're comfortable answering them appropriately for the grade level you're teaching, and that you know the answers.

To find out more, review the document: ***Responding to Student Questions / Question Box.***

### Class Discussion

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Talking about sexual health with students can be challenging because it's a subject that touches on our privacy and our vulnerability. Open conversations let students express opinions and exchange information safely within the classroom. They also let students practise healthy communication skills, such as respect for other people's feelings, asking questions when they feel vulnerable, or sharing their views.

Class discussions will likely be more effective if they take place **after** you've given the material through a lecture, video or reading. You'll likely need to remind students of the ground rules at the beginning of each class discussion to make sure all students feel safe and respected during the activity.

### Advantages of Classroom Discussion

- Helps build a positive classroom climate.
- Leads to student interest in sexual health.
- Makes students feel more positive about themselves and the learning environment.
- Makes the student feel the changes are 'normal'.
- Allows more students to be involved and express their ideas.

### Procedure

#### 1. Set up an atmosphere that assures sensitivity during the activity.

- Make sure ground rules are in place.
- Introduce the topic with a short lecture, video or skit.
- Define terms to make sure all students are at a similar level of understanding and have the same information.

#### 2. Hold the discussion.

- Encourage students to take part by asking questions, making suggestions and expressing their ideas.
- Probe, prompt and redirect students to add to the discussion.
- Encourage students to remember, analyze, generalize and personalize the information.
- Make sure correct information is being shared among the class (correct misinformation and use proper terminology).

#### 3. Finish the discussion.

- Find consensus or a solution. Talk about what students have learned in the discussion or give a summary (preferably one given by students).

### Tips for Using Class Discussion

- Introduce facts and correct any misinformation.
- Help students use the proper terminology.
- Be consistent with ground rules, such as raising your hand or listening to the speaker. Some teachers find using an object (like a talking stick) helps.
- Be respectful of the student's questions or responses.

- Use ‘wait time’, the pause between asking a question and asking for a response. This gives students time to think about and give a more reflective answer.
- Use open-ended questions to encourage higher level thinking.
- Be aware of your own values and reactions during the discussion (despite what you think or feel, you must model sensitivity and respect).

## Videos

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Videos can be an entertaining way to introduce content and raise issues in the sexual health classroom. While there are many videos, not all are appropriate for the classroom. It's important to find the right media and to use it effectively to ensure student learning is optimized. It's always a good idea to have videos approved by your school administration.

### Advantages of Video

- Stimulates discussion by ‘breaking the ice’ on sensitive topics.
- Can increase your comfort by giving the information visually (e.g. how to use a condom).
- Illustrates complex or abstract concepts (such as internal anatomy and physiology) through animated or 3-D images.

### Procedure

1. Preview the media
  - Use only those parts of the media that match the lesson's objectives.
  - Make sure the media is appropriate for the grade and age.
  - Give parents or other community members a chance to preview the media.
  - Evaluate your resource before using it in the classroom.
2. Prepare the classroom
  - Check the equipment (projector, computer, DVD, website, remote control).
  - Arrange the seating.
  - Have the media ready ahead of time.
3. Include lead-in activities
  - Review vocabulary or key concepts.
  - Ask students to make predictions about what they think they'll see and learn.
  - Give focus questions ahead of time.



4. Segment your viewing
  - Pause the media before and after important points to highlight a certain idea or check for comprehension.
  - Ask students to connect what they're seeing to other topics or real-life events.
  - Pause the media to create a still picture when important visuals are used.
5. Include follow-up activities
  - Many programs come with a teacher's guide with activity suggestions. Think about using a small group discussion, role play or post-test to reinforce the learning.

### Tips for Using Video

- Remember, all media comes with a 'stop' button.
- Leave the lights on to reinforce that media is not passive entertainment.
- Try turning off the sound or the picture. No sound allows you to narrate based on your students' needs. No picture (turn down the brightness) encourages students to concentrate on the message.

### Examples

- Use these demonstration videos to show how to use condoms and dental dams. Each video has speaker notes for additional information.
  - [Using an External Condom](#)
  - [Using an Internal \(Vaginal\) Condom](#)
  - [Using a Dental Dam](#)

## Kahoot! Quizzes

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New technologies for use in the classroom are ever-evolving; however it can be a challenge to find and use technology in a way that engages and excites students and contributes to meaningful learning. One such technology that is freely available to all teachers is Kahoot!

Kahoot! is easy to learn and easy to use in the classroom. You will need a computer with internet and a projector to display the questions. Your students will need access to Wi-Fi connected devices (computers, tablets, or phones) – either one device per student or one device per team, to input their answers. You can choose to have the students download the Kahoot! app directly onto their devices or play from the website [Kahoot.it](https://kahoot.it).

For more information about using Kahoot! in the classroom, including how to use “ghost mode” for pre-and post-tests, and how to get your students making their own quizzes, visit [kahoot.com](https://kahoot.com).

## Online learning

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Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers, educators and students have had to shift, in some cases many times, from in-classroom to online learning. Additionally, some schools have adopted virtual schooling as a permanent option, offering it at all times. Because of this, many teachers and educators may be providing sexual health education online for the first time. Teaching comprehensive sexual health education online requires a tailored approach, which includes providing children and youth with a safe, supportive virtual environment.

In providing sexual health education online, many in-classroom best practices should be considered along with a few additions:

1. Make a plan:
  - Recognize online education is more physically, emotionally, and mentally taxing on students and teachers. Aim to reduce the amount of content in half when teaching online and try to group similar topics together. You may need to increase the number of sexual health education classes to meet curriculum goals. Anticipate there may be IT disruptions and have a backup plan.
2. Inform parents/caregivers in advance:
  - As you would with in-classroom learning, let parents/caregivers know that sexual health education will be provided and include basic information about the topics that will be discussed. Let parents know about providing a private, secure space at home for their child to learn.
3. Establish ground rules:
  - Have students participate in the development of ground rules, but consider specifics to the online learning environment (e.g., using anonymous names if possible, use of the chat box and messaging, use of camera).
4. Provide a rich introduction and start with a fun activity:
  - Introduce the topic, as well as yourself and the expectations for the lesson. Starting with an interactive, fun activity such as “what flavour is your day- sweet, spicy, salty, or sour?” can reduce tension and give you an idea of where the students are at.

5. Moderate online discussions among students:
  - Ensure that the online space is free from harassment and bullying. Examples of online harassment include using the online space to spread rumours or make fun of someone, sending threatening or abusive messages. Respond immediately to disrespectful chat. If you are unable to respond or the chat escalates, know how to turn off the chat function.
6. Provide opportunities for students to anonymously ask questions:
  - Do an online version of the question box where students are encouraged to ask any question that they have about sexual health. Students may feel more comfortable asking questions in an online and anonymous format. This could include having alternative screen names for the lesson, and completing an anonymous response form via a link sent to students.
7. Use a range of methods to create active learning opportunities and interaction:
  - Consider using a variety of interactive technology resources or platforms for each class (e.g. breakout rooms, Kahoot quizzes, mentimeter, annotation, chat).
8. Link students to credible, online and/or print sexual health education resources.
9. Remember, you can do this! What makes you a good educator, makes you a good sexual health educator – no matter if you're in the classroom or online. Build relationship with your students online by using eye contact with your camera; use body language like head nods and facial expressions to show you're engaged.

### **Safety Tips for Online Learning:**

- Be alert to signs of trauma and discomfort. It can be challenging to assess this, but you can look for things such as students indicating they don't have a safe space to participate in or students not engaging with the content. Address any concerns you might have directly. Continually offer supports (e.g., embed resources in your email signature).
- Encourage, but don't require cameras to be on, and use and reinforce ground rules.