

Faculty Matter Teaching Tip #38: Dynamic Lecturing as an effective mode of teaching

This Teaching Tip focuses on a pedagogical format that has gotten something of a bad rap of late – **lecturing**. The main point here is that, like most things, **decisions about how to teach most effectively are complex, and those of us who feel most comfortable (and indeed, enjoy) lecturing should not feel undue pressure to adopt alternative teaching practices**. To be sure, most of us have probably had the experience of sitting through boring, opaque and ineffective monologues, and of emerging from them having learned little if anything. But “lectures” come in many forms, some of which have been shown to be every bit as effective at engaging and motivating learners as more student-centered alternatives.

Lectures can ...

- **be an efficient and effective way to introduce information, especially to novice learners**
- **model ways to for students to think about the information being conveyed, organize it, and apply it in new situations**
- **can convey your passion for the subject matter, and excite students about the material at hand**

Below, we highlight a few techniques to ensure “pedagogically effective” lectures:

- **Provide an outline for the day.** Make sure students have a roadmap for the session, so that they can readily see “where they are” in the day’s agenda. It is helpful if they can refer to this as needed throughout the session. If you post lecture notes ahead of time, keep them skeletal, so that students will need to flesh them out as you speak.
- **Draw students in from the start.** Begin the class with a warm-up activity that helps them connect with the topic at hand. It might be as simple as asking students to talk about a prompt or an image projected on the board as they settle in to their seats.
- **“Ask first, then tell”.** Continue this pattern of engaging the curiosity of your students. Introduce each section of your lecture with a compelling question, then launch in to the content itself.
- **Pace your delivery and stop before students are overwhelmed by content.** Slow down, and pause periodically to ensure that students can follow and take good notes. Consider stopping your lecture a few minutes before the end of the

class period, to allow students time to reflect upon (and possibly discuss) what you have shared, and identify places where their notes are incomplete or confused.

- **Break the lecture up** by inserting opportunities for something a bit more “active”. Brief turn-and-talks work well in very large classes. You might consider “clicker questions” (or the low-tech raising of hands holding cards of different colors), as vehicles for prompting discussion among students sitting in proximity to one another.
- **Use “visual enhancements” (e.g., PowerPoint slides) carefully.** Most *students can't read and listen and take notes at the same time*. Slow down so that students can process the information coming to them in all modalities. Try to not overcrowd your slides with too much text. Pause to talk about what you are projecting.
- **Play to your strengths.** If you are great story-teller, tell stories. If you are a natural comic, insert humor. Just be sure students can follow you, and the thread of your presentation.

More food for thought:

From *Faculty Focus*, an online resource about teaching and learning in higher education: [Improving lectures](#) (7/9/08)

The *University of Waterloo Centre for Teaching Excellence* website provides a rich array of resources to consider as you prepare to teach using variety of formats and strategies. Of particular relevance to this Tip is they page on [Lecturing Effectively](#): <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/lecturing-and-presenting/delivery/lecturing-effectively-university>.

* * * *

You can read all previous tips on the [Faculty Matter Tips](#) page of the CFD website, and share your own thoughts and ideas on the [Provost's Academic Spotlight blog under the category "Faculty Matter"](#).. **Please add your own strategies using the comment link** on the [Provost's Academic Spotlight blog under the category "Faculty Matter"](#).

Additionally, we have started a weekly Student Success Tip for students. They are will be archived here: <http://www.sjsu.edu/sfs/tips/> and shared on the Office of Student and Faculty Success FaceBook site, Twitter, and Instagram (@SJSUSuccess). Please follow/share/like them and spread the word to your students.