

I Lecture

Are students getting the most out of your lectures?

How you prepare, organize and deliver your lecture affects its accessibility and how much students learn in your class.

Lecturing is a very effective way of disseminating information and facilitating learning – especially in large classes. Enthusiasm and expressiveness, clarity and interaction are all characteristics of effective lecturing.ⁱ Other effective teaching strategies can be used in large or smaller classes to help you meet the learning styles of students. These include inviting guest speakers to present, hosting a panel of experts or allowing for short discussion breaks among smaller groups of students. Research on best practices in teaching and learning shows that people learn in a variety of different waysⁱⁱ – so mix it up and everyone can benefit!

Tips on Lecture Structure

- Try to limit each lecture to one major topic; if this is not possible – clearly delineate when you are changing topics
- Contextualize the lecture – give students the “Big Picture” of where the lecture fits in to the overall course, and program content, and how it relates to earlier material
- “Tell them what you’re going to say, say it, then tell them what you’ve just said” – this old adage still holds true; everyone benefits when you provide a clear outline, a well-structured informative lecture and a good summary of the key information conveyedⁱⁱⁱ
- Consider taking short, “**active breaks**” in your lecture; studies on student attention span have shown that even highly motivated students only have attention spans of about 20-25 minutes; active breaks could allow them to compare notes with a neighbour, discuss a question in small groups, solve a problem or write a reaction; (for a descriptive list see pages 117 to 120 in [Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors](#))

Tips on Lecture Delivery

- Face your students when you speak and make sure you’re not in a shadow; being backlit may make it difficult for students to see your face
- Pause to allow students to keep up with their notes and take in information
- Try not to move around too much – it can be distracting, make it difficult for students trying to lip read and/or limit the effectiveness of a microphone if you’re using one^{iv}
- Give examples of key concepts.
- Provide definitions for new concepts or vocabulary
- Share your enthusiasm for the topic - if your own research touches on the lecture topic, share your successes and challenges^v
- Verbally explain any charts, graphs, images or tables
- Consider allowing students to audio-record lectures, or create your own audio “podcasts” of your lectures and make them available to students; this can benefit all students as a study aid and may be especially helpful for students with disabilities and ESL students (Note: provincial accessibility standards require a transcript be provided if requested by students with disabilities)
- Encourage and support different ways for students to interact with you, the material and each other through hands-on activities, such as discussions, technology and Internet-based interactions
- Give students options for participating in activities and discussions – summarizing notes, written or verbal questions, etc.

I Lecture

- Mix it up: is there a video, audio clip, cartoon, graph, image or chart that conveys the information you're trying to transmit? Consider incorporating other teaching methods, such as guest speakers, inviting a panel of experts, discussions, PowerPoint, white boards, handouts, etc. Using multiple methods to convey information is one of the best ways to reach as many students as possible and keeps them engaged - just make sure all the formats are accessible (use captions, transcripts, alternative text, etc.)

Large Classes

- Use a microphone if there is one available, there is always a risk of trailing off, or students at the back of the room not being able to hear
- If you allow questions or comments from the class, repeat the questions and comments into the microphone so that everyone can hear

Mid-Sized Classes

- Use a variety of approaches for student engagement
- Encourage students to ask questions, and seek clarifications; you can do this verbally, online, by e-mail or through note cards – it's best to give a number of options
- Follow up with students who appear to be struggling and suggest methods of support

Small Classes, Seminars and Tutorials

- Use open-ended questions to check for comprehension of materials
- Consider giving a participation grade for students who post their notes online for the entire class; this could be done on a rotational basis
- Get to know your students and understand what's working best to meet their learning needs

Other General Tips

- Make an announcement at the beginning of term, inviting students with disabilities to approach you to discuss any accessibility needs
- Make your lectures notes, PowerPoint slides, or other handouts accessible and available electronically to students before class via Course Link, by e-mail or on a course website (students may wish to take notes on your slides, and it can help them follow the flow of the class)
- If you make your lecture notes available for each class, students may not need to use a note taker, and you can assure they will receive high quality information
- If you make an important verbal announcement in class, such as a change in class location or time, or some other logistical information – consider also sending it by e-mail or posting it on CourseLink
- If you use videos or audio files, check with Library E-Learning and Reserve Services for captioning and transcript support; audio and video must be captioned and transcribed upon request by a student with a disability. However, these alternative formats could be beneficial for the entire class
- Check out your classroom before the semester begins: is it accessible to students with mobility-related disabilities? Does the class layout allow you to facilitate what you need to in class? Are there distracting background noises? See what you can do to minimize accessibility concerns or distractions in the classroom that may make it difficult for students to hear, pay attention or take notes
- Insist on professional, civil conduct between and among students, that respects people's differences and creates an inclusive environment

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More resources on lecturing:

See the [University of Ohio's Fast Facts for Faculty](#) for a list of a variety of teaching methods and their strengths and limitations.

The [DO-IT Centre](#) at the University of Washington has suggestions on accessible Delivery Methods, as well as a [Checklist for Inclusive Teaching](#).

For tips of varying your instructional method, see pages 117-120 of [Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors](#) by Linda B. Nilson, 3rd Edition. John Wiley and Sons, 2010.

Teachability Project at the University of Strathclyde. Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. Resource for Academic Staff on Accessible Curriculum For Students With Disabilities. [Creating Accessible Lectures for Disabled Students](#).

University of Guelph, Teaching Support Services, Centre for Open Learning and Educational Support, [UID Quick-Start Checklist](#) and the [UID Workbook](#)

University of Oxford, Equality and Diversity Office, [Creating Accessible Lectures](#).

University of Waterloo, Centre for Teaching Excellence, Teaching Tips [Lecturing Effectively in the University Classroom](#).

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ⁱ Murray in Perry and Smart in the Centre for Teaching Excellence, Lecturing Effectively in the University Classroom, Teaching Tips. http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching_resources/tips/lecturing_effectively.html

ⁱⁱ Nilson, Linda B. Teaching at Its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors. 3rd Edition. John Wiley and Sons, 2010. Available at: <http://www.carlosmoreno.info/upn/pdf/133332445Teachin%20at%20its%20best.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo. CTE Teaching Tips: http://cte.uwaterloo.ca/teaching_resources/tips/lecturing_effectively.html

^{iv} University of Oxford, Equality and Diversity Office <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/disab/workingwithdisabledstudents/accessiblelectures/>

^v University of Guelph. Teaching Support Services, Centre for Open Learning and Educational Support, UID Quick-Start Checklist.