

# Some Simple Guidelines for More Effective Teaching

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By employing many of the speech field's principles of effective communication, instructors in all disciplines can improve their teaching skills. For example:

1. **Let your enthusiasm for teaching show.** Unless we show that we are really interested, how can we expect students to be? For students to love our courses, we must convey a love for them ourselves. Unfortunately, the common stereotype of the professor who appears bored and who drones on and on in a monotone is all too real.

We must constantly remind ourselves that, although we may have been teaching the same course material for years, our students are experiencing it for the first time. And, like actors staring in a long-running Broadway play, we must try to teach each class with the same degree of enthusiasm we had when we taught it for the first time. By allowing our fondness and our reverence for our discipline to show through, there is a much greater chance that it will "rub off" on our students.

2. **Learn as much as possible about your students.** The unique chemistry between students and teachers gives each class a personality all its own. And we must learn to adapt to that unique class. By knowing that a particular class has a large number of business majors, for example, a history instructor may decide to utilize examples from "corporate America."

By finding out about your students, you can tailor the class to meet their needs.

3. **Organize each class session well.** Include an attention-grabbing introduction as well as a clear statement of the points that will be presented. This allows maximum opportunity for the students to take in and comprehend the information.

The "body" or main points of the presentation must be organized in some logical manner. This may be a chronological order, such as is often used in teaching history, or it may be a spatial sequence, as is often used in teaching geography.

Finally, you should present at the end a clear summary of the key points that you want the students to remember from the class session. This allows students one final opportunity to take in any information that they may have missed and to better understand any concepts or ideas that seemed confusing.

4. **Use a presentation style that maximizes student interest.** Good teachers, like good public speakers, must be able to hold the attention of the audience. Establishing and maintaining good eye contact with the students, using gestures effectively, and varying the voice level are all positive things to do. Others would include frequent change of facial expression, movement around the classroom, and use of the pause for both emphasis and dramatic effect. A recent study showed a high correlation between students remembering specific information and their ability to recall how the instructor presents the information.

5. **Use a variety of methods to present material.** The professor who delivered a long lecture from behind the lectern while students diligently scribbled down notes

may have worked in the past. But this is the 21st century, the lecture approach must be complemented with good class discussions, simulation exercises, and use of state-of-the-art audiovisual materials.