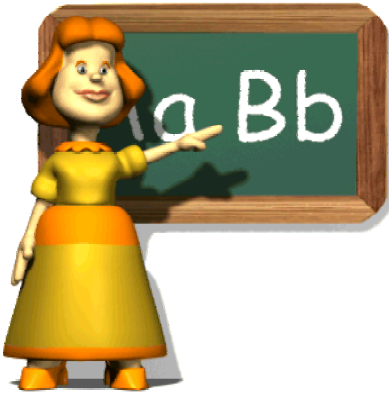


Lesson-21



Basic Teaching

and Presentation Skills

Basic Teaching Skills

There are some basic teaching skills that are used by all instructors and the following is one that has been specifically adapted for computer training.

- Make sure you are well prepared for the class. Don't wait until you are covering a class exercise to find problems. Test the class exercises yourself *before* the class. Keep on schedule with what you should be teaching and when. Pace yourself so you don't run out of time when you should be covering valuable information. You can also refer to the section in this course manual about the 5 Steps to Teaching a Class to make sure you are really ready to teach.
- Cover the logistics of the training event in the beginning of the class. It's nice to put your name, the name of the class, and a brief schedule with break times for the day on the board where all participants can see it. A phone number where participants can be contacted is also helpful for those who may need to still be "on call" when in training, or for parents who need to leave an emergency number for children. Give instructions to the water fountains or snacks, and point out the location of the nearest restrooms.
- Take a few minutes up front to introduce yourself and the other participants by telling them the following about yourself and asking them to do the same:
 - their name
 - what they do (job functions, not job title)
 - any previous experience with the training material
 - what their expectations are for the training event.

This is a good way to determine the comfort and experience level of your participants and how they might be using what they learn from you on their job. It is also a good way for the participants to get to know one another, to realize they might have some things in common and to develop group connections.

Once you have heard their expectations for the training event, cover the event objectives, or what they will learn in the class, with them so that any false expectations can be cleared up before the class is over and it's too late. If you notice any discrepancies with their expectations and the event objectives, take the time to address individual concerns before they become problems. Sometimes just telling participants that you will take time during breaks, after class or at the end of the course to address individual concerns will clear up any potential problems.

- Speak slowly and clearly. After the class starts, check to be sure that everyone can hear you.
- Tell them when you are going to demonstrate and when you want them to follow along with you. Usually, demonstrating and then giving them time to practice is the most effective teaching technique. A common method of gently forcing them to watch a demonstration instead of working along with you is to jokingly tell them you want them to either sit on their hands or fold them on their keyboards. Make sure everyone can see what you are demonstrating.
- Don't touch participant's keyboards. Instead, help them to solve their problems. Point out things on the screens such as error messages and tips in the status bar or pop-up boxes. Help them to recognize the visual cues on the screen rather than to take over their machine. Enable self-paced work by giving a clear cue when they can have time for individually performing a task or exercise. Reinforce this by telling them you will be walking around to offer individual help if it is needed and that they should signal to you if they need assistance.
- When demonstrating on a screen, keep menus pulled down for a long time so students can see menu items. Slow down the movement of the mouse and increase the size of the mouse pointer or change it to solid black to make it more visible.
- Use practical examples that relate to the job when explaining something new.
- Ask answerable questions
 - to encourage students to think about the material
 - to test how well students are absorbing and understanding material
- Speak to the participants, not the to the board or to your computer. Look up frequently and take a few minutes to walk about the classroom when lecturing.
- Be respectful to all participants regardless of age, status or current mood. Yes, this means be nice to the participant who might demonstrate some hostility. There is a reason for most participant anxiety and it usually has something to do with being there for the training. More information on dealing with participant anxiety can be found in the section of this manual titled Anxiety and Classroom Management that starts on page 12.
- If a participant asks you a question you can't answer, tell them you don't know the answer and let them know that you will find the answer during break or lunch and get back to them. You can also encourage other participants to provide a solution.
- Repeat all participant questions so that everyone can hear, or demonstrate the answer for everyone in the class when a participant asks a question that others may be thinking about but are hesitant to ask.
- Be aware of your body language, voice modulation and eye contact. Smile, change the tone of your voice from time to time and provide appropriate gestures occasionally. Don't direct your eye contact to one side of the room or to one participant.

- Solicit feedback from the entire class during the class so you keep up a good pace. Simply ask how the pace is and if you need to speed up or slow down, or if you need to repeat any material. Do a learning or comprehension check at the end of each concept presented. Walk around to see the participants performance, don't wait for them to say, "Excuse me, could you come over here for a minute?" Keep a watch on participant facial expressions when lecturing or demonstrating to make sure that no one is getting lost or confused.

How to Develop and Deliver Concepts

In conceptual learning, participants learn new skills when they are shown or told how to do something, rather than giving them the steps to perform a task, which is procedural learning. The advantage to conceptual learning over procedural learning is that the participant understands a concept that can be later applied to other tasks whereas a set of instructions might not apply exactly to another circumstance and can easily be forgotten. Remind the participants that understanding the concept is more important than memorizing a set of instructions or steps in a task.

Concepts can be built in such a way that enables participants to gain an understanding of new ideas. When developing and delivering concepts, you "tell them what you are about to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you just told them". The steps to effective concept building are Setup, Delivery and Follow-up.

Concept Setup - Before you can teach new material, you need to provide a context in which the concept might be appropriate. You determine what historical or background information that is relevant to the concept you want to deliver. State the problem or task clearly, use analogies if possible, give examples of the task or problem, state a possible solution and tell why and then build a transition to your concept delivery.

For example, when teaching participants about troubleshooting a computer that constantly freezes, you might want to stress the importance of preventative maintenance. You might tell them that a computer whose hard drive is fragmented results in slower machine performance and file errors contribute to application errors and machines that freeze. You then tell them that using ScanDisk and Defrag in Windows or Norton Disk Doctor and SpeedDisk in Mac OS is a good place to start troubleshooting. You have just effectively set up the concept you are about to deliver.

Concept Delivery - There are several techniques to delivering a concept; Clarify the problem or task again by restating the problem using analogies and examples and giving relevant historical or background information. Once you are done giving them the new material, reinforce it by doing a hands-on exercise with instructions for completing the task.

In keeping with the frozen computer example, tell them how the operating system writes data to a disk, how over time, bits and pieces of data and files get scattered about on the disk, making it more difficult for the operating system to retrieve data and hence the machine responds more slowly. Explain that once a machine is compromised by slow operating system performance, machine hangs are more likely and hence file structure errors that result from a machine freeze happen. Explain that file structure errors further result in more freezes and file corruption and so on. Then give the participants a step-by-step exercise using the operating system utilities that clean up the machine and prevent the machine freezes.

Concept Follow-up - Follow-up involves summarizing the concept to bring closure to the new material presented. If the concept you just delivered is used to build the next concept, be sure to

enable a smooth transition from one concept to another by linking where appropriate. This allows participants to see that there is a relationship between one concept and another.

In our example of troubleshooting a freezing computer, the follow-up might include restating the need to do preventative maintenance with computers using operating system utilities so that file corruption does not result. Once operating system files are corrupted beyond repair by utilities, the only solution is to reinstall the operating system or in some cases to recopy good files from another machine. Drawing a link between preventative maintenance and operating system file corruption helps the participant to understand computers can freeze and what can be done. Less emphasis should be put on the steps to running the utilities and more on the concept.

Exercise - Developing and Delivering Concepts

Refer to the instructions shown in the Appendix for Exercise 3. The instructor will break the class up into groups. The groups will be presented with concepts that might be taught in a computer class. As a group, decide how to develop and deliver each concept. At the end, each group will present the concept to the other groups.

Solution: - Developing and Delivering Concepts

As a group, use your knowledge of effective concept setup, delivery and follow-up to address the following learning situations. Each group will be assigned one learning situation and will work together to determine how to develop and deliver the concept to the rest of the class. You will need to choose one or two group members to deliver the concept for the other class participants.

1. You need to teach your users the difference between built in functions and manually constructed formulas in Excel. The underlying concept here is the "order of operations" in mathematical calculations.
2. You are training a group of co-workers in Microsoft Word. You need to explain how to use the indent feature of Word to align text in paragraphs. The underlying concept here is moving users from using a typewriter spacebar and tab key to align text to a word processing application's concept of the document ruler.
3. In teaching a group of users about operating systems, you need to explain what disk formatting is and why it is needed to save data to disks.
4. You must describe to participants the method of copying and pasting text from one application to another. The concept to focus on here is OLE (object linking and embedding) and transferring data from a source document to the clipboard and finally to a destination document.

Exercise - Explaining with Clarity

Refer to the instructions shown in the Appendix for Exercise 4. This exercise is used to demonstrate some of the complexities involved in explaining a concept to class participants and to get you thinking about how important it is to not overlook the basics when explaining a concept, and also why it is important to test your exercises before holding the first class.

Solution - Explaining with Clarity

This exercise is used to demonstrate some of the complexities involved in explaining a concept to class participants and to get you thinking about how important it is to not overlook the basics when explaining a concept.

1. The instructor breaks the class into small groups. Each group will need a piece of paper to write on and will need a volunteer to be a scribe for the rest of the group.
2. The instructor asks each group to collectively write a set of instructions for making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Make sure the instructions are very clear and will allow someone with no prior experience making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich to accomplish this task.
3. When the groups are finished writing the instructions, each group will take a turn in guiding the instructor through the process of making the sandwich.
4. Class discussion will follow the completion of the exercise. What did you learn from the exercise?

The Components of Presentation Skills

There are 5 basic presentation skills that a trainer needs to understand to effectively present new material to participants. They are:

Voice - Speak in a clear, firm voice and vary your volume and pitch when you want to emphasize something. Make sure that all participants can hear you easily but be sure not to shout or talk so loud that you sound angry.

Tone - Many people confuse voice and tone. Tone is the 'feeling' that emanates from voice and mannerisms. A tone that is confident and warm, and not dry or ego-centric works well in projecting a comfortable feeling to your participants.

Vocabulary - Stay away from unfamiliar terms and jargon as much as possible unless you are sure that your audience will understand. If you need to introduce technical terms and jargon, take the time to define them for your participants. Acronyms fall into this category. If you use them, make sure you tell the participants what the acronyms stand for.

Humor - A trainer with a good sense of humor can actually help to create a more relaxed atmosphere for the participants. Humor in teaching has been known to liven up boring material and help to diminish the traditional idea that the teacher is dominant and the participants are subordinate. Too much humor can be detrimental. You want the participants to know that you take your work seriously so they will too.

You should never resort to humor at the expense of any of the participants. Appropriate forms of humor in computer classes might be cartoons or illustrations with a computer-related theme, or some of your past experiences where *you* are the target for the punchline.

Body Language - It is a known fact that participants respond better to a trainer who is moderately active and moves around the room to connect with participants. The trainer who stands at the board or sits at their computer all day does nothing to present an image of comfort in the classroom. On the other hand, getting too close to a participant's personal space is not good either. You might want to try teaching from the back of the room when participants are doing exercises so that you can readily see if anyone is having problems without making them draw attention to themselves. Questions such as "how is it going" as you approach a workstation prevents you from startling the participant.

Exercise - Presenting Information

Refer to the instructions shown in the Appendix for Exercise 5. The purpose of this exercise is to utilize some of the 5 components of presentation skills in presenting information to class participants.

Solution - Presenting Information

The purpose of this exercise is to utilize some of the 5 components of presentation skills in presenting information to class participants.

1. The instructor breaks the class into small groups. Each group needs to assign one person the task of acting as the "instructor". The rest of the group members will act as "class participants".
2. Each group "instructor" will be given a drawing that she or he will refer to but will not show the "class participants". The drawing can be any combination of two or three simple geometric shapes. The object is for the "instructor" to use a variety of presentation skills to explain what the drawing looks like to the "class participants" without actually showing them the drawing.
3. The "class participants" will each create a document that represents what they think the "instructor's" drawing looks like.
4. The class will share comments and observations about the exercise.

CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE LECTURING

Be Prepared

- . Outline clear objectives for your lecture. An objective should not be "to cover material"
An objective is a reason why the material is important.
- . Develop an outline; create *effective* visuals for the main points.
- . Limit the main points in a lecture to three to five.
- . Do not use lecture time to reiterate readings. Refer to them and highlight key points.
- . Plan for diverse learners-use verbal, visual, and physical (hands-on exercises, simulations) approaches.
- . If you're nervous, write out the first two-three minutes of the lecture. That will carry you until you loosen up.

Engage Your Audience

- . Focus attention early on using a quote, a snappy visual, an anecdote, or other appropriate material *relevant to the topic*.
- . Share your outline. Emphasize your objectives and key points in the beginning, as you get to them, and as a summary at the end.
- . Integrate visuals, multi-media, discussion, and small group techniques.
- . Link information to students' prior knowledge (i.e., common experiences or previous course work).
- . Exhibit enthusiasm for the topic and information. Remember, you are modeling your discipline.
- . Give students time to think, and genuine opportunities to respond.

Get Feedback

- . Observe students' non-verbal communication: note-taking, response to questions, eye contact, seating patterns, response to humor. Are they "with" you?
- . Use the "minute paper" (or other assessment techniques) (you'll be in the company of some of the most respected professors of our day): ask students to respond in one or two sentences to the following questions:

1. What stood out as most important in today's lecture?
2. What are you confused about?

Do this every lecture -- it will take you 15 minutes to review the sheets. You'll learn an enormous amount.

. Give quizzes periodically on lecture *objectives*, not obscure material. Are they getting it? . Conduct mid-term teaching evaluations or simply ask the students for suggestions/comments

"PROBLEM" STUDENTS

A sensitive approach to your work with your students can save you from many problems. If you phrase questions and criticism carefully, you can generally avoid defensive or hostile responses. If you are supportive, encouraging, and respectful of student ideas in class, then you can correct wrong answers, point out feeble arguments, or highlight weak points in a positive manner without discouraging your students. Rather than asking what is wrong with a written paragraph or a problem solution, ask how it could be improved. Instead of asking what the weak point of an argument is, ask how well it applies to or uses the material for the session. Rather than dismissing an idea immediately, ask the student to clarify it using the material for the session. Don't, on the other hand, respond to student questions with "good point" when the idea was in fact poorly presented. Always show students the courtesy of attending to their answers when they offer an idea; don't be writing on the blackboard or scribbling on a note pad.

You are also more likely to work smoothly with your students if you resolve for yourself feelings that you may have about your authority as a teacher. Students are confused by and often alienated from a teacher who alternately acts as a friend or peer, then as a stem authority figure. You will also want to be careful about teasing or sarcastic humor since these are all too easily misinterpreted.

However careful you are, you may still run into some students who present problems. A few recurrent types-and ways to work with them-are discussed below.

The Arguer

If a student insists that you are not "allowing him his opinion" (or her her opinion) when you disagree with a statement he has made, point out that you disagree because the statement does not correlate well with the session's material. If the student begins to disrupt the discussion, offer to talk privately after class or during office hours. Remain calm and nonjudgmental, no matter how agitated the student becomes. Always use evidence when disagreeing with a student. Using the authority of your position as teacher rarely proves anything in a disagreement and can inhibit discussion. You can largely avoid having students feel that you are putting them down by not beginning critical statements with "I". Phrase criticism with reference to the material for the session or other commonly shared information from the course.

If a student is stubborn and refuses to postpone a disagreement until after class or office hours and completely disrupts a class, remain calm. If the student is agitated to the point of being unreasonable, ask him or her to carry the grievance to a higher authority. Make apparent your willingness to discuss the issue calmly, but do not continue trying to reason with a student who is highly agitated. If you remain calm in the presence of the group, the student may soon become cooperative again. In an extreme case, you may have to ask the student to leave the classroom, or even dismiss the section. Seek to make your response as calm as possible and avoid making an issue out of a small incident. The hardest part of such a situation is to maintain your professionalism and not to respond as if personally attacked.

The Overtalkative Student

Over talkative students can deaden a class. If a student is dominating a section, try to elicit responses from other students. Call on someone else even though the over talkative student volunteers a response. Emphasize to the group that it is the quality, not the Quantity, of responses that most interests you. Make sure they see that you consider the group's project a communal and not a competitive activity. If the student does not recognize the importance of listening to what other members of a group have to offer, talk with him or her about it privately. If the problem continues, talk to the student's advisor, dorm resident fellow, or both to try to develop a strategy for dealing with the over talkativeness. Do not ridicule an over talkative student or make comments to other students in the group, but try as tactfully as possible to keep the group's activity going without reinforcing the talkative behavior.

The Silent Ones

The student who never speaks out in class also presents a problem. By making sure that all members of a class (if small enough) know each other by name and by trying to create a safe environment, you can sometimes overcome the silent student's fear of speaking. Occasional small group activities-where the students discuss issues in pairs, for example-can also make it easier for a shy student to open up. As with the over talkative student, do not ridicule or put the silent student on the spot, but do try to elicit answers from him or her at first once every session and later more frequently when he or she begins to appear more comfortable responding.

Talking with the student privately can also help. Reasons for being silent may vary. One silent student may merely enjoy listening. Another may lack confidence to contribute. The latter is very common among first year students. Some students simply have quiet personalities; others may be undergoing personal stresses that inhibit their speaking in class. Some may be unprepared. Even after you gently encourage them to speak, they may remain silent. This is their right, and ultimately you must respect their privacy. Requiring all students in your sections to come and talk with you during office hours at the beginning of the quarter and a second time during the quarter can help alleviate both over talkativeness and silence by putting students more at ease.

The "Grade Grubber II

You may find that some students will unrelentingly pursue you if you give them a lower grade than they expected. Many faculty and TAs complain that they have had even A-'s vigorously contested! There are ways to minimize such incidents. Make it entirely clear from the beginning exactly what you expect in papers or tests. If possible, hand out guidelines for a good essay or examples of a superior exam answer. When you do put the grade down, note in some detail weak or strong points of the work and suggestions for a better performance next time. With papers, you can give students the option of initially handing in a draft that you will not grade but that you will criticize.

When students actually come to you to contest their grades, indicate that when you reconsider their marks, you retain the right to adjust them up or down. If you are the T A, advise students that in the case of sum solved differences, the professor will make the final decision. (Be sure to discuss this with the professor beforehand, however.) When no resolution is possible, brief the student on which office to turn to (such as the Ombudsperson) to pursue an appeal.

Although grade grubbers can discourage you and appear to undermine the academic enterprise, remember that this generation of students is under pressures you may not have had as an undergraduate. Competition for graduate and professional schools is fiercer than ever before. You will have more success if you listen to and respond to their anxieties as well as their complaints.

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Preparing to Teach

Preparing to Teach

- * How do I limit the material due to time constraints? * How do I define the goals for the course?
- * How do I build a "state of the art" syllabus?
- * How do I make a lesson plan?
- * How much should I try to cover in one class?

*** How do I limit material due to time constraints?**

Begin by making a list of all the content that you WANT to cover. Now edit this list. What material is optional and what must be taught? Cover less and uncover more. The material remaining should pertain to the core concepts, basic theories, and underlying themes of the topic. The material should give students a conceptual framework on which they can later build. With a more manageable load of content, you and your students can concentrate on ways to think critically about what you do cover and how to apply it in a meaningful way. The critical thinking and application exercises will be retained far longer than any specific body of content. Until students have reached some level of integration and "ownership" of the material, it will truly go in one ear and out the other.

*** How do I define the goals for the course?**

When generating course goals decide what set of skills, what knowledge you want your students to be able to demonstrate, gain, and understand at the conclusion of the course. It may also be important to consider what students' hopes and needs might be in relation to your course. What are students' motivations for taking your class? If you are unsure, ask them at the beginning and be willing to be flexible regarding their concerns. You may also want to consider the larger, more general skills students learn from your class-how to think critically about this content, how to do effective research in this area of study. Look at the broader life and academic skills your class may have to offer. You may want to incorporate these into your course goals as well.

*** How do I build a "state of the art" syllabus?**

The more information that you can give the student the better. Do not be afraid of generating a long syllabus. However, if it does become more than a few pages, consider attaching a table of contents. Below is a list of information which students would love to see on their first day of class:

Basic Information: Course title, course number, number of credits, current year and term, meeting time and location, your name, location of your office and office phone number, e-mail address, office hours and whether appointments are taken, names, offices and phone numbers of any teaching assistants or GTF's. Prerequisites: Required classes or knowledge for this course.

Course's Purpose: What this course is about and why it is interesting to you. Learning Goals: What competencies/skills/knowledge the students are expected to demonstrate at the end of the course.

Textbooks & Readings: Titles, authors, editions and local booksellers who carry the titles.

Additional Required Materials and Equipment: Do the students need to buy a calculator, computer, computer software, art supplies, drafting materials, etc.? If yes, be specific about what brands or models. Assignments, Term Paper, and Exams: Be specific. Give nature and format of assignments. What format are the tests: short answer, essay, multiple-choice? What are the topics, expected lengths, and due dates of the term papers? Try to anticipate their questions, and the confusions that may arise later. Grades: Describe how you will calculate grades. Include here your policy regarding the marks "I", "Y", and "W".

Course policies: How do you deal with tardiest absences, late homework, requests for extensions, make-up tests or assignments, cheating and plagiarism? Be very explicit and firm. Is the date for the final exam set in stone?

Course schedule: Provide a schedule of events which gives topic of discussion or lecture for each

day and what assignments or readings should be completed for each day. Topics and activities may be tentative, but exam dates and required reading should be reasonably fixed. Students are attempting to manage their workloads for the term at the beginning and major last-minute changes in the syllabus can be very upsetting.

Other things you might consider: Give your students tips/advice on how to approach studying for this course. Recommend that they take a look at old exams if these accurately reflect your testing style for this course. Talk about how you feel about extra credit. Make suggestions on how students can make the most of an office visit.

If you wish, make your syllabus informal and friendly. Be encouraging and enthusiastic about the coming experience. Encourage students to visit you in your office and say hello. Assure them that you want to help them all succeed with the coming material.

*** How do I make a lesson plan?**

Ask yourself first what you want to accomplish during this particular class session. Students will walk in at and when they leave- what should they be able to do? What new knowledge should they have gained and be able to use and retain? What new skills will they have acquired and had a chance to practice and integrate?

Once you know clearly where you want to go with the class, then you can plan your lesson. Layout a sequence of activities which will lead you to your goals. Put a timeline on each component of your plan and determine whether the time you have is sufficient to do or cover what you intend. Be realistic here. Allow for things not going like clockwork.

Incorporate your teaching philosophy into your plan. If you believe in active learning, do not plan a full period nonstop lecture. If you believe in students being accountable for their learning, plan opportunities for them to demonstrate that they understand and can apply what you have attempted to teach them. Keep in mind the interests and abilities of your students.

Look at the organization of your plan. Does it make sense? Are there clear transitions from one component to the next? Have you built in time for questions, misunderstandings, additional examples, demonstrations and illustrations to make your points clear? If you have planned a small group activity, have you given it enough time to produce positive outcomes?

Think about beginnings and endings. Does your lesson plan have a good hook? How can you effectively bring your students' attention to today's topic? Also think about how you will end the class. Plan to end a few minutes before dismissal and summarize what has been covered and learned. Begin the next class with a review of this.

*** How much should I try to cover in one class?**

The better question to ask here is - How much do you want your students to learn, understand and be able to apply? You can talk nonstop and jam as much content into a class period as possible. But that's about all that strategy will accomplish. The better you know and understand your students, the more effectively you will be able to facilitate their learning in your course.

Some general guidelines are to generate two or three main topics or big ideas for each class session. Split the session into 10 or 15 minute "chunks" for each topic and expand on each with definitions, explanations, illustrations, and examples, leaving time for questions after each. Remember to restate

the big ideas before and after each "chunk." If you do this, you may cover less and uncover more.