LECTURE

PURPOSE
Few instructional techniques have been more widely used than lectures. Lectures have and will continue to play important role with instruction. This tool addresses when and how this approach is best suited for student learning. It highlights best practices, tips for organization, delivery, and student engagement within the framework of the BYU-Idaho Learning Model.

DESCRIPTION
The word itself derives from the Latin lectus and hints at the ancient and venerable origins of the practice. In the medieval university, texts were read aloud so that others could take notes on them. Since this time it has evolved to an instructional discourse.

It is not hard to call to mind examples of brilliant and effective lectures. Clearly, a practice with such a long and rich history has been refined and perfected over the years by many gifted practitioners. Yet research has shown that lecturing has its strengths and weaknesses. The bullets below are adapted from Improving Lectures by William E. Cashin (1985)

Strengths
There is good reason that so many have worked to become great lecturers. Lectures are extremely effective at achieving certain educational goals.

- Lectures can communicate intrinsic interest and enthusiasm for a topic better than books.
- Lectures can frame material in a particular way to fit a particular need.
- Lectures can 'deliver' large amounts of informational material efficiently.
- Lectures permit maximum teacher control.
- Lectures require little of students who may be unprepared to participate actively.

Weaknesses
The weaknesses of the lecture method are also well-documented, however.

- Lectures emphasize one-way communication.
- While lecture can be engaging, it does not promote retention as well as active learning.

When to Use Lecture
Lecture is too often the preferred means of instruction, not through any process of planning, design or choice, but through a thoughtless reversion to the historical default.

Lectures seem to be most effective for giving facts and technical information, providing structure to material, introducing new frameworks, and inspiring students. Yet it often enhances your presentation of the material and student learning when students are able to “act” rather than be “acted upon.” Consider how students might engage with the material. Could other instructional practices help your students reach your learning outcomes? These questions will help you evaluate the appropriateness of this instructional approach.

Best Practices
Lecture can be an effective and enjoyable pedagogy. When used incorrectly or over-used, it can become a stumbling block to learning. When you decide to lecture incorporate these practices:

Preparation and Organization
- Fit lecture to your audience.
- Focus your topic.
- Prepare an outline with five to nine major points. The object of a lecture is not just to cover material, but to have the listeners learn.
- Select examples. Almost all writers agree that illustrations, etc., help people both to understand and to remember.
- Present more than one side of an issue.

Presentation and Clarity
- Speak clearly and loud enough to be heard.
- Avoid distracting mannerisms.

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• Provide an introduction.
• Present an outline.
• Emphasize principles and generalizations.
• Stress important points.
• Pause. Give your listeners time to think.

**Stimulation and Interest**
• Use effective speech techniques; inflection, gestures, positions, pace of lecture. Talk, do not read your lecture.
• Start with a question, problem or controversy.
• Be relevant. Use materials and examples that students can relate to.
• Use media. Models, videos, recordings etc., make a lecture more vivid and immediate.
• Be enthusiastic. Use humor.
• Provide change about every 15 minutes. Stop for questions, move to a different part of the room, do something different.

**Feedback and Interaction**
• Look at your listeners.
• Solicit questions.
• Use discussion techniques and get the students actively involved in thinking about the material and give you feedback about what the students are learning.
• Create an interactive lecture by using such tools as concept tests, clickers, quizzes, peer mentoring, etc.

**Lecture and the Learning Model**

The Learning Model does not exclude instructors from the Teach One Another equation. Instructors are to apply the principle to “love, serve, and teach one another.” As such there are times when it is most appropriate for instructors to use expository instructional methods like lecture. That said, instructors must be cautious with the limitations of this method and the temptation to focus on transmission of information rather than the process of learning.

**TIPS**

- **Learning, not Teaching:** Remember that the important thing is student learning, not instructor performance. The “public display of daring and dazzling intellectual expertise” or the “passionate display of erudition” have purpose only as measured against student learning.

- **Balance:** Research has shown that the two variables that most engage undergraduate students are an instructor’s control of the material in question, and concern for student understanding. Don’t let the first upstage the second of these concerns.

- **Change it up:** There is no inherent virtue in tedium. Rigor need not be rigor mortis. If you choose to lecture, make sure that you do everything in your power to insure student learning throughout the lecture.

**PITFALLS**

- **Winging it:** Excellent lecture takes careful and thoughtful preparation. Just talking about a subject you understand well is not lecturing, nor is it teaching.

- **Doing unto others what was done to us:** Thinking that we did just fine in a system where lecture predominated is not sufficient justification for not expanding our own instructional repertoire.

**KEY ARTICLES**


**OTHER RESOURCES**


Discussion Based Learning

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