

What Is It?

An *opportunity to respond* (OTR) is a teaching strategy that elicits student responses by posing questions or comments that provide students with multiple occasions to answer (Cuticelli, Collier-Meek, & Coyne, 2016). Teachers can provide OTRs to students individually or a group of students. OTRs keep students engaged and on task. They give teachers an opportunity to assess student learning, check students' understanding, and provide immediate feedback to student responses. By providing multiple ways to respond in class (verbal responses, quick writes, small group discussion), teachers can keep students academically engaged and on-task during instruction times. For example, a teacher may ask her whole class for a thumbs up (or thumbs down) if they think a spelling word is (or is not) a noun.

When to Use It

Teachers use opportunities to respond in many ways:

- When promoting classroom participation and academic engagement.
- During direct instruction. OTRs provide students with opportunities to engage in classroom instruction.
- When teaching specific behaviors to individual students or groups of students.
- When checking effectiveness of the instruction.
- When checking how well students understand the academic content.

Steps to Implementation / How to Do It

	1. Identify what's being taught (i.e., the goal of the question).
	2. Choose how the students will respond to questions or commands (white boards, thumbs up, exit cards, verbally, etc.).
	3. Determine whether students will have the opportunity to respond individually or in groups.
	4. Pose a question or command related to instruction or an academic topic.
	5. Reinforce correct responses (verbal praise, point system, etc.), and prompt students to make changes and corrections ("Remember, a noun is a person, place, or thing.").

Example

Ms. Barkley, a 1st grade teacher, is teaching her students to spell three letter consonant, vowel, consonant (CVC) words. She creates Elkonin squares (three blank boxes) on individual student white boards using electrical tape, and distributes them to each student. Next, Ms. Barkley places a picture of each CVC word on the board (hat, cat). She instructs the students to work in small groups and use the Elkonin boxes to sound out and spell the words.

When the students are finished, Ms. Barkley asks them all to hold their white boards up in the air. She gives verbal praise for correct responses, as well as feedback encouraging students to make changes if necessary. Ms. Barkley awards points by placing a checkmark on the board for any group with all members responding correctly.

Ms. Barkley increased the OTR for each student. Rather than having one student come up to the board at a time to demonstrate how to spell the CVC word, each student was given an OTR for each word. This provided the students with increased practice and increased feedback from the teacher.

How to Increase Effectiveness

- Include opportunities for students to make corrections if they answered incorrectly. Continue to provide feedback for both correct and incorrect answers.
- Ask all students to respond to each question if they were working individually. This increases OTRs for all of the students.
- Increase the rate of question asking to both individual students and groups of students. By increasing the rate of instruction, OTRs increase and students should be able to learn at a faster rate.
- Allow students time to process information before responding.
- Allow students time to discuss answers with partners or groups before responding.
- Provide verbal praise and reinforcement for correct group and individual responses.

Resources

Cuticelli, M., Collier-Meek, M., & Coyne, M. (2016). Increasing the quality of tier 1 reading instruction: Using performance feedback to increase opportunities to respond during implementation of a core reading program. *Psychology in the Schools*, 53(1), 89-105.

Sutherland, K. S., Wheby, J. H., & Yoder, P. J. (2002). Examination of the relationship between teacher praise and opportunities for students with EBD to respond to academic requests. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 10(1), 5-13.