Exit Slips
Exit Slips are a favorite among educators because they are a quick, easy, and powerful way to improve teaching and learning. An Exit Slip is a piece of paper turned in at the end of class on which students write to a prompt. You might have students:

- rate their current understanding of new learning,
- answer a question,
- summarize the lecture material,
- write a question, tell you something they are confused about, or list 3 things they learned and the practical application, or
- provide feedback about any component of the lecture.

As you can see, Exit Slips can cover anything and everything!

Exit Slips have many purposes. They serve as:

- formative assessments so that you know what your students know or don’t know before they take the exam (which gives you time to do something to help them before the test),
- an assessment of teaching strategies or effectiveness of the presentation of the material so you can tweak your strategies before the next lecture,
- a way for you to have some personalized contact with every student, and
- a strategy to help students organize their thinking before they move on.

In order for this to be an effective tool when used in a large class, the responses need to be short and to the point. Therefore, your prompt should be focused and you should only give students a few minutes to jot something down; otherwise, you won’t have time to review them all.

Questions
Have you ever talked straight through a 50 minute lecture without any input from students? We are all probably guilty of this at some time or another. Asking and providing students with questions is beneficial to you and the student. While questions allow you to assess learning, the big payoff is for students. Questions increase student participation and encourage active learning. Questions require students to start thinking about the material. Simply listening to you speak about the material does not require

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3 Summarize Periodically
We all know that a lecture should have a beginning, middle, and end. Most of us end our lectures by restating main points and quickly summarizing the lecture. However, restating and summarizing are also important activities to do throughout the lecture. These quick pauses allow students to quickly review and modify their notes (a good technique for reinforcing retention of knowledge). It also gives students a minute to swallow the material just presented before moving on to the next chunk of information. While restating and summarizing should primarily be done by the instructor (for a variety of reasons) this can also be modified, on occasion, by having a student volunteer restate main points and/or summarize the information (an active learning, formative assessment, or instructional variety component).

4 Model Thinking
Even though we are teaching bright students, the content they are studying at VCOM is unlike anything they have experienced before. As such, many students need help in knowing how to think about the material. Modeling your thinking in class provides students with a framework that they can duplicate and use themselves. Students often report not being able to determine what they need to know. This is usually a result of not knowing how to think about the material; therefore, students focus equally on everything and can still never pull it all together. You can help by modeling your thinking in each class. After you have introduced a topic, take a break and self-talk (out loud) how you would organize or apply the information. It’s much like watching someone demonstrate a technique, without which you may not ever be able to replicate by just reading or listening to someone speak about it. Seeing that technique demonstrated and/or having someone talk you through the steps as you do them makes all the difference in the world. Modeling thinking sounds simplistic but it really gives students insight that they can’t get elsewhere.

5 Streamline Your PowerPoint
Tweaking your PowerPoint for presentation best practices aids both the instructor and student. When your presentation contains too much information per slide or overall you are doing yourself and the students a disservice. The disservice to you is that it tends to trap you into reading your information and not teaching the information, which takes the joy out of being in the classroom. The disservice to students is that they don’t have to engage in class because they know you will write down everything for them that they will need for later study. Plus, no note-taking in class equals no learning in class. Additionally, too much information in a 50 minute lecture is overwhelming (especially if they have been in 3 - 5 hours of lecture that day) so it is very difficult to get motivated to be engaged. There is a lot of information on the internet regarding effective PowerPoint presentations. For more information check out Garr Reynolds’ blog entry, “What is Good PowerPoint Design” or “7 Tips for Designing and Delivering PowerPoint Presentations” by the USC Center for Teaching Excellence. For a humorous take watch Don McMillian's video clip (love it!).

Spring Cleaning for the Mind
Spring is here! Most of us are more than ready to see trees blossoming and look forward to warm weather. Maybe you’ve started some spring cleaning at home to prep for the change in season. Like our homes and offices, our mental space can often use decluttering and refreshing as well. Here are 10 tips on how to de-stress for April:

1. Prioritize. Make task checklists and start on the most important ones first. Check tasks off as you go and don't procrastinate.
2. Put things in perspective. Make a list of the things that are troubling you; then fold it and put it away for the rest of the day. Think to yourself, "Will this matter in a week, month or year from now?"
3. Give up a grudge. Releasing your grip on a gripe can free up emotional energy that you can then invest in other, more positive areas of your life.
4. Do one thing at a time. Avoid doing two or three things at once to help reduce stress. “Multitasking” is inefficient and generally unproductive, contrary to popular belief.
5. Stay positive. Be a positive person and praise yourself and others for good work.
6. Offer an apology. Is there someone in your life that, when you see them, you feel awkwardness about something you’ve said or done? If so, offer a sincere apology to clear the air.
7. Forgive your own faults. It’s easy to collect evidence for negative self-evaluations like, “I am never good enough” or “I’m always putting my foot in my mouth” or “See! I’m not good at relationships.” Dwelling on your past mistakes clutters the present and leads to self-critical thinking.
8. Take a break. Always have a lunch break or take some “me-time” so you can relax and unwind.
9. Exercise. Engage in physical activities, even if it’s just to get outside for a fresh air and fresh food after lunch! Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
10. Have fun! Find time to do things you enjoy — you deserve it.

References:
www.cigna.com/behavioral/web/basicsite/bulletinBoard/springCleaning.jsp
www.sharecare.com/health/stress-reduction/article/6-ways-to-spring-clean-your-mind