



BEST STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE STUDENTS

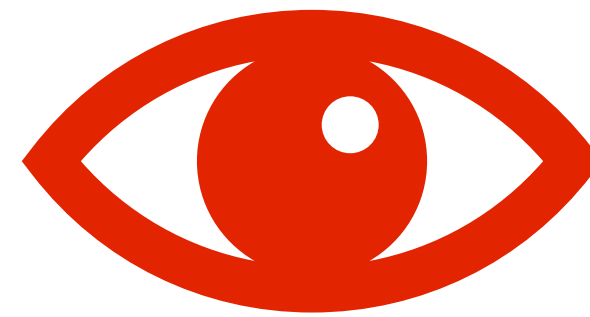
IN ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE COURSES

ENGAGEMENT

- Student engagement is defined as “the extent of students’ involvement and active participation in learning activities.” (Cole & Chan 1994, p. 259)



Cognitive: Can be achieved through assignments and activities aimed at promoting learning.



Behavioral: Can achieved through monitoring class participation and learning activity tracking tools.



Emotional: Can be achieved through interactions and conversations with faculty and fellow students.

FIVE STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

1. Create a strong presence
2. Help students believe that they can succeed
3. Establish ways to monitor progress
4. Build a sense of community
5. Plan effective interactions

BEST STRATEGIES

➤ 1. Create a strong presence

PROBLEM

- ▶ Students taking online classes may feel uncomfortable and not know how to communicate with faculty.

SOLUTION


- ▶ Be “VOCAL”:
 - ▶ Visible,
 - ▶ Organized,
 - ▶ Compassionate,
 - ▶ Analytical, and
 - ▶ Lead-by-example.

EXAMPLES



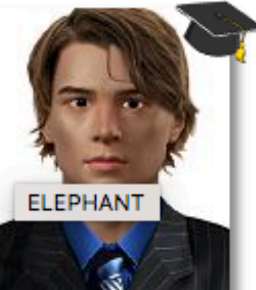



- ▶ Send students a welcome letter introducing yourself, the course, and materials needed for the class.
- ▶ Create a visual presence: Incorporate personal profiles and photos. Create introduction videos that have personal and professional information.
- ▶ Create asynchronous video/audio/text messages to reflect on recent assignments or discussion wrap-ups; Monday Motivation videos.
- ▶ Communicate with students often and in a variety of ways, emails, text chat, video conferencing, and so on.

➤ Create a visual presence













Voki Avatar Gallery *voki.com*

Note:  indicates a Premium avatar, available only to paid subscribers.

3D

 Amber	 Angela	 Erik	 Ginger	 Lilly	 Tom
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Animals

 Capuchin Monkey	 Chester	 Dolphin	 Earl The Bear	 Elephant	 Fran
 Harry The Horse	 Koala	 Lion	 Lioness	 Manatee	 Moose



BEST STRATEGIES

➤ 2. Help students believe that they can succeed

PROBLEM

- ▶ Subject matter may be difficult or intimidating for students so they might not engage, struggle, or feel like they can't succeed, so they drop out.

SOLUTION

- ▶ Help students feel that they can succeed.
 - ▶ Create opportunities for quick wins early on.
 - ▶ Reward effort, progress, and learning behaviors you'd like to encourage.
 - ▶ Show how similar peers have progressed through the course.

EXAMPLES

- ▶ Provide low stake assignments early on where students get quick points and feedback.
- ▶ Send a note to students praising participation and progress.
- ▶ Reach out to students in class or from previous class and ask them to share how they succeeded in this course.

BEST STRATEGIES

➤ 3. Establish ways to monitor progress

PROBLEM

- ▶ Students often do not engage productively in the online course because they are not sure how they are doing in the course.

SOLUTION

- ▶ Create smaller assignments rather than a high stakes final assignment.
- ▶ Establish clear objectives and tie activities, assessments, and instructional materials to the objectives.
- ▶ Faculty can monitor progress by tracking student access of course materials on Blackboard (data), observing missed assignments, and so on, and reach out to students.
- ▶ Solicit feedback from students.

EXAMPLES

- ▶ Breaking down a big assignment into smaller chunks.
- ▶ To do list: Provide a checklist of assignments, total points, points earned, due dates, etc. Students can mark assignments off as they complete them, while also noting the points. Encourage students to check their assignments grades on Blackboard.
- ▶ Faculty can send an email or ask students.
 - ▶ *“Dear Joy, You didn’t turn your work in on Sunday like usual, I just wanted to check on you...”*
- ▶ One can add a poll each week for a quick feedback from students.

BEST STRATEGIES

➤ 4. Build a sense of community

PROBLEM

- ▶ Students often feel they are on their own in an online class. As a result they may check out or feel overwhelmed.

SOLUTION

- ▶ Provide opportunities to know each other.
- ▶ Use collaborative activities.

EXAMPLES

- ▶ Class introductions.
- ▶ Collaborative assignments using wiki, discussion boards, or collective problem solving through group work, can help.

BEST STRATEGIES

➤ 5. Plan effective interactions

PROBLEM

- ▶ Students may find some interactions more difficult in an online course.

SOLUTION

- ▶ Think and plan for
 - ▶ Faculty-student interactions
 - ▶ Student-student interaction
 - ▶ Student-content interaction

EXAMPLES

- ▶ Audio/video feedbacks, comments, opportunities to ask questions (e.g. virtual office hours)
- ▶ Peer feedback on assignments; group work and study; suggest communication with each other using tools such as Microsoft Teams, Discord, and Social Media messenger.
- ▶ Have students teach a concept to the class in a recorded presentation.

Best Practice Examples

1. Choosing and implementing engaging activities
2. Managing expectations
3. Creating tests

Asynchronous Online Participation

Common Options and Tools

- Discussion boards
- Essays
- Learning journals
- Padlet
- Oral presentations
- Post a music video
- Movie night
- Community interviews
- Icebreakers
- Group work
- Think-pair-share problems
- Collaborative document creation

Analogy



Thestayathomechef.com

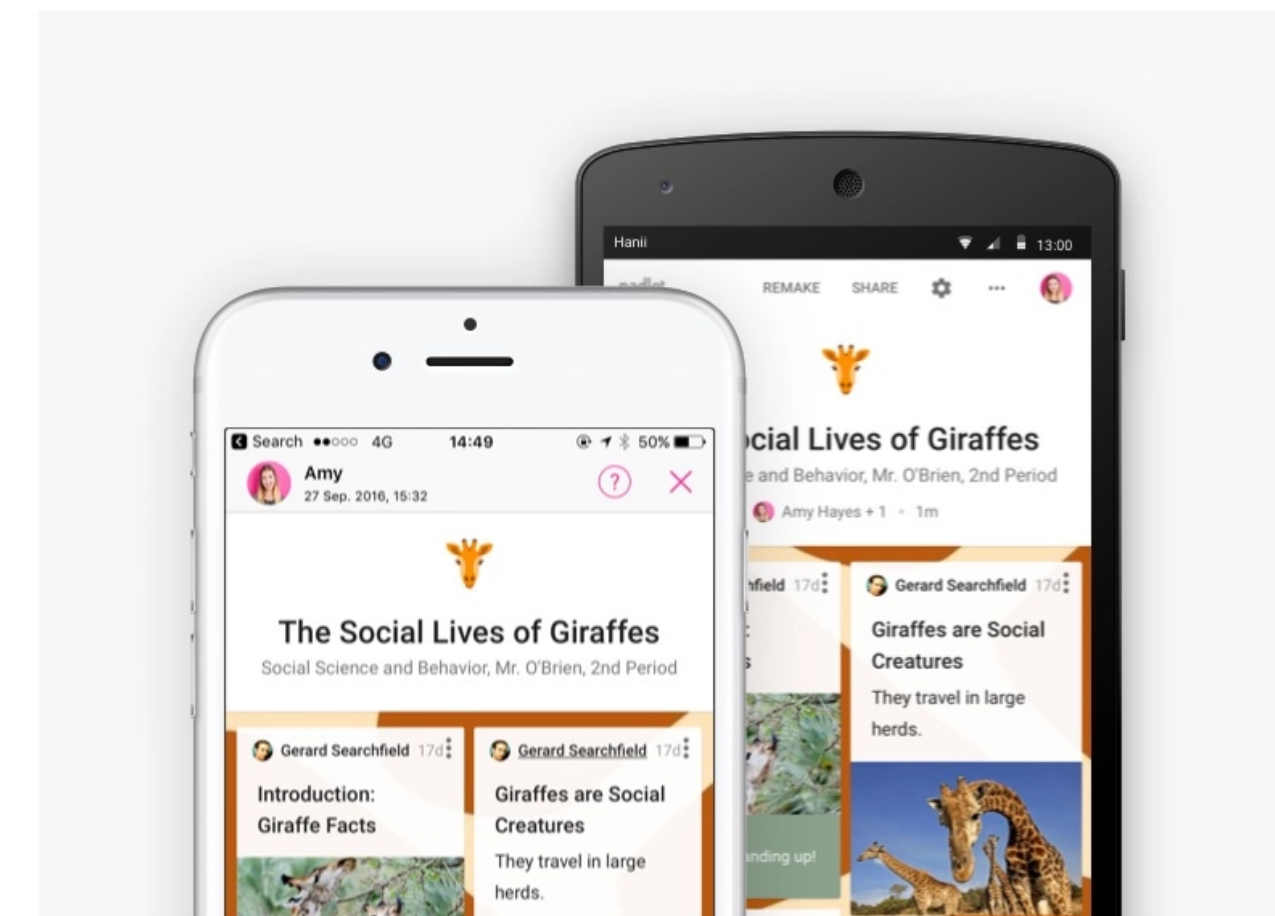
Discussion boards

Design Recommendations

- Questions should have infinite answers
- Credit should reflect the work you expect
- Set multiple due dates
 - At least two
 - Due on a day when instructor is available
 - Ex. three responses on three different days

Creative Ideas

- Record video or audio clip
 - Describing assignment and expectations
- Use Padlet



Discussion Board Protocols

- Describe framework for a student discussion of a problem
- Tuning Protocol
 - Commonly has six steps with associated time limits (example from Hughes, 2016)
 - Project Overview (4 minutes)
 - Clarifying Questions (2 minutes)
 - Probing Questions (3 minutes)
 - Discussion (10 minutes)
 - Reflection (3 minutes)
 - Debrief (3 minutes)
- Important to explain to your students the purpose of the protocol

Create a Help Discussion Board

- Describe during first class
- Create a “Help” discussion board (Chaterjee et al. 2016)
 - Student post their questions
 - Faculty moderate (use subscribe option in Bb)
 - Students are encouraged to also help answer questions
 - Post anonymized Q/A from faculty email correspondence with students also
 - Remind students to look there first
- Benefits
 - Students can find answers more quickly
 - Faculty receive fewer duplicate student questions

Essays and Journals

- Best Applications
 - Student reflection
 - Written communication learning objectives
 - When topic can relate to student's life experience
 - Relating knowledge gained throughout a semester
- Challenges
 - Grading time
- Creative Ideas
 - Current events
 - Student personal experience



Worldpress.com

Other Engagement Tools

- Oral presentations
 - Require audio/video file submission
 - Guide students to tech. resources
- Post a music video
 - Encourages creativity
 - Describe how it relates to concept X
- Movie night
 - With your “quaranteam”
 - Discuss and submit a summary
- Community interviews
 - Local leaders



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loOWKm8GW6A>

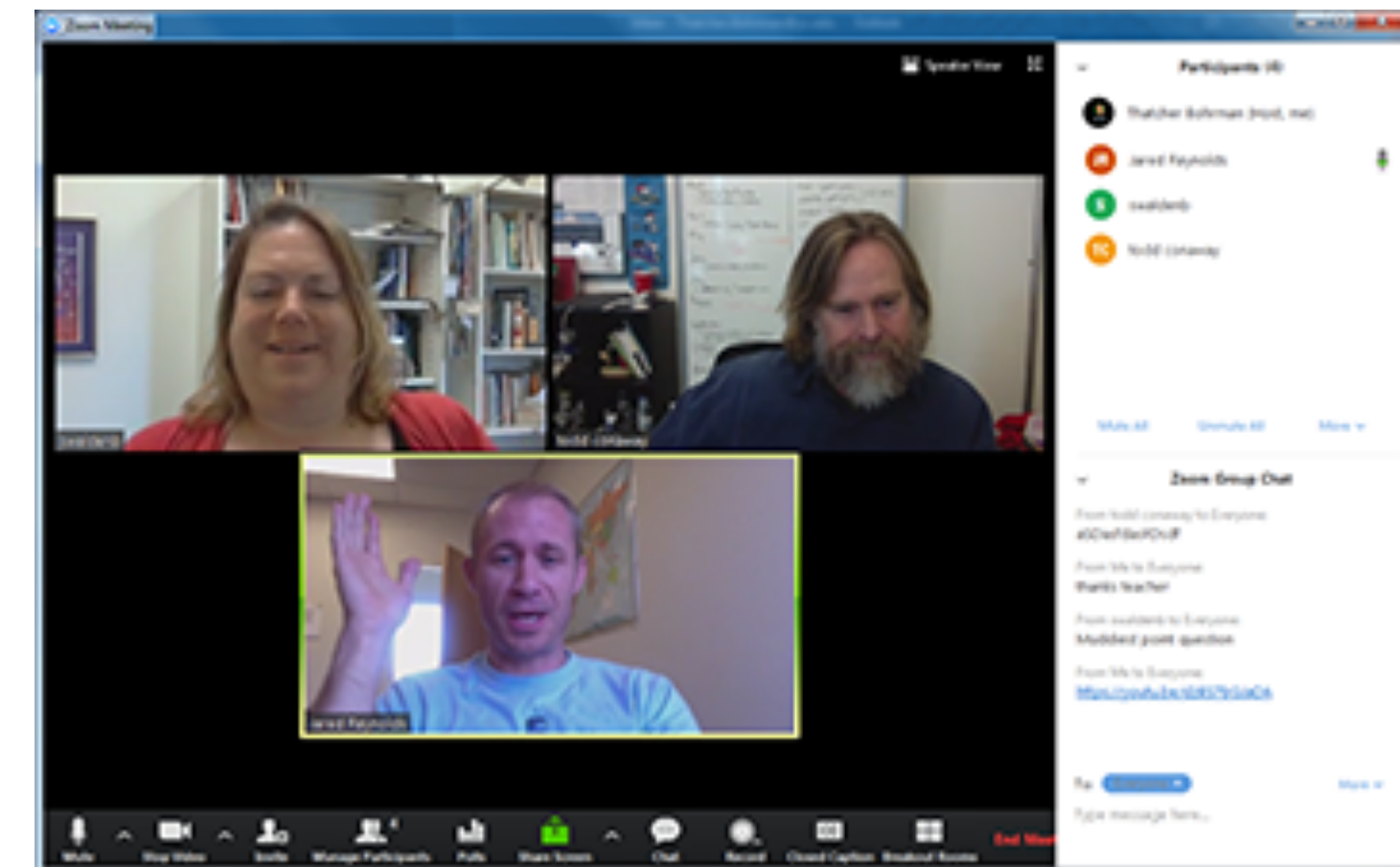
Starting on the right foot

- Icebreakers
 - Two truths and a lie
 - Trivial Pursuit
 - Cards Against Humanity
 - Haiku introductions
- Why bother?
 - Sets tone
 - Aids informal study groups
 - Starts community building
 - High benefit-cost



Collaborative Engagement Tools

- Group work
 - Worth the effort if a course outcome
 - Otherwise, avoid in online courses
 - Provide flexibility
 - Allow students to choose their roles
 - Maybe assign a rotation
 - Clearly describe
 - Deliverables
 - Group roles
 - Individual and group grades
 - Encourage collaborative document creation
- Think-pair-share problems
 - Require multiple deadlines in asynchronous courses
 - Builds communication skills
 - Relies on peer instruction



Managing Expectations

- Clear Communications
- Overall Course Policies
 - Response Time
 - As soon as possible is best, but 24 hours is optimal (Kay 2018)

Timing of Communications: During business days, I will normally respond to emails and phone messages within one day. I will use Blackboard to let everyone know in advance if I plan to be unavailable due to business travel. My response time during weekends is variable.

- Content (FTF vs. OL)

Communicating Deadlines

- Syllabus alone is not adequate
 - SIUE student survey data
- Show in two or more places in Bb
 - Assignments
 - Announcements
- Use multiple communication medium
 - Videos
 - Blackboard
 - Emails

The screenshot shows the Blackboard assignment creation interface. At the top, the assignment name is "Assignment One (Due 9/1, 6pm)" and the color is set to "Black". Below this is the "Instructions" section, which contains the text: "Read Chapter 4", "Turn in your work using this link. Complete Chapter 2, problems 2, 3, 4, 6,& 7", and "Please be sure that scanned documents are clear." The path is set to "p". Below the instructions is the "ASSIGNMENT FILES" section, which includes an "Attach Files" button and three sub-buttons: "Browse My Computer", "Browse Content Collection", and "Browse Cloud Storage". At the bottom is the "DUE DATES" section, which has a "Due Date" field with a checked checkbox, a date field containing "09/01/2020", a time field containing "06:00 PM", and an empty field for a second date.

Communicating Discussion Board Expectations

- Provide detailed guidance to students
 - Use a protocol?
 - Give an example post
 - Describe qualities or quantities you expect
 - “to answer this question, it should take two paragraphs”
- ITS Knowledge Base has best practices for students
 - <https://kb.siue.edu/82031>

Creating Online Tests in Blackboard

- Calculated formula questions
- Question pools
- Essay Questions (weight more heavily)
- File uploads

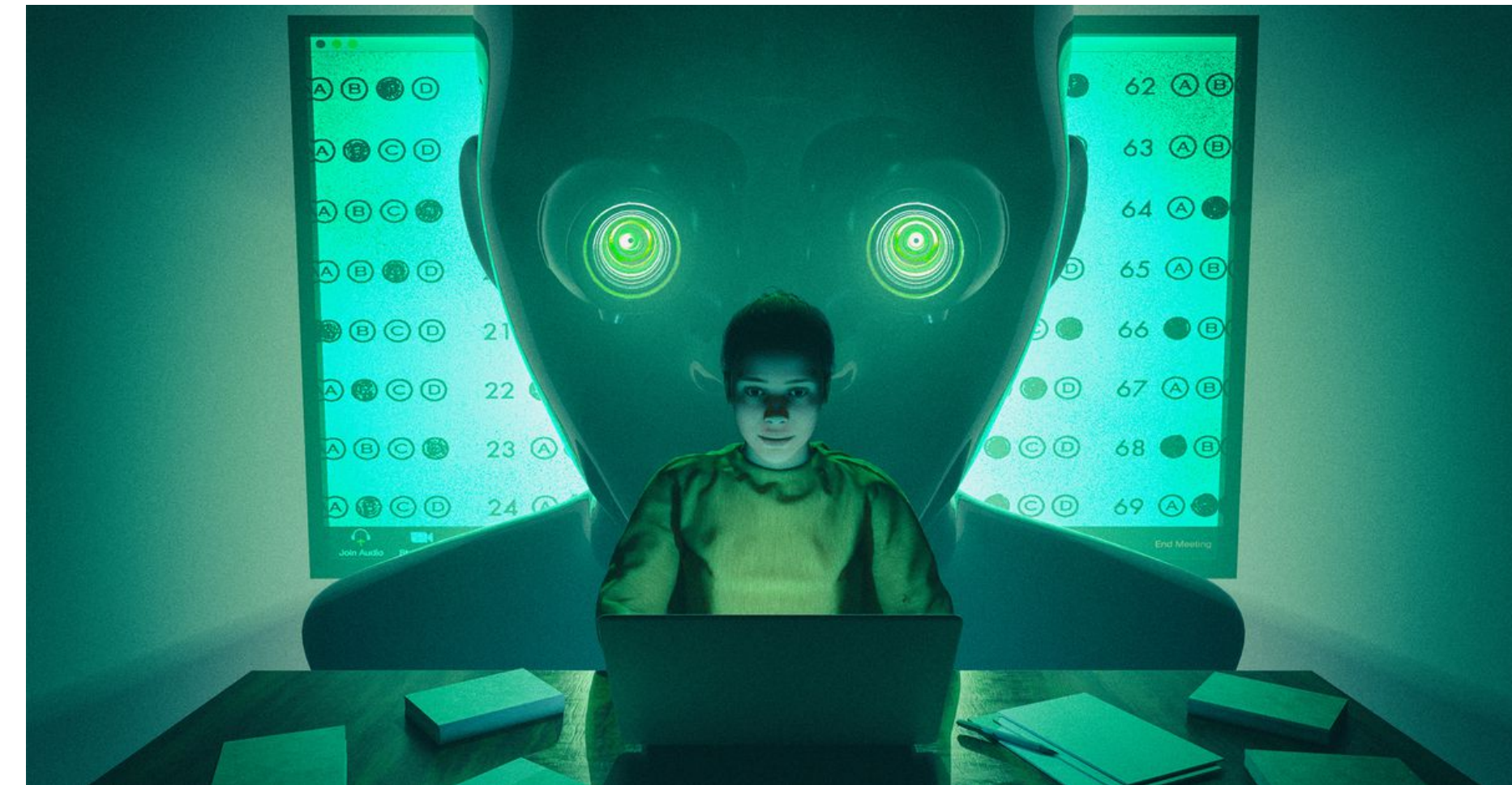
Calculated Formula: What is the heavy vehicle factor for ... Points: 0.5

Question	What is the heavy vehicle factor for a freeway with level terrain, [A]% trucks and 3% buses? Use three decimal places when submitting your answer.
Answer Formula	$\frac{1}{\left(1 + \left(\frac{A+3}{100}\right)\right)}$
Precision	Decimal
Answer Range +/-	± 0
Number of Answer Sets	50

Online Tests Monitoring

- Online proctoring services
 - Proctor U
- Respondus
 - Lockdown Browser
 - Monitor
 - <https://kb.siue.edu/page.php?id=98988>
- Web cameras required?

proctor^u



The Verge

Crafting Questions for Online Tests

Questions Should

- Require critical thinking
- Be reflective
 - How did you solve the problem?
 - Why did you choose that approach?
 - How does it relate to your personal experience?
- Have carefully chosen words
 - Not easily searched online or in text

Questions Should Not Be

- Googleable
- From the textbook
- The same answer for everyone
 - Use calculated formulas
 - Randomize order of answers

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