10 ways UCSB Professors are using Clickers

1. Think—Pair—Share.

   Instructor poses question, polls class using clickers. Students are then encouraged to compare answers in pairs and discuss their reasoning. Instructor then re-polls the class. This can be used in conjunction with a demonstration, movie clip, simulation, etc. Histogram of responses can be displayed after first polling, and/or after second polling. The instructor often emphasizes that it is the discussion itself that leads to student mastery.

2. Anonymous responses to sensitive questions.

   Encourage students to respond to questions that may be too sensitive for a “show of hands” in-class poll. The instructor has the option of using the anonymous polling function, which lets you track whether or not students voted without recording which answer choice they selected.

3. Questions tie in with homework, readings, study guides, or past lectures.

   This can be an effective way to encourage students to come to class prepared, and to highlight important concepts. Be sure to use questions that test different levels of knowledge, from factual recall to comprehension, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. One instructor enticed students to do the homework & readings by agreeing to put certain questions that 80% or more of the class got correct on the midterm/final exam.

4. True/False questions posed at the beginning and end of the class.

   This encourages timeliness and discourages students from packing up early. The question at the beginning of class ties into a major concept from the previous lecture and acts as a transition into the new material. The question at the end of class draws attention to a main point from the lecture, and keeps students thinking about the course concept after class.

5. Demonstrating difference of opinions.

   Students choose from a list of opinions; the instructor can ask the class for additional perspectives and add them as answer choices. Voting may spur students to become interested in each other’s points of view; peer discussion can allow multiple perspectives to be examined more closely.
6. **Low-stakes quizzing.**

Draw students’ attention to important ideas from your course with “low-stakes” quizzes. By making the quizzes worth a small portion of the grade, students will be less inclined to cheat (i.e. look at which button their neighbor is pressing). Be sure that some of the questions ask about “big-picture” concepts that you want students to take away from the class.

7. **Pre- and post- questions.**

Asking a medium-difficult question before explaining a concept or theory can help students become engaged with the upcoming topic. After explaining the concept, see how many students are able to correctly answer the question. Getting feedback on students’ understanding can allow you to adjust your explanations “on the fly,” particularly when incorrect answer choices represent common misconceptions.

8. **Poll student experience/interest.**

Connect with students on a personal level by asking them questions related to their own experiences or interest. This information can help you make your course more relevant to students by tailoring examples, paper topics, and case studies to their experiences and interests.

9. **Confidence level questions.**

Students often have a difficult time gauging their own mastery of course concepts. By asking them how confident they are about a particular topic, then polling them on a representative question, you can help students better calibrate their own understanding.

10. **Fun questions.**

A variety of questions can be used as a “break” in the lecture—a way to change up the pace and re-engage students. Some instructors report asking about students’ study habits, the amount of sleep they had the night before, or even a “traffic light” question to see if students are comfortable with the concept at hand and ready to move on (green = go, yellow = proceed, slowly, red = stop and re-explain). You can also compare answers among sub-groups of the class (freshmen vs. seniors, etc.).