

What is Case-Based Learning?

Using a case-based approach engages students in discussion of specific scenarios that resemble or typically are real-world examples. This method is learner-centered with intense interaction between participants as they build their knowledge and work together as a group to examine the case. The instructor's role is that of a facilitator while the students collaboratively analyze and address problems and resolve questions that have no single right answer.

Clyde Freeman Herreid provides eleven basic rules for case-based learning.

1. Tells a story.
2. Focuses on an interest-arousing issue.
3. Set in the past five years
4. Creates empathy with the central characters.
5. Includes quotations. There is no better way to understand a situation and to gain empathy for the characters
6. Relevant to the reader.
7. Must have pedagogic utility.
8. Conflict provoking.
9. Decision forcing.
10. Has generality.
11. Is short.

Why Use Case-Based Learning?

To provide students with a relevant opportunity to see theory in practice. Real world or authentic contexts expose students to viewpoints from multiple sources and see why people may want different outcomes. Students can also see how a decision will impact different participants, both positively and negatively.

To require students to analyze data in order to reach a conclusion. Since many assignments are open-ended, students can practice choosing appropriate analytic techniques as well. Instructors who use case-based learning say that their students are more engaged, interested, and involved in the class.

To develop analytic, communicative and collaborative skills along with content knowledge. In their effort to find solutions and reach decisions through discussion, students sort out factual data, apply analytic tools, articulate issues, reflect on their relevant experiences, and draw conclusions they can relate to new situations. In the process, they acquire substantive knowledge and develop analytic, collaborative, and communication skills.

Many faculties also use case studies in their curriculum to teach content, connect students with real life data, or provide opportunities for students to put themselves in the decision maker's shoes.