Good/Bad Qualities of Classroom Activities

Qualities of a good classroom activity: Qualities of a bad classroom activity:

1.

2.

3.

Notes:
My activity planning process:

WHAT? → WHO? → HOW?

WHAT do I want students to learn?
• Do I want the to acquire information or synthesize it?
• What are my teaching goals for the lesson?

WHO will do the activity?
• Individuals? Pairs? Small groups? (Five seems to be the effective upper limit for me.)
  The whole class?

HOW will students connect with the material?
• Discussion?
  ○ Debate? Brainstorming? Think-pair-share? Jigsaw (each student in the group is given a different piece of information to share)?
• Low-Stakes Writing?
  ○ “Define X in your own words”? Compare and contrast? Pros and cons? Personal experiences related to the material?
• “Fun” activities? (These seem to work best for acquisition rather than analysis.)
• Linguistic analysis?
  ○ Depends on the topic of the course.
• Lecture?
  ○ Brief lectures to review/introduce material can be very helpful for students.
• How much time do I want to devote to this? (Remember to include transition time!)

Some tips based on my experience (your mileage may vary):

• More white space on worksheets is generally better.
• Worksheets are generally better than slide shows. You can't count on having a projector and it encourages students to come to class if they have to be there to get the worksheet.
• Save your extra worksheets! Bring them to the last week of classes for students to review with.
• Always double-check any data sets you give to students.
• If you have more than one group activity in a class, have students get up and move around.
• Keep different learning styles (visual, verbal, aural, etc.) in mind. Try a variety of different activities.
• Make use of the Center for Teaching and Learning: http://www.washington.edu/teaching/
• Be aware of your students' English proficiency (which can vary dramatically).