

Teaching Tip Series

Design and execute an effective lecture

As a teaching method, lectures can be useful and effective means for sharing content, especially if there are a number of learners new to the content (Zakrajsek & Harrington, 2017). Students' prior knowledge of the content, the energy instructors bring to class, and the extent to which visual aids are used properly, can all determine the effectiveness of a lecture.

1. Activate students' prior knowledge

Students prior knowledge plays a large role in what and how much they learn during a lecture. Gain an understanding of what this prior knowledge is by conducting a diagnostic assessment or poll at the beginning of the semester, at the end of a topic, or in preparation for the next topic. Next, make sure students connect deeply with the material before class by assigning an activity related to the readings, such as a discussion post, summary, or response to a scenario or case. During class, connect the material to students' prior knowledge by asking them to share their experiences related to the content in groups. Quizzing students on what they've read for homework or asking them to discuss homework in groups also activates their prior knowledge and makes it easier for them to learn new material.

2. Bring your passion for your field into the classroom

Attention is a prerequisite for learning and research has demonstrated that our minds wander after a few minutes of listening to a lecture, particularly if it is monotonous. Studies show that the instructor's passion for a subject is contagious, generates interest in the topic, and helps students maintain attention for longer periods of time (Zakrajsek & Harrington, 2017). Before leading a class session, remind yourself what you love about the topic and bring your positive energy to the classroom.

3. Use effective visual aids

Use PowerPoint or other [presentation software as an organizational tool](#). Instead of reading directly from the slides, highlight key points (bold font and arrows can be helpful), use relevant images when possible, and present a structure for the lesson that might help students learn and retain the content (Holstead, 2015). Make your slides available to students before class, so that they can focus on noting key points around the organizational structure of the slides.

References

Holstead, J. (2015). The impact of slide-construction in PowerPoint: Student performance and preferences in an upper-level human development course. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*.

Zakrajsek, T. and Harrington, C. (2017). *Dynamic Lecturing: Research-based strategies to enhance lecturing effectiveness*. Stylus Publishing.