

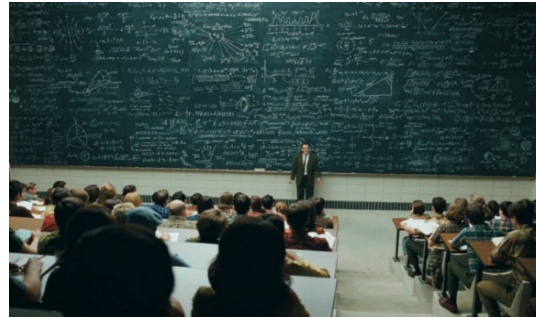


HOW TO MAKE LECTURES MORE EFFECTIVE



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‘The lecture is probably the oldest teaching method and still the method most widely used in universities throughout the world.’ (McKeachie and Svinicki, 2006, p. 55). Studies comparing the effectiveness of lectures with other teaching methods (i.e.



discussions) reveal discouraging results for those who lecture, yet lecturing can particularly be good for presenting up-to-date information, summarizing material from a variety of sources, focusing on key concepts, principles, or ideas, and adapting material according to students’ interests (McKeachie and Svinicki, 2014). According to Bonwell and Eison (1991), there are ways to make lectures more effective and engaging, and move students from passively receiving information and ideas to actively engaging with the content.

Here are some guidelines that can help you to design an effective lecture;

Create an outline of the lecture. You can outline how you will introduce, explain, and summarize the main ideas in your lecture. You may also select examples, videos and prepare how you will show students the relationships between the main ideas.

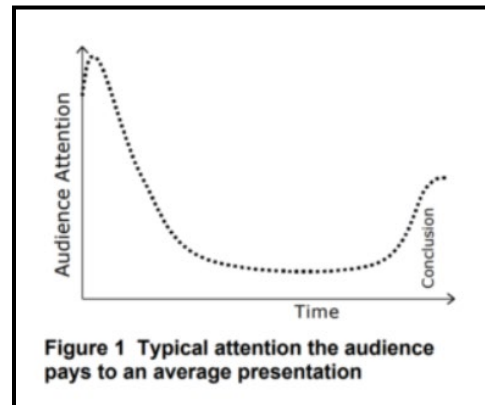
Prepare notes. You can prepare notes, a list of main points, proofs, key definitions, questions. For example, you can color-code your notes to include suggestions like “Distribute handout,” “Show first diagram,” or “Pause to ask for questions or comments.”





Assess students' prior knowledge. Students learn most effectively when actively building on their prior knowledge frameworks. When planning and beginning a lecture, instructors can ascertain prior knowledge through questions. New terminology and ideas should be linked to previous experiences or subject matter (Wittwer & Renkl, 2008).

Get students' attention. Professor [J.W. Niemantsverdriet \(2000\)](#) acknowledges that the attention of the audience doesn't maintain a consistent level throughout presentations. In fact, he proposed the diagram in Figure 1 to depict what normally happens. Research shows that most audience members will pay



attention in the beginning of the presentation. However, toward the middle of the presentation, their attention “may well have dropped to around 10-20% of what it was at the start.” According to Matheson (2008), using pauses, time for questions, and small group discussions in the lecture can promote higher level learning and refresh student attention span.

Use active learning breaks. Through [one-minute papers](#), [think-pair-share](#), [concept maps](#), [jigsaw discussions](#), simulation, and other active learning practices, instructors can break up monologue in their lecture.

Use questions to prompt students to think about how the concepts discussed during a lecture relate to their life experience. Students are also more likely to remember information that relates to ideas or experiences they are already familiar with. You can use examples from students' lives, current events in the media or popular culture.





Engaging students through storytelling. Describing a personal experience, a researcher's journey, or a relevant moment in the lesson can arouse curiosity and increase students' intrinsic motivation. Good lectures model expert thinking, tell good stories, and share experiences that provide context and insight.

Watch the students much of the time you're lecturing. Do they seem to be following what you're saying? Are they taking notes? Or do they seem confused? If you think they don't understand you, stop and ask them questions.

Use multimedia and technology. Multimedia presentations (slides, audio, and websites) can make your lecture more appealing, vivid, and immediate, as well as providing variety.



Summarize the main points. In general, students capture only 20-40 percent of a lecture's main ideas in their notes (Kiewra, 2002, p. 72). Without reviewing the lecture material, students remember less than 10 percent after three weeks (Bligh, 2000, p. 40).

Allow time for questions at the end of lecture. If your schedule permits, come early or stay late to answer questions and engage in discussion with students. If you are available five or ten minutes before and after class, some students will talk with you more readily, and you will get to know them and their thoughts.



Show enthusiasm. Research shows that enthusiasm of the lecturer positively affects student learning and motivation. To increase your enthusiasm, try to include in your lectures something you feel passionate to talk about. This will result in your voice and gestures showing more energy and expressiveness.

Enthusiastic teachers **move around, make eye contact with students, and use more gestures and vocal variation**, and teachers **could learn** these behaviors (Murray, 1997).



Reflection Questions to Think about Before or After a Lecture

Regardless of your lecture duration and interactivity, answering the following questions can help to design your lecture:



Questions to reflect on	Comments
What is the purpose of your lecture?	
What do you want students to know or to be able to do by the end of the session?	
Do you need to create an outline for the lecture?	
Do you need to prepare notes for the lecture, a list of main points, proofs, and questions?	
How will you start? What will you do to gain attention? Share a story, problem, question, case?	
What will you have to do in class in order to help students meet the learning goals you've set for them?	
At what points will you pause? What will you ask students to do during those pauses?	
Can you integrate visuals, multi-media, discussion, and active learning techniques in your lecture? If so, when and how?	
Can you link new material to students' prior knowledge, such as common experiences or previous coursework?	
Can you choose relevant, concrete examples, in advance of the lecture, examples familiar and meaningful to the students?	
Will you allocate time for students to ask relevant questions, make comments?	
Will you summarize the key points in the lecture?	



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Further Reading and Resources

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- [Effective Lecturing. Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning.](#)
- [Bruff, D. \(2010\). Lecturing. Center for Teaching. Vanderbilt University.](#)
- [8 Evidence-Based Tips to Make Your Lectures More Engaging and Memorable By Youki Terada.](#)
- [Georgetown Professor Heidi Elmendorf on Lecturing as Story-telling.](#)
- [BBC Arts and Ideas. What Makes a Good Lecturer?](#)
- [Teaching Methods for Inspiring the Students of the Future | Joe Ruhl | TEDx Talks](#)