

Circuit Cards

These are also called “I have, who has” cards. For those who have never used them, here is a quick description. Each student gets a card and you keep one. You read your answer and then the question that accompanies it. For instance, I read, “13. Now subtract 4 from me.” The student with the 9 card says, “9. Triple me.” The last card read will have 13 (my card, in this example) as the answer. If your number of cards exceeds the number of students, then a few students will play two cards.

I do this as a race between classes. The class with the lowest time wins. I award participation points (another article for you to read) at the end of the day to everyone who was present in the winning class. You can offer any incentive you might normally give. You can have your Algebra I classes compete against your Algebra II classes or you can have two winners – one from each prep.

Mental math is important. We use calculators a lot in high school but students should still be able to do calculations in their head. I had one administrator marvel at how I had every student engaged at the beginning of the period. Even when you have already read your card, most students still work out the problems as they occur, especially if they have two cards. I don't use a cheat sheet so I have to be faster with my mental calculations than the students in case I need to call out 'wrong'. If you allow wrong answers to continue, the circuit gets broken.

I have some additional rules that I have developed over the years:

- 1) If you call out the answer and it is not your card, you get a 3 second penalty added to your time. This is not always bad, and I actually teach it as a strategy to use when someone is obviously stuck or not paying attention and there is silence for 5 seconds or more.
- 2) If you point to someone to cue them to read, that is a 3 second penalty.
- 3) You do not get to shuffle through the cards for your row and pick out the one you want.
- 4) Any comparing of cards can lead to a 3 second penalty.

I write the time in dry erase on my plastic seating charts. I make sure to award the points before I leave for the day. The seating chart also has the attendance for the day marked. Absent students do not get a point.

You can review lots of things with circuit cards. I have a whole numbers deck. I have an integers deck. I have a geometry terms deck. You can create decks of different sizes. I started with one deck of 30. Now, most of my decks are 24. One year, I had a competition and let students design a deck. Most of them ended up in the trash but I did get one that was excellent that I still use.

In the Resources section of my web page, I have attached a template you can use and included a few decks that are ready to use. You will run these on card stock and then cut out the cards. You will run them front/back so that the description of the deck is on the back of each card. For instance, the back of the card may say “Integers – 24 cards” to tell me the topic and the deck size.

Enjoy! Create your own decks. You will be using them for years. I use my decks on Mental Mondays as my class opener. However, they can be effective as a transition activity or even a closing activity.