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## How to Do Choral Responding

**Give Clear Directions and Model the Activity**

* Tell students the types of questions that will be asked and demonstrate one or two times by acting out the roles of teacher and students. For example: “How many hydrogen atoms in a molecule of methane?” [pause briefly, then give signal for students to respond] “Four.”

**Provide a Brief Thinking Pause Before Signaling Students to Respond**

* Let the complexity of the question/problem and students’ relative level of mastery determine the duration of the pause. If a thinking pause greater than 4 or 5 seconds is required for students to answer, break the content into smaller chunks.

**Signal Students to Respond**

* Use a clear, consistent auditory and/or visual signal for students to respond. For example, “Class, how many?” then a finger snap, or a hand or arm movement. Also, saying “Get ready” immediately before signaling the students’ response promotes unison responding.

**Provide Feedback**

* When only correct answers are heard: (1) give confirmation and/or praise (e.g., "Yes!/All right!” “You got it.” “Great!”) and (2) present the next question, item, or problem.
* When one or two incorrect responses are heard: (1) confirm the majority response and restate the correct answer in context with the question for the students who erred (e.g., “Yes. A molecule of methane contains hydrogen atoms.”) and (2) a few trials later present the same question again.
* When more than a few incorrect responses are heard: (1) state the correct answer with a brief explanation, (2) immediately repeat the same question and signal a choral response, and (3) several trials later present the same question again.

**Intersperse Individual Turns**

* Now and then, instead of signaling a unison response, call on an individual student to answer the question. Present the question before calling a randomly selected student’s name so students cannot predict when they will be called on. Individual turns can also be used to give low-achieving students opportunities to shine in front of their classmates. After a low-achieving student chorally voices a correct response, the teacher repeats the question several trials later and calls on that student to answer individually.

**Maintain a Lively Pace.**

* Students make more responses, respond with higher accuracy, and engage in less off-task behavior when teachers conduct CR at a fast pace. Preparing questions and examples prior to the lesson enables the teacher to focus on students’ responses and move without hesitation from one learning trial to the next.

**Deliver praise and approval for students’ participation and correct responding.**

* For example, say, “You’re so smart!” and give “high fives” throughout the lesson. Your praise and approval can increase students’ motivation and make the CR lesson more fun.

**Sample script for a CR-based lesson:** Teaching elementary students the meaning of a new word (“examine”), using synonyms or short definitions.[[1]](#footnote-1)

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| **Teacher’s Direction or Question** | **Students’ Choral Response** |
| Listen, *examine*. Say it. | Examine |
| *Examine* means look at. What does examine mean? | Look at |
| I’ll say some sentences. You tell me “*examine* or *not examine*.” Get ready….  Aunt Rachel listened to the birds sing. Did she *examine* or not examine? | Not examine |
| How do you know? | She didn’t look at the birds. |
| The doctor looked at the cells carefully through her microscope. Did the doctor examine or not examine? | Examine |
| How do you know? | The doctor looked at the cells. |
| James crouched down and saw that a nail had punctured his tire. Did he examine or not examine? | Examine |
| How do you know? | He looked at the tire. |
| *Repeat with more examples and non- examples.* |  |

## Choral Responding (CR) Tips

* CR has been used successfully with students from preschool through high school.
* CR works well in whole class or small group instructional settings, and can be lead by a teacher, assistant, or even a student!
* CR can be used to firm students’ background knowledge when introducing new content, to gauge learning throughout a lesson, and to provide a brief end-of- lesson review.
* CR can be used effectively with any curriculum content that meets three criteria:   
  a) each question, problem or item presented has only one correct answer;   
  b) each question can be answered with a brief oral response or phrase (e.g., counting by 5); &  
  c) the material is suitable for a lively paced presentation.

1. **ADAPTED FROM A PROCEDURE DESCRIBED BY CARNINE, SILBERT, KAME’ENUI, AND TARVER (2010).** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)