

**KAREN HUFFMAN’S GREAT TEACHER’S
TRIFECTA
FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
(FOOT TEST, VALUES WALK, & SORTERS)**

**PART 1
FOOT TEST—(AKA “POOR TEACHER’S
CLICKERS”)**

Purpose:

- Provides a quick, easy visual display (for both teacher and student) of the diversity of student understanding/mastery of important topics.
- Increases student attention, learning, and mastery of material.
- Introduces difficult topics in a unique, interactive format.
- Provides an opportunity for students to meet and interact.

Time: Approximately 10-30 minutes—depending on the number and kind of “test” questions you offer.

Instructions:

1. Begin by explaining to students that you’re going to first discuss and lecture on an important topic for several minutes, and then will ask everyone to stand up and move around the room according to their understanding and mastery of that topic.

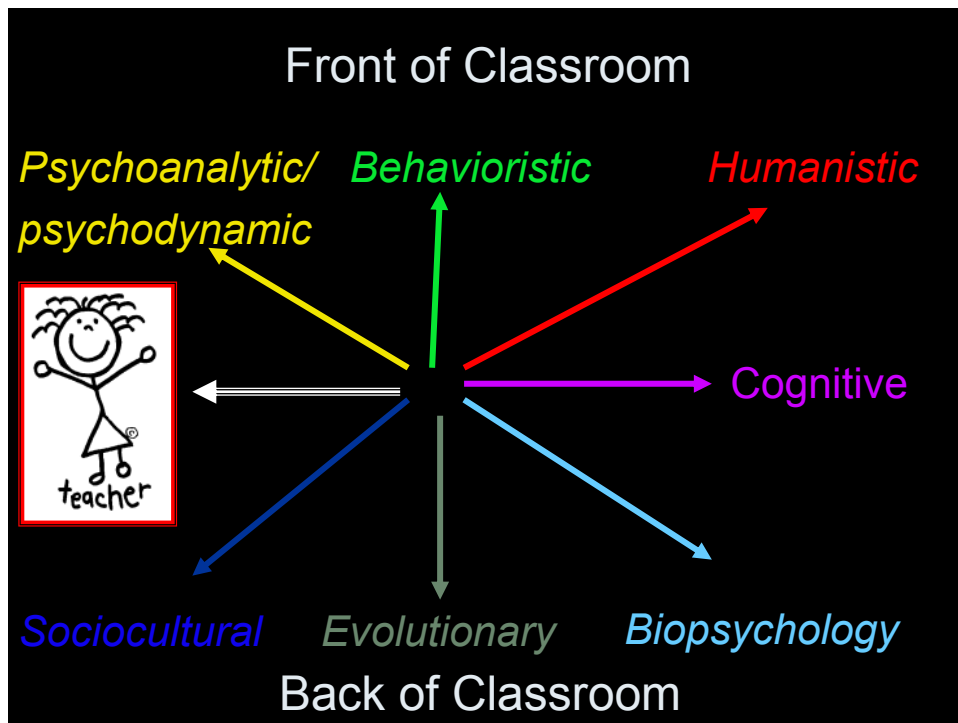
Virtually any topic that you can test using a multiple-choice format can be turned into a “foot test.” For example, after lecturing on positive and negative reinforcement versus positive and negative punishment, you could present an example, like taking an aspirin when you have a headache (adding aspirin takes away the headache = negative reinforcement) and ask students to move to one of the four corners of the room (labeled positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, and negative punishment). I’ve found this to be a very effective way to teach this topic.

When you have more than four choices, you can still use the foot test. Below are two specific examples of how you can introduce two topics with seven possible choices (modern schools of psychology and sources of stress) with corresponding sample Power Points and sample questions for students. You could create a similar power point with the various mental disorders (e.g., schizophrenia, anxiety, bipolar, etc.) and then read out a list of symptoms and ask students to go and stand beneath the appropriate label.

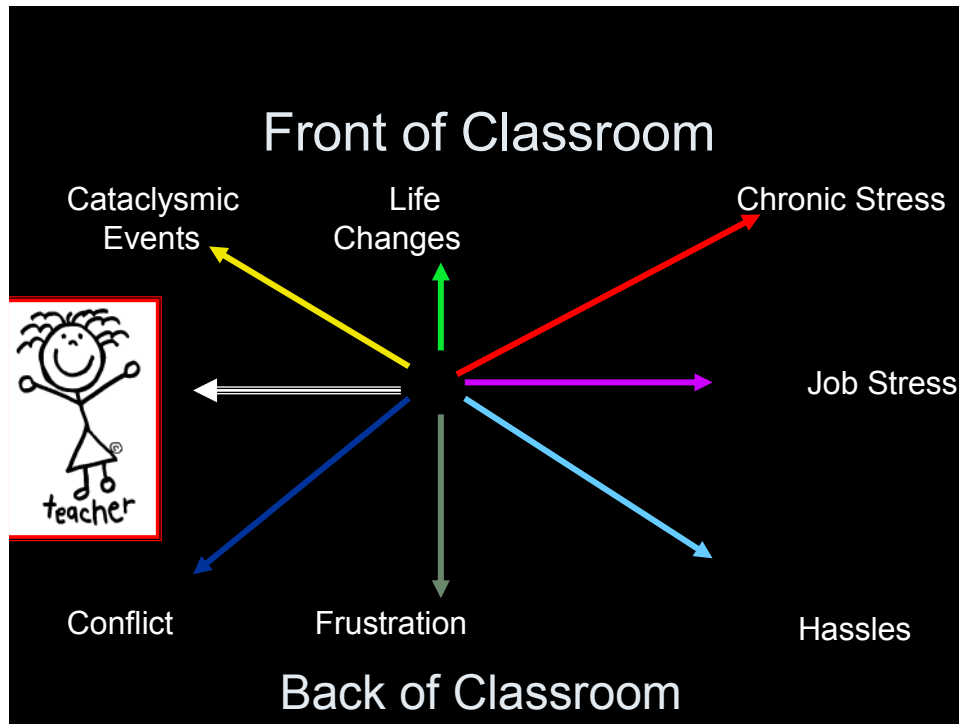
- **Modern Schools of Psychology:** ‘Today we will be covering the seven major schools of psychology, which are shown on this Power Point. Note that the arrows on

this slide are indications of the area of the room that you will be asked to move to following my lecture. For example, after my brief lecture, I might say: “I believe in the power of the unconscious mind and the importance of early childhood experiences. Please stand and move to the area of the room that most closely reflects this school of psychology.”

(Note on the Power Points that the “teacher” icon on the left is a guide to where you should stand during the exercise.)



- **Sources of Stress:** “Today we will be covering the seven major sources of stress, which are shown on this Power Point. Note that the arrows on this slide are indications of the area of the room that you will be asked to move to following my lecture. For example, after my description of the seven major sources of stress, I might say, “My husband is critically ill and needs constant medical attention, but we don’t qualify for in-home medical care unless I quit my job. If I quit my job, my children and I won’t qualify for medical care and we’ll have no income. Please stand and move to the area of the room that most closely reflects this source of stress.””



2. Be sure to remind students to take careful notes while you're discussing the specific topic because after your brief lecture they will be asked to stand and move to the area that corresponds to answers to specific questions on that topic.

(Can you see how alerting students ahead of time that they will be asked to stand and move to areas of the room after your presentation increases attention? Knowing that they will be immediately assessed for their understanding is a generally less threatening, but still effective type of "pop quiz." Keep in mind that anything you could assess on a multiple-choice test can be turned into this same type of "foot test," which literally keeps students on their toes during your lecture!)

3. Once students have moved around the room, select individuals from various positions, and ask them to explain to the entire class why they hold their particular point of view. Encourage students to be brief (one minute or so). It generally works best to choose different people to speak each time and to select one or two individuals from each of the various positions. Once all the major points have been made, energy "runs down," or time runs out, stop and ask everyone to return to their seats.

Advance preparation:

- Create various Power Point slides, similar to the samples above, with an overview of the lecture material and arrows depicting locations where students will walk to around the room.

PART II

VALUES WALK--THE FIRST DAY (*and throughout the term*)

As psychologists, we know (and teach) about the power of first impressions. Ironically, when it comes to our own teaching, and the first day of class, we often unwittingly create a bland and possibly negative first impression by discussing reading requirements, grading policies, and college business. Although this information is very important and must be discussed, the printed syllabus can be passed out and briefly discussed at the first meeting, with a more detailed discussion at later meetings. For the first day, I have found the following exercise to be extremely helpful in creating a lively, student-engaging first impression.

FOUR CORNERS/VALUES CLARIFICATION--INTRODUCING INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY

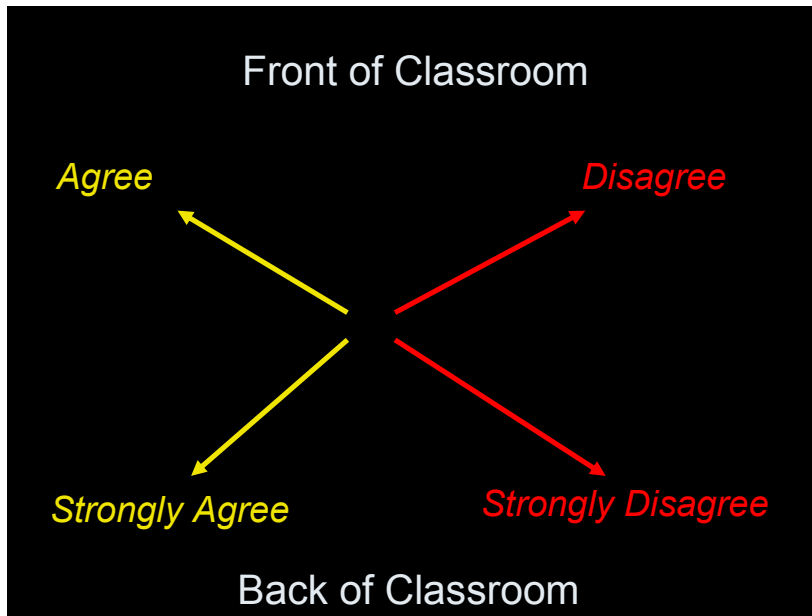
Purpose:

- Sets the stage for an interactive and critical thinking environment for your course.
- Creates a good first impression and a positive "set" toward your class and introductory psychology.
- Introduces general course content.
- Provides an opportunity for students to meet and interact.
- Emphasizes the importance of critical thinking/values clarification. To become critical thinkers, students must have insight into their personal biases, ideas, and beliefs, and the opportunity to practice expressing and defending these values.

Time: Approximately 45-50 minutes depending upon the number of values statements you choose to use.

Advance preparation:

- Before the first class meeting, you will need to make one copy for each student of the values clarification form shown at the end of this exercise.
- Create a Power Point slide with these words to show students how they will move around the room according to their positions on the various value statements (sample below)



Instructions:

1. At the first class meeting, distribute and briefly discuss your syllabus. Remind them that you will answer questions about the course at your next meeting. Then briefly introduce yourself and inform students that you are all going to engage in an activity, known as a “values walk.” Explain that introductory psychology includes numerous topics that touch on important personal values and beliefs, and that this values walk will help them explore their own thoughts and beliefs, while also increasing their mastery of the material.
2. Begin by asking students to stand and move all desks away from the center of the room--just push them off to the sides. Once the chairs have been rearranged, ask students to stand in the middle of the room, and to leave their belongings at their desks. (If you have a large lecture hall with fixed seating, or if it’s impractical to move the chairs, just ask students to move to the four corners of your classroom—it’s a bit messier but still effective.)
3. Inform students that this exercise has two main objectives—to get acquainted with one another and to explore topics covered in introductory psychology. If you assign active learning, critical thinking, or extra credit points in your grading, it helps to offer a few extra points for the one or two students who learn the most names while participating in this exercise. Explain that students will have 5 minutes at the beginning to walk around and learn the names of as many classmates as possible.
4. At the end of the 5 minutes, call for attention and read your first “values” statement (see sample statements provided at the end of this handout). Then ask students to move and stand under the posted sign that best reflects their feelings or beliefs (e.g., strongly agree, disagree, etc.). Once students have moved around the room, select individuals from various positions, and ask them to explain to their fellow classmates why they hold their particular point of view. Remind them to begin by giving their names, which allows you and the other classmates to learn first names.
5. Encourage students to be brief (one minute or so), and it generally works best to choose different people to speak each time and to select three or four individuals for each value

statement. Once all the major points have been made, energy “runs down,” or time runs out, stop and ask everyone to return to the center of the room.

6. When students are in the center of the room, read your next statement and repeat what you did in Steps 4 and 5. After approximately 30 minutes (three or four values statements), many students will have shared their opinions, met several other students, and have gained an appreciation and enthusiasm for your course and topics you will be covering.
7. If time allows, ask for one or two volunteers who think they have learned most or all of their classmates’ names. Have them point to each student and give the name. Award the appropriate extra points.
8. In the final minutes, ask students to grab pens from their desks and to sit on the floor or lean against the wall, while filling out the “Values Clarification Form” (provided at the end of this handout). Remind students NOT to put their names on the paper—it is anonymous. Then form students into one large circle, collect and shuffle the forms, and redistribute the forms so it’s clear that no student has his or her own paper. Remind students that if they do by chance get their own papers to simply act as if it is NOT their paper.
9. Starting with the statement “I learned that . . .,” have each student read aloud what is written on the sheet in front of them. If that line is blank, students should say “Pass.” Repeat with each of the next three open-ended responses. You will find that any point you wanted to make regarding the purpose of this exercise is made by the students’ written comments, and that students will generally report being very “pleased” with the exercise and “disappointed” that the exercise was so short.
10. If time runs out and you can’t finish steps 7 & 8 have students complete the values clarification forms, collect them, and then redistribute and read from them at the next class meeting. The following meeting also should be a time for general reactions to the exercise, and a chance for students to ask questions of the instructor regarding topics in the discussion.

References: This "values walk" was developed from similar exercises conducted at many Great Teachers' Seminars across the nation. It was adapted from an exercise created by Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum (1972). Values clarification, New York: Hart.

SAMPLE VALUES STATEMENTS

GENERAL VALUES QUESTIONS

- If I had my life to live over, I'd live in another state (if using this for teachers, change to "I'd still go into teaching").
- If I had my life to live over, I'd come back as the other gender.
- Motivation is more important than IQ in lifetime success.
- Birth control should be readily available in high school.
- The best way to improve education is to increase teacher's pay.
- I would immediately leave my partner or spouse if he or she had sex with someone else.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RELATED TO SPECIFIC CHAPTERS IN HUFFMAN'S PSYCHOLOGY IN ACTION TEXT

1. **Using animals for psychological research is inhumane and should be severely limited (Ch. 1).**
2. **I would rather have a high paying job with lots of stress than a low paying non-stressful job (Ch. 3).**
3. **Strong scientific evidence exists for extrasensory perception--ESP (Ch. 4).**
4. **The legal drinking age for alcohol should be 18 in all states (Ch. 5).**
5. **Spanking and other forms of physical punishment help develop good children and responsible adults (Chs. 6, 9, & 10).**
6. **Motivation is more important than IQ in lifetime success (Chs. 8 & 12).**
7. **Children without siblings are less happy and successful as adults (Chs. 6, 9, 10).**
8. **In almost all cases, divorce is bad for children (Chs. 9 & 10).**
9. **Drug-addicted mothers who give birth to drug-addicted infants are guilty of child abuse (Chs. 2, 5, 9 & 10).**
10. **If I had my life to live over, I would come back as the other sex (Ch. 9 & 11).**
11. **Mothers of young children should not work outside the home (Chs. 9 & 10).**
12. **Abstinence education is the best sex education for teenagers (Chs. 9 & 11).**
13. **Condoms should be distributed in high schools (Chs. 9 & 11).**

14. Lie detector tests help prove guilt or innocence in a criminal case (Ch. 12).
15. People can and should control their bad moods (Ch. 12).
16. A child's personality is generally set and unchangeable after age 5 (Ch. 13).
17. Insanity should be abolished as a legal defense (Ch. 14).
18. People who attempt suicide should be involuntarily committed to a locked psychiatric ward (Chs. 14 & 15).
19. Electroconvulsive shock therapy (ECT) should be illegal (Chs. 14 & 15).
20. Prejudice results from prejudiced parents (Chs. 6 & 16).
21. Viewing televised violence creates violent children (Chs. 6, 9, 10, & 16).

SAMPLE "VALUES CLARIFICATION" FORM

-----**(Make copies and cut here)**-----

I learned that ...

I was surprised that ...

I was disappointed that ...

I was pleased that ...

PART III

SORTERS--THE FIRST DAY “ICE BREAKERS” *(and throughout the term)*

Purpose:

- Sets the stage for an interactive and critical thinking environment for your course.
- Creates a good first impression and a positive "set" toward your class and introductory psychology.
- Provides an opportunity for students to meet and interact.

Time: Approximately 10-15 minutes.

Instructions:

1. Begin by explaining to students that this is a get-acquainted/ get-to-know-you-better type of exercise and that you're going to make various statements and will ask everyone to stand up and move along the spectrum on various personality or personal experience dimensions. Students who fit the category (i.e., those who would say “Yes” would be at one end of the line with those who say “No” at the other).

Below are specific examples of “sorter” statements:

- In a Hollywood film, I would prefer to be the actor, director, producer, or writer.
- I play a musical instrument. (Maybe ask students to mime the instrument they play with the “non-players” guessing the name of the instrument.)
- In most parts of my life, I am an introvert or an extrovert (offer copies of Time magazine article and copy of quiz).
- I speak more than one language. (Maybe ask students to say something in the language of their choice—other than English).
- I skipped a class in high school (if using this for teachers, change to skipping a class as an undergraduate).
- I flunked a class in high school (if using this for teachers, change to skipping a class as an undergraduate).
- I prefer to relax by watching television versus physical activity.
- I prefer to exercise outdoors versus a gym.
- I prefer to read versus socialize.

- I prefer housecleaning versus cooking.
 - I live within 10 miles of the campus.
 - I was a member of an athletic team in high school. (Maybe ask students to mime the sport they played with the “non-players” guessing the name of the sport.)
2. Once students have moved around the room, allow them to talk with one another and/or select individuals from various positions, and ask them to elaborate on their choice. Again, it generally works best to choose different people to speak each time and to select one or two individuals from each of the various positions. Once all the major points have been made, energy “runs down,” or time runs out, stop and ask everyone to return to their seats.

KAREN’S PERSONAL TIPS FOR SUCCESS FOR THE TEACHER’S TRIFECTA (FOOT TEST, VALUES WALK, & SORTERS)

- Students may initially resist moving around the room. Tell them this is like a multiple-choice question—they must choose one of the four alternatives. If they say they don’t like any of the choices or feel neutral, tell them they will probably encounter lots of test questions like this during the course and they must choose. It’s important not to let the “neutral” or “uncooperative” students remain in their seats or in one spot.
- To set the stage for a safe, friendly learning environment in which students are free to express their opinions, encourage students to use “I” statements (“I feel,” “I believe,” “I think”). Remind the class that everyone comes from different backgrounds and that respect for everyone is expected. Encourage them to take turns and to actively listen to one another. Set specific rules for “Civil discourse,” such as: 1) raise one hand when you want to contribute, and 2) raise both hands if you notice a violation of “NO put-downs” [i.e., verbal insults (“No way!” “Get Real”) or nonverbal insults (rolling the eyes, hands on hips, etc.)].
- To avoid turning any one of these three exercises into an uncomfortable debate or argument versus a discussion and get-acquainted exercise, encourage students to move physically to another side of the room if they change their minds during the discussion. Remind them that one of the major goals of a college education and critical thinking is open-mindedness; and that the willingness to listen to others and to change one’s mind is a tremendous asset as a parent, friend, lover, etc.
- If students are repeating arguments or if one student is monopolizing the time, it helps to ask, “Does anyone have a point to make that has not yet been made?”
- Students may try to draw YOU into the discussion. Resist. If they find that you have an opinion, many students will “shut down” and be less willing to participate. Explain that you will discuss many of the topics at various points in the course, and that this is a time for them to think about their own values. In addition, discourage students from directing their statements or

eye contact toward you. (Stand to the side of the room and look down or redirect their attention to their classmates.)

- On rare occasions, students may become upset and the discussion may become uncomfortable. One way to diffuse this situation is to ask everyone to remain where they are, while you change the Power Point slide to opposite values at each of the four locations (i.e., the “Agree” corner of the room reverses and becomes “Disagree” and the “Strongly Agree” becomes “Strongly Disagree.” Tell students they now need to present arguments from the opposing side. They may resist, but remind them that good discussions and critical thinking require each of us to be able to understand and articulate the opposing position.
- DO NOT be overly concerned about this list of possible problems. All three of these exercises are GREAT! I use them in various forms several times every term to introduce new chapters, topics, or to break up the lecture time. Finally, be enthusiastic about this type of student engagement. If you do one or more of these three exercises on the first meeting, you’ll set a positive tone for your course and establish student expectations for active participation for the entire term.