

Ten Suggestions for Improving a Lecture

Lecturing is one of the most time-honored yet least effective ways to teach. By itself, lecturing will never lead to active learning. For a lecture to be effective, the instructor should build interest first, then maximize understanding and retention, involve students during the lecture, and reinforce what has been presented. There are several ways to do just that.

STEP 1: Building Interest

1. **Lead-off Story or Interesting Visual.** Provide a relevant anecdote, fictional story, cartoon, or graphic that captures the audience's attention.
2. **Initial Case Problem.** Present a problem around which the lecture will be structured.
3. **Test Question.** Ask students a question (even if they have little prior knowledge) so that they will be motivated to listen to your lecture for the answer.

STEP 2: Maximizing Understanding and Retention

4. **Headlines.** Reduce the major points in the lecture to key words that act as verbal subheadings or memory aids.
5. **Examples and Analogies.** Provide real-life illustrations of the ideas in the lecture and, if possible, create a comparison between your material and the knowledge and experience that the students already have.
6. **Visual Backup.** Use flip charts, transparencies, brief handouts, and demonstrations that enable students to see as well as hear what you are saying.

STEP 3: Involving Students During the Lecture

7. **Spot Challenges.** Interrupt the lecture periodically and challenge students to give examples of the concepts presented thus far or to answer spot quiz questions.
8. **Illuminating Activities.** Throughout the lecture, intersperse brief activities that illuminate the points you are making.

STEP 4: Reinforcing the Lecture

9. **Application Problem.** Pose a problem or question for students to solve based on the information given in the lecture.
10. **Participant Review.** Ask students to review the contents of the lecture with one another or give them a self-scoring review test.