

Co-teaching

📌 Objectives

- Get to know the principle of co-teaching: How we do it and how you can too.
- Learn the team teaching concept and how to tailor it to your situation.

Instructor note

- Teaching: 15 min
- Exercises: 10 min
- Discussion: 5 min

Overview

CodeRefinery lessons benefit from the application of the concepts of **co-teaching**.

📌 Co-teaching

Co-teaching can be defined as “the division of labor between educators to plan, organize, instruct and make assessments on the same group of students, generally in a common classroom, and often with a strong focus on those teaching as a team complementing one another’s particular skills or other strengths”.

Co-teaching can be used in various forms, some of which are present in our workshops:

- **Teaching + support**, e.g. one of the teachers leading instruction while the other watches over and maintains the collaborative document (HackMD/HedgeDoc/...).
- Another similar example is **remote learning groups** that watch the streamed CodeRefinery lessons guided by the local instructors.
- Having open-source material and planning jointly allows **multiple instances** of a lesson to be held by multiple teachers:
 - *parallel teaching*, to different audiences at the same time,
 - *alternative teaching*, to different audiences at the same or different time, with potential content adjustments (for example, different installation procedures).
- **Team teaching**, where the lesson is presented by multiple (in most cases, two) teachers who actively engage in conversation with each other. The team-teaching concept is explained in more detail in the [CodeRefinery manual](#).

In reality, different forms are very often mixed or fused together, even within a single lesson.

Co-teaching is not an online-only concept. However, it is very practical in online teaching due to larger number of instructors and learners potentially available to join a teaching session.

Co-teaching and team teaching benefits

- It **saves preparation time**. Co-teachers can rely on each other's strengths while creating/ revising the material as well as in unexpected situations during the lesson.
- It **helps with onboarding new instructors**. One of the co-teachers can be learning at the same time, either the subtleties of the material taught (in this case literally being the “voice of the audience”) or the teaching process itself.
- Team teaching **looks more interactive and engaging** to the audience in many cases, without forcing the learners to speak up if they can't or don't want to do so.
- It also **ensures responsive feedback and less workload** by having more active minds.

Are there any downsides?

Not every learner and not every instructor might like the team-teaching approach.

- It might seem **less structured**, unprepared, and chaotic, even with preparation.
 - It might create situations where instructors accidentally talk over each other or “interrupt” and change the flow of the lesson.
 - For some instructors it can be stressful to not know in advance what questions they get asked from the co-instructor.
 - Sometimes when an unexpected question is asked that throws the other instructor off, it can add to the feeling of chaos and unpreparedness.
- It can be interactive and engaging but it can also end up awkward if the co-teachers don't have a good synergy.
 - Can sound awkward: Main instructor talking all the time and at the end asking co-instructor whether everything is clear and co-instructor only saying “yes”.
 - Possibly more engaging: Co-instructor asking questions which help with the flow and a common understanding of the material.

Team teaching specifics

- For successful team teaching, additional **coordination** is needed, first of all to agree on the teaching model (see below) and the person in control (the **director**) for the lesson or its parts.
- It's useful to keep track of the **lecture plan**. The discussion is a good way to make lesson more interactive and adjust to the audience, but deviating too much will become disorienting (for example, if someone dropped their attention for a minute and now is trying to catch-up by reading lecture notes).
- Experienced solo teacher might have a habit to keep talking (lecturing), while the co-

teacher might not want to “interrupt”. Therefore, it is important for the leading presenter to anticipate and **allow for remarks/ questions**, and this can be different from one’s previous teaching style at first.

Team teaching models

We propose two basic models, but of course there is a constant continuum.

Guide and demo-giver

One person serves the role of **guide**, explaining the big picture and context of the examples.

Another, the **demo-giver**,

- shows the typing and does the examples,
- might take the role of a learner who is asking about what is going on, to actually explain the details, or to comment occasionally.

Hands-on demos and exercises work especially well like this.

Presenter and interviewer

In this case, one is the **presenter** who is mostly explaining (including demos or examples), and trying to move the forward through the material.

Another, the **interviewer**,

- serves as a learner or spotter,
- fills in gaps by asking relevant questions,
- tries to comment to the presenter when things are going off track.

This can be seen as closer to classical teaching, but with a dedicated and prepared “voice of the audience”.

Exercise

Discuss the models of team teaching (10 min)

While in breakout rooms, discuss one of the basic team-teaching models presented here:

- Have you already tried this or similar model in your teaching?
- Does it seem natural to apply this model in your subject area (tell what it is)? How could it be adapted to fit best?

Write your comments in the collaborative document.

Summary

📌 Keypoints

- Co-teaching focuses on complementing individual skills and strengths in teaching process.
- Co-teaching may save time, reduce teachers' workload and make lessons more interactive/ engaging.
- Team teaching requires some adjustments in lesson preparation and delivery.