

What we do

Clickers: Classroom response systems

What are clickers/response systems?

“Clickers” enable more interaction between students and faculty in classroom learning situations. Clickers are keypads which wirelessly transmit student input to a receiver connected to a computer used by an instructor. Typically, instructors use this sort of response system to present questions interspersed throughout a presentation, receiving immediate feedback about student skills and knowledge. Clickers may also be used for attendance, quizzes, group activities, and more.



Why clickers/response systems?

The challenges of maintaining the attention of college learners during lectures have been demonstrated in many studies, and can be anecdotally confirmed by any instructor. An increasing body of research documents incompatibilities of the lecture format with findings from cognitive science on how people learn.

One technology (well known from at least the time of Socrates) to address this challenge is the question. However, asking questions and involving students in actively processing information presents logistical challenges in large lecture halls. Classroom response systems are a technology designed to help instructors overcome this challenge and engage students in more effective learning.

What support is available for clickers/response systems at SDSU?

In Summer 2006, SDSU standardized on the eInstruction CPS radio frequency (RF) response system after a selection process which included input from SDSU faculty and students, as well as from other universities with more experience with response systems.

The eInstruction system enables students to purchase their clickers in the bookstore and use them in any class where the faculty member wants to use a response system. The necessary software and a receiver with a USB connection are free to any interested faculty member. The eInstruction system interfaces with Blackboard, the campus learning management system, meaning that any attendance or assessment data collected in class can be seamlessly transferred to the Blackboard gradebook.

SDSU also has had a permanently installed OptionPower radio frequency (RF) response system in ENS 280, SDSU's first 500-seat classroom, since it opened in 2003. Each seat has a response keypad tethered to it. One faculty member has conducted research indicating that students rated the use of this system for responding to “concept check” questions in class as the most important contributor to their learning, aside from the lectures themselves.

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