

## Continuum Activity - Similarity Hub

### Overview

The Continuum Activity is a movement-oriented way to get students thinking critically. The Continuum Activity requires participants to choose a place to physically stand along a continuum between two polar opposite statements, silently indicating their own position on the issue. This provides an opportunity for students to articulate their own ideas, revise their thinking throughout the process, and hear their classmates' viewpoints with respect and interest. In this lesson, it prepares them to explore the perceptions vs reality of political polarization on issues.

### Procedures

#### Opener - Continuum Activity

1. **Clear:** At the beginning of class, clear furniture out of the way so there is enough space for students to stand in a line from one end of the room to another.
2. **Preview:** Explain that students will hear two opposite statements and will decide where on the continuum between the two extremes to stand, based on their beliefs. Students can opt to stand at an extreme end as well. In other words, a Continuum Activity requires participants to choose a place to physically stand along a continuum between two polar opposite statements, silently indicating their own position on the issue.

**\*\*Note:** The statements that establish the ends of the continuum must allow for differences without there being a right and wrong place to stand.

3. **Prepare:** Remind students of class expectations. Teachers might remind students that while it is appropriate to argue the merits and consequences of an idea, the Continuum Activity is a conversation to enhance our understanding of one another's viewpoints, not to win an argument or denigrate someone else's perspective. Encourage:

- Listening to understand
- Asking clarifying questions
- Sharing your point of view

4. **Think:** Read each statement *twice*, giving students time to move silently and without discussion to a place on the continuum. Participants go and stand in the place that best represents their preference/opinion/belief. Ideally, projecting the written wording of the two option statements would help everyone.

**\*\*Note:** If this is the group's first time doing a Continuum Activity together, one or two practice rounds can help increase comfort with the process. Well-tested possibilities include:

*"I do my best work in the morning."/ "I do my best work late at night."*

*"I work best alone/by myself."/ "I work best in a large group/with the whole class."*

5. **Move:** Each time, read a pair of statements and clearly/visibly point to the physical place on the continuum that corresponds to each statement. Once most students have settled on a place to stand, ask people at different points in the continuum why they chose to stand where they did. People are free to move along the continuum if they change their minds as they hear one another respond to your questions. Some options:

*"Oregon should prohibit all hunting."/ "Oregon should have no restrictions on hunting."*

*"College should be free of cost to students."/ "College is a privilege students should pay for."*

*"Guns should all be banned."/ "Anyone should be allowed to have any gun they want."*

*"Parents should decide what their kids learn in school."/ "Teachers should decide what kids learn in school."*

6. **Discuss:** Ask what patterns they noticed about where people stood. The opening exercise shows that many issues are complex enough that people find themselves somewhere in between the extremes on many issues.



## Inquiry Time

The US has just survived another election year in which the red and blue tribes feel more far apart than ever. However, the data shows that Americans agree about more than they think they do.

7. **Read:** Have students read this brief article: [Americans agree more than they might think – not knowing this jeopardizes the nation’s shared values](https://theconversation.com/americans-agree-more-than-they-might-think-not-knowing-this-jeopardizes-the-nations-shared-values), *The Conversation*, November 21, 2024.

URL:

<https://theconversation.com/americans-agree-more-than-they-might-think-not-knowing-this-jeopardizes-the-nations-shared-values-242555>

8. **React:** Let students share their impressions of the topic. Do they agree or disagree with the author?

9. **Analyze:** Have students navigate to the Allsides [Similarity Hub](https://www.allsides.com/similarity) online. They can explore the topics in the drop down menu.

URL: <https://www.allsides.com/similarity>

10. **Reflect:** Have students write their response to these questions on paper before sharing out to the class.

- *On which issues did you see more agreement than you expected between Republicans and Democrats?*
- *On which issues were there substantial differences?*
- *Why do you think this Similarity Hub was created?*

**Lesson Duration:** 60-75 minutes

**Materials Needed:** For visual learners, teachers may write out/copy the statements onto slips of paper and share them with students when they are read out loud. (It’s also possible to project the statements on a screen if doing so does not pull focus from students interacting with one another.) Student access to tablet or laptop to read the article and look at data online.

### Modifications/Variations:

- Recognize and accommodate students’ varying needs, particularly with regard to physical mobility and language processing in the Continuum Activity.
- Avoid issues that you know may be too raw for some of your students when doing the Continuum Activity. You can modify the statements to suit your class age and content.

*Continuum Activity adapted from numerous educators in the field, including Marylyn Wentworth and the School Reform Initiative.*