Choral Response

When to Use Choral Response
When you want your students to:
(1) stay on task,
(2) respond more often, and
(3) respond more accurately.

Choral Response, adapted from Heyward, Courson and Narayan (1989), is a fast-paced, highly-engaging whole class to small group activity that immediately brings each student to focus on the instructional process underway in the classroom.

Choral Response works best when:
1. The answers to the questions and problems are short and brief.
2. The answers are of high consensus (only one answer is correct).
3. The material can be presented quickly and the lesson will have a fast pace.
   Off-task distractibility is eliminated as student focus on content significantly increases.

Teacher Actions and Expectations for Choral Response

1st - Make the Student Response: Physical, Observable, and Assessable
Identify all of the behaviors that are necessary to ensure a complete cycle of Choral Response. Then deliberately model each action with students leaving no room for variation or individual misinterpretation of the student response. You cannot overdue modeling. Teach past mastery.

2nd - Allow for “Think Time”
While many classrooms are run on the belief that they are training grounds for “Jeopardy” contestants in reality they are places to take cursory knowledge and drive it deeper into each child’s learning network to be used to expand, extend, and evaluate future learning. In order to do this, after you have asked your question allow several seconds before calling on the class/section/row/team for their Choral Response. You might want to vary the wait time from 3-4 seconds to 10 seconds to help the class develop self-control and not answer just mindlessly.

3rd - Model the Student Response Signal
Demonstrate the physical and auditory signal you will be using in class with the expectation that every student will respond in UNISON at the end of the signal. Saying, “Get ready . . . 3, 2, 1 Now!” provides both additional think time and guides the class into a ready position. Students are to respond only after the word “Now” was spoken and not before. Everyone responds altogether and with force or intensity. Using a snap of the fingers, a movement of your hands, a nod, pointing, and other non-verbal cues add clarity to the signal.

4th - Assess the Student Response to Determine What You Will Do Next
Determine before the session what level of student accuracy to your questions will be acceptable for mastery.
1. If all or the clear majority of the class answers correctly and confidently then proceed to the next question.
2. If the answer is correct but the students lack confidence or certainty repeat or vary the question.
3. If the answers are less than the “mastery level” the stop the process and reteach, repair, refocus your students on the task at hand.

5th - Vary the Groupings of Students to Respond
Every good strategy easily slides into routine and thoughtless performance as the process becomes predictable. As a result pose a question to your class and at the student response signal identify a different grouping of students to respond. (e.g. “This half of the class,” “Just the back row,” “All the boys, stand,” “Everyone who has brown eyes.”) It is also very acceptable to call on small groups, pairs, and individuals.

6th - Pace, Pace, Pace
It is important to remember that the success of the strategy is dependent upon the students responding at a high rate of frequency in a short period of time. Your students should feel they need to be always prepared at a moment’s notice to accurately respond to the question posed.

Using Choral Responding to Increase Active Student Response. Teaching Exceptional Children, 21.