

Tips for Teaching with Lectures

Preparing

- Design a structured plan that identifies specific objectives for the lecture.
- Organize the lecture with a clear beginning, middle, and end; plan questions to ask at specific times.
- Prepare notes that will serve as a “road map” rather than a script to be read verbatim.
- In larger classes, communicate frequently with the instructional team (faculty and TAs) to ensure coherence among lectures, discussion or recitation subsections, and help sessions.
- Practice the lecture before class, especially sections that are difficult or that you feel less prepared to teach. Be sure to include practice using visuals or multimedia, and to plan how you will move around the classroom to engage all students.

Delivering

- Give students an outline or a set of guiding themes, topics, or questions.
- Connect the current lecture to broader themes of the course and to the students’ prior knowledge.
- Rather than lecturing from start to finish, integrate active-learning activities, such as a small-group or paired discussion or problem solving.
- When asking questions, create a comfortable, non-threatening environment, encouraging students to “think out loud.” Give students time to reflect before answering; do not be afraid of silence.
- Show passion and enthusiasm for the subject. Help your students see why the content is significant, fascinating, or worth further study.
- Focus on communicating with everyone in the room, not just students who sit in the front: Speak clearly, move around, make eye contact, and use gestures to engage your students’ attention.
- Listen carefully to students’ questions, asking them questions of your own, and integrating their ideas into the lecture. Doing so will show respect for your students and challenge them to learn more.
- At the conclusion, provide a synthesis or summary of the lecture; recap the important concepts or facts or return to an opening question. Alternatively, ask your students to tell you what they thought were the most important concepts or facts introduced in the lecture.

Assessing

- After class, jot down a few brief notes on what went well, and what you might change the next time.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

1. Trying to cover too much material in one class session.
2. Not budgeting time well; rushing through some of the material.
3. Filling the chalkboard or slides with too much information.
4. Reading lengthy passages from your notes or slides.
5. Not looking at the students, or not making eye contact with all students, when you are teaching.
6. Not including opportunities for questions or active learning.
7. Waiting until the last two minutes of class to ask and answer questions.
8. Answering your own questions or asking more than one question in quick succession.
9. Assuming students are learning the material if they are not asking questions.
10. Assuming students will automatically identify and understand the important points of each lecture.