

New teachers, and sometimes veteran teachers as well, may have trouble deciding upon which teaching methods to use in their courses. Many instructors are usually most familiar with the lecture method, having been taught themselves primarily by lecture. The lecture is useful for many classroom situations and for accomplishing many objectives. However, other teaching methods are available, and instructors should choose the method uniquely suited to the particular objectives they have within a given class period (see Chapter 4, [Preparing and Designing a Course](#)).

There are a number of reasons for having a repertoire of teaching methods. Some methods are better suited to meeting specific course objectives and to reaching students with particular learning styles (see Chapter 12, [Characteristics of Effective Teaching](#)), so varying methods helps ensure that more students are reached. Teaching that is rich in variety becomes resistant to monotony. As a result, many good teachers vary their method approximately every 20 minutes, the average attention span of most adults. Whichever method instructors select, it is important that they budget class time and remain realistic about how much time to devote to each portion of the class. Instructors should also remember to achieve closure at the end of each class period by summarizing and beginning the transition to the next class.

This chapter will examine a number of different teaching methods and suggest how they can be tailored to assist teachers in the accomplishing of their objectives and in meeting the needs of their students within the structure of a given class period.

The Lecture Method¹

Teachers tend to teach the way they have been taught. For many, that means relying on lectures. Although not the best method for every teaching situation, the lecture does offer the most efficient and useful means for accomplishing many objectives.

The lecture works well for:

- Conveying a great deal of information efficiently to a large group of students;
- Previewing, summarizing and reviewing material;
- Presenting information to an audience who may otherwise be unable to organize print material (i.e., poor readers);
- Emphasizing learning by listening, for students who learn best this way;
- Conveying material otherwise unavailable, including original research or recent developments that have not yet been published;
- Communicating the intrinsic interest of the subject matter;
- Providing students with role models of scholars in action.

The lecture method is not suited for:

- Engaging students in higher levels of learning such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation;
- Presenting complex, detailed, or abstract material, because not all students learn at the same pace or are at the same level of understanding;
- Sustaining student attention for longer than 20 minutes at a time.

Teachers should not fall back on the lecture method as a standard means of organizing class time while using other methods only for occasional variety. The lecture method has its strengths, but it should be employed, just as other methods, to accomplish specific objectives. When using the lecture method, instructors should also recognize the inherent problems with this method:

- **Lectures require an effective speaker** who can vary tone, pitch, and pace of delivery. Lecturers must be verbally fluent.
- **Lectures encourage one-way communication.** As a result, feedback about learning may be hindered when teachers depend upon the lecture method.

- **Lectures put students in a passive rather than an active role.** Therefore, it is important to alternate periods of lectures with periods of active learning and to engage students in question and answer periods. The lecturer should not become a "talking head."
- **Lectures tend to be forgotten quickly.** It is wise to support the lecture with visuals such as outlines on the chalkboard, handouts and other media to aid in retention (see Chapter 7, [Technology and Learning with Technology in the Classroom](#)).

Planning an Effective Lecture

The lecture should always build upon current knowledge, organizing the presentation to take into account students' experiences, prior learning and expectations as well as the objectives for that particular class period. Further, the lecturer should attempt to accommodate as many student-learning styles as possible and repeat key points.

Introduce a lecture by capturing students' interest. It is important at the outset to assist them in organizing subsequent information and in recognizing its relevance to other material within the course. The organizational schemes often used for developing the body of the lecture include cause and effect; time sequence; topic, organizational idea, or method; problem-solution; order of importance; and comparison/contrast. Some tips for introducing the lecture are:

- **Title the lecture.** Select a title that is memorable, clearly demarcates lectures in students' notes, and helps unify the material.
- **Relate lecture content to previous class material.** Point out how the material to be provided will link to and build upon knowledge.
- **Outline the lecture.** Explain what will be covered and the organization of the material.
- **Raise a question to be answered by the end of the period.** Use the question to help students search for main points in the lecture.
- **Tell students how they will be expected to use the lecture material.** Relate the lecture content to career interests or a current or historical problem, or explain how students will use the material within the course. Teachers should be flexible enough to take time to respond to student questions and need for clarification even if that means they are unable to cover all that they intended. They should remember to use an appropriate vocabulary level and a variety of illustrations and restate main points often. The conclusion of the lecture is also important. It is wise to leave enough time at the end of the period to provide closure to the lecture, perhaps by:
 - **Restating the main points** using a new example, asking for the main points, and showing where the class is now;
 - **Asking students to summarize the lecture's key ideas** (this will provide immediate feedback on the effectiveness of the presentation);
 - **Pairing up students and giving them two to three minutes to react,** respond, and/or raise questions or issues;
 - **Setting up what to expect in next class period or assignment** by indicating how it will tie in to the lecture material just covered.

A Few Comments about Lecture Notes

Lecture notes facilitate organization and keep the lecture on track. Teachers have several options for organizing their notes and should select whichever style they are most comfortable with. One option is to have a complete script of the lecture. Although this method may enable the instructor to stay on the topic, the dangers may far outweigh the benefits.

Drawbacks include:

- Using language and syntax more appropriate for reading than listening;
- Reading the lecture rather than engaging students in the lecture;
- Using inappropriate intonation;
- Spending a great deal of preparation time;
- Creating distance between the material and the students;
- Discouraging students from asking questions and making comments during class;
- Losing one's place in the lecture.
- Outlining is a style of notes recommended most often by expert lecturers. Of course, there are both pros and cons to this method. Outlined notes free instructors from the podium and allow the teacher to omit or embellish particular points. Although

notes that are in outline form often contain language that is more simplified and therefore, easier for students to follow, there is a danger that notes in outline form may cause the delivery to be "choppy" and the instructor to fumble for words or forget specific examples. Another drawback is the risk that connections between concepts may not seem clear to students.

Charts and diagrams are nonlinguistic formats for notes that often accommodate visual learners. These include "tree" diagrams, computer flowcharts, nonlinguistic symbols, and pictures.

Presenting Lectures

Most people agree that a lecture with excellent content can easily be ruined by poor presentation. It is crucial to grasp the attention of students and to retain it throughout the class. Effective lecturers use a variety of presentational techniques to accomplish this goal. Here are some suggestions instructors may find helpful:

- **Vary speech rate, volume and pitch.** Cue important ideas by slowing down and leaving pauses. Remember that students usually take notes at less than one-fifth the rate at which most lecturers speak.
 - **Speak to students** by establishing and maintaining eye contact.
 - **Enunciate clearly, and speak loudly enough to be heard.** Ask students to signal if they cannot hear.
 - **Be enthusiastic.** Show a sense of humor, but do so sparingly and without offending.
 - **Avoid repetition of pet words or phrases** (e.g., "okay," "alright," "you know").
 - **Use gestures and physical movements that complement verbal statements** and teaching style, and avoid distracting gestures or physical movements
 - (e.g., pacing, straightening tie, excessive hand gesturing).
 - **Adjust the room for physical comfort** (e.g., adjust temperature, close doors, rearrange desks).
 - **Cultivate a supportive classroom atmosphere.**
- Effective lecturers also utilize an interactive style.

See Chapter 12, [Characteristics of Effective Teaching](#) for a discussion of ways to engage students through questioning techniques.

The Discussion Method²

When students are actively involved in manipulating ideas and information, they have a much better chance of learning the material and using it. Indeed, it is doubtful that higher levels of knowledge and skills can be mastered without direct student involvement. A structured discussion, in which the teacher leads and facilitates the dialogue, affords excellent opportunities for this kind of active learning. Further, discussions of this type have been used effectively in classes of several hundred students, so class size is no barrier to the method.

Discussions can be invaluable for any of the following goals of instructions:

- To help students learn to think in ways that are particular to the discipline;
- To help students learn to identify and evaluate the logic and evidence that form the basis of their own and others' positions;
- To give students opportunities to formulate applications of principles;
- To help students identify, formulate, and solve problems using information gained from readings, lectures, and/or life experiences;
- To use other students as resources;
- To gain acceptance for information or theories counter to previous beliefs of students;
- To develop motivation for further learning;
- To get prompt feedback on how well objectives are being attained.

Rapport and Effective Discussions

Students perceive a safe environment when the instructor has established adequate rapport with the class and when students feel they have rapport with one another. When instructors engage in behaviors that promote a comfortable environment for discussion, they also serve as role models for students, and students will quickly learn to engage in appropriate discussion behaviors (see Chapter 5 [The First Day of Class](#)). Instructors can also use verbal and nonverbal cues to build an atmosphere of trust.

Verbal cues include questions and comments such as:

"Can you think of a situation in which this notion might apply or not apply?"

"That's an interesting idea, tell me more."

"I don't know either; but that's a very interesting question. Can anyone help us unravel ourselves here?"

"I'm not sure I understand. Were you saying [restatement of student's comment]? Can you give me an example?"

"Feels to me like we've strayed from the point. Have we?"

"Let's not forget the basic problem we're trying to solve."

"What's the first step?"

Nonverbal cues include:

- Showing enthusiasm when listening to responses
- by smiling expectantly and nodding as students talk;
- Keeping eye contact with the student who is talking;
- Walking toward the person who is talking, even if there is only space to take a few steps in any direction;
- Walking around the room throughout a discussion so that students will view people in different parts of the room;
- Looking relaxed by leaning against the wall, sitting on a desk, or pulling up a desk or chair and joining the class;
- Arranging students' chairs in a circle or in a configuration in which they can see each other talking;
- Standing by students who have not contributed to the discussion (proximity may draw them into the discussion).

Preparing for Discussion

Discussions that are effective in helping students learn and understand course content result from careful planning. Instructors who facilitate meaningful discussion often prepare questions in advance and pose them to the class in a logical hierarchy of abstraction. Discussions result in greater learning when students know what to expect. The following techniques can be used to prepare students for classroom discussions:

- Make sure the discussion topic is known to the students well before the class in which it will take place.
- Choose materials (e.g., readings, films, field trips, experiments, position papers, demonstrations, etc.) that raise important and interesting issues.
- Form small groups to consider the discussion topic for a few minutes; ask volunteer spokespersons to summarize the dominant issues raised in each group.
- Have students spend five or ten minutes writing a response to an opening question before the discussion begins.
- Have students write brief answers to discussion questions or to form small groups to discuss the question before the general class discussion begins.
- If possible, arrange chairs in a circle to facilitate face-to-face interchange and to create a more egalitarian atmosphere.

Conducting the Discussion-The Basics

- Phrase questions so they will be clear to students. Rephrase the question while waiting for a response.
- Resist the temptation to answer the questions when a student doesn't answer immediately. Students need *at least* 20 to 30 seconds to think about a complex question.
- Use information and clarification questions to facilitate the discussion:
- *"Could you please explain that further?" "Could you restate what the author said in your own words?"*
- To involve other students and to elaborate on key concepts, ask for other students' reactions to a student's statement.

- As the discussion ranges over various viewpoints and interpretations, be prepared to redirect attention to the original question.
- Provide encouragement and praise for well-supported answers, varying responses so they don't sound mechanical.
- Encourage students to question each other.
- Don't ridicule weak answers. Instead, try to extract a kernel of truth or an interesting point of contrast.
- Help students identify their own mistakes rather than correcting them.
- Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." Offer to find out the answer and report it in the next class meeting.
- At the end of the class meeting, spend a few minutes summarizing the main points of the discussion, or ask the class to summarize what they have learned.

Conducting Discussions-Keeping Them Going

Maintaining discussions sometimes means dealing with situations in which the conversation never gets going, gets off track, or becomes problematic. Often problems with effectively leading discussions result from inadequate organization or preparation, and many of the strategies outlined earlier will minimize unproductive discussions. Additionally, instructors can avoid problems by asking students to help set ground rules for discussion. This technique results in students feeling a sense of ownership in helping to create a classroom environment conducive to learning. By gaining class consensus on ground rules from the outset, teachers can be assured of student support and participation in their enforcement. Four suggested ground rules are:

- **Participation.** Instructors should encourage students to speak from their own experience using "I" statements. Personalizing discussion invites diverse perspectives from students who often find themselves on the fringe of university life, such as gay, lesbian, and bisexual students; nontraditional-age students; and ethnic minority students. Students who know that they tend to monopolize conversation should be encouraged to self-monitor and make room for other students. In addition, students who tend to be reluctant contributors should be encouraged to take responsibility for contributing. It is useful to encourage students to be direct about their opinions and to avoid using "questions" to indirectly express their sentiments.
- **Confidentiality.** Instructors should encourage students to take concepts and ideas from class and discuss them freely but require that personal stories or issues raised by individuals be kept confidential and the property of the class.
- **Respectful listening.** Meaningful class participation involves listening and contributing. Instructors should encourage students with differing points of view to raise questions after listening first. Instructors should point out that if someone raises a position that is offensive or that others disagree with, others need to remember that the person making the comment deserves respect and the opportunity to be heard. It is helpful to encourage students to learn one another's names and to use them in discussions.
- **No put-downs.** Instructors should encourage students to confront positions and avoid criticisms of people, even those made in jest. Put-downs and sarcastic humor that are directed at individuals discourage open communication and honest exchange of ideas among the whole group.

Despite ground rules and an instructor's best efforts to facilitate discussion, sometimes classroom group dynamics or individual personalities can result in discussions going awry. Here are some suggestions for dealing with common problems in class discussions:

- **The student who talks too much.** A way to approach an overzealous student is to use nonverbal feedback, e.g., avoid looking in the direction of the persister. Instructors can also preface the discussion with statements like, "Let's hear from someone who has not yet contributed." One or more members of the class can serve as observers for a few class periods, reporting back their observations to the class. Assigning the avid talker to the observer role might assist sensitivity.

Another technique is to talk to the student individually outside class.

- **The student who won't talk.** When instructors set clear expectations for and reinforce participation, students who tend to be reluctant to contribute may feel more at ease. Another way to approach non-participants is to have small group discussions, which may help them feel more at ease. Asking affective questions such as "How do you feel about...?" rather than questions that require factual information reduces discomfort among students who have excessive fears about answering incorrectly for more information about levels of questioning). Asking students to write out their answers to a question may be helpful to students who have trouble with speaking spontaneously in a group. Finally, reminding students that they will be at their best in discussions if they are not thinking about their performance or how it will be evaluated is a good strategy for encouraging reticent students.
- **The discussion that turns into an argument.**
In good discussions conflicts will often arise. If such conflicts are left ambiguous, they may cause continuing trouble. Conflicts can be resolved by:
 - a) referring to the text or another authority if the solution to the conflict depends upon certain facts;
 - b) taking the opportunity to review the method by which the answer could be determined, if there is an experimentally verified answer;
 - c) helping students identify and clarify the underlying values that lead to the difference of opinion, if the conflict involves differences in values.
 - d) listing both sides of the argument on the board, creating distance between an individual and a position;
 - e) moderating forcefully, by preventing students from interrupting each other or speaking simultaneously. Refocusing conflicts on ideas rather than on people encourages participants to avoid becoming judgmental.
- **Comments that are unclear or hesitant.**
Instructors should encourage a student making unclear contributions to give examples or restate

points for verification by that student. The instructor can encourage hesitant comments by enthusiastic nonverbal cues and patience or by asking for elaboration and examples at appropriate points.

- **The discussion that goes off track.** Keeping discussions on track by listing relevant questions or issues on the board or summarizing the discussion on the board as it continues is helpful. It is also useful to interrupt the discussion occasionally and ask students to point out where the discussion appeared to go off track.
- **The student who attacks the instructor.** When students argue for the sake of argument, instructors will usually lose if they take the bait. Students who attack usually want attention, so simply giving them some recognition while firmly moving on often takes care of the problem. If students are trying to embarrass the instructor, they may seek to make him or her defensive with comments such as, "How do you *really* know that...?" or "You're not really saying that...?" Such questions are not really questions but indirect comments that are often loaded and intended to foster defensiveness in the recipient. Responding by becoming defensive often results in an instructor losing credibility with the class. The situation is best handled by turning the question back to the questioner by saying, "What I'm saying is..., but now I'd like you to share your perspective." This boomerang technique forces the questioner to take responsibility for and state directly the opinion that underlies the indirect "question." Other ways to handle these situations include:
 - a) confronting the questioner with statements such as, "I am uncomfortable with the indirectness of your question. What I hear you saying is ";
 - b) paraphrasing the message heard and checking out the accuracy of one's understanding before responding;
 - c) asking the questioner to explain the context behind the question;
 - d) reframing by clarifying the assumptions behind the question or argument and inviting the contributor to see alternative possibilities, e.g., "Your argument

is premised on the idea that people cannot be trusted. How would you restructure your position to reflect the assumption that people can be trusted?"; e) deferring by inviting students to come up after class and arrange to time to talk about the disagreement further.

*The Case Method*³

A case study provides a situation, hypothetical or selected from real life, for student analysis, decision-making, or problem-solving practice. For example, in an anthropology course, a case might describe the artifacts discovered in a real or hypothetical excavation. The students, as a group, would be expected to infer information about the life and culture of the people who lived at the site, based on knowledge and techniques they had learned in other parts of the course.

Instructors should begin with familiar cases that are exciting, controversial, challenging, complex, and Well-written. Instructors who are enthusiastic about exploring the possibilities associated with such cases, will inspire students to do the same. The ideal case is short (five to ten pages), but still requires a full class period to explore. The case should clearly describe a complicated situation in which people must respond to difficult problems that cannot be perfectly resolved but can be addressed in at least two reasonable ways.

When preparing for the discussion, Christensen (1987) suggests using a technique called "blocks of analysis," that is grouping ideas that represent a logical flow in the case. Instructors should consider in advance how much time should be spent discussing each "block." Questions can be used to move the discussion into consideration of alternative action. In addition, visual aids can be designed to correspond to blocks of analysis. The instructor should organize from left to right, arranging sections for the organization and its environment, the critical decisions to be made, the different perspectives of key individuals involved, options, and an action plan.

Guidelines for helping students prepare for discussion of cases are essentially the same as those outlined earlier in this chapter. It is helpful to prepare students

by explaining that students usually work with cases to answer two central questions:

"What is your analysis of the situation?"

"What should Actor X do about it?"

It is helpful to divide the class into small groups to work on the case and to circulate among these groups to facilitate the process and provide encouragement. The instructor should close the discussion by summarizing key points and posing some of the important questions the case raised. The case method represents a big change for students, and adjusting to change is sometimes difficult for them. The instructor should be clear, consistent, and firm in explaining expectations, and remind students that the goal is to learn how to think, how to approach problems, and how to apply theories.

*Studios and Performance Labs*⁴

Several undergraduate courses, including those in art, music, theater, dance, design, and architecture, use studio or performance labs as the primary setting for instruction or as a major adjunct to traditional instruction. These instructional situations involve, by their very nature, active learning. Although the dynamics of the student-teacher relationship and the criteria for improving it remain essentially the same as in traditional situations, such as lectures, these situations often involve additional considerations.

Often in studios, the role of the instructor's subjective judgment becomes especially significant, and s/he must address several important issues before the course begins. For example, defining course objectives helps the instructor decide how to weight individual differences in areas such as talent and effort when evaluating the performance of students in the course. Such issues require serious consideration before the syllabus is written. Whatever the decision, the instructor is advised to make sure all students have attainable goals for the course, however much inherent ability they may have.

As the other teaching methods and situations described in this chapter, effective studio and performance lab instruction is maximized by **careful**

planning and communicating of instructor expectations:

- Determine, in advance, the relative importance of talent, level of achievement, attitude, effort, and attendance in deciding how performance will be evaluated.
- Decide upon the relative importance of process and product in the course. Will students demonstrate achievement of course goals by creating a high-quality product, or by demonstrating excellent process?
- If process is of interest, determine how it will be measured, both for evaluation and improvement, and build this into the course. Decide if personal observation and feedback, self- and peer-evaluation, rehearsal logs, creative work journal, outlines, rough drafts, plans, and sketches will be used to document process.
- Communicate expectations orally and in the syllabus.
- Provide constructive feedback and restrict criticism to areas that students can change, and use criticism to help students overcome the barriers that only
- appear insurmountable.
- Work on recognizing potential, and avoid making snap judgments. Keep in mind that some students will demonstrate obvious talent in the studio whereas others will have abilities that have not yet surfaced and need to be identified and drawn out.
- Retain objectivity; avoid becoming too personally or emotionally invested in students' creative growth. Guard against crossing the boundary from appropriate interest and nurturance to becoming patronizing and parental.

One-to One Teaching

The typical instructor at Ball State devotes a considerable amount of time teaching students outside the traditional classroom setting. Students are encouraged to develop the habit of moving beyond the classroom and the textbook and seeking alternate opportunities for learning. Many students find these opportunities inspiring and motivating, and they later report that such experiences helped them develop life-long learning habits. One-to-one teaching situations

may include formal arrangements such as supervision of an independent study course and supervision of an internship or field experience, or informal instruction during office hours or sporadic "help sessions." Even the spontaneous chat in the hallway can develop into a "teachable moment."

The structure of individualized teaching varies with the goals of the student. Independent study allows students to delve into topics of individual interest and achieve a broader knowledge base and deeper understanding of an area within the discipline. Field experiences permit broadening the knowledge base by linking classroom learning with the "real world" of the discipline. Tutorial work permits students to gain clarification of difficult concepts, to problem-solve with structured guidance, or to explore ideas and possibilities that are prompted by classroom instruction. Despite the variation in goals and structure of one-to-one teaching situations, most share the feature of being open and flexible, and what is to be accomplished by the student is largely a matter of negotiation between the instructor and the student. Although the advantages of such arrangements are obvious, they can result in conflicts due to misunderstandings and unspoken differences in expectations between the student and the instructor. Therefore, like all the other teaching situations outlined in this chapter, individualized instruction requires planning and organization to be effective.

Independent Study

- Meet with the student to decide upon the objectives and the scope of the independent study. Define the boundaries of what is to be accomplished.
- Communicate expectations for the level of initiative expected from students. Be sure that the amount of initiative expected from the student is commensurate with his/her ability and academic standing (e.g., sophomores may require more direction and structure than seniors).
- If guided readings and discussion will be the major focus, begin creating a reading list.
- If an independent research project is to be initiated, decide which phases of the project can

comfortably be completed within the allocated time frame.

- Negotiate what the final product, if any, is to be and how it will be evaluated. Discuss grading criteria.
- Decide upon a tentative plan for scheduling meetings and evaluating progress.
- Decide how to handle situations in which the student is unprepared for a meeting and how canceled meetings (by either party) will be handled.
- After these negotiations have taken place, devise a written contract that outlines the ground rules of the independent study and the responsibilities of each party. (Such contracts contain most of the same elements of a traditional syllabus, plus any additional terms.) Keep a copy of the contract/syllabus, give a copy to the student, and devise a plan for making any modifications, should they become necessary later in the semester.
- Schedule regular meeting times and stick to the schedule. Keep in mind that students feel cheated and devalued when meeting times are repeatedly cancelled and rescheduled, and they perceive that the instructor is not giving appropriate priority to meeting times and is unconcerned about their progress.
- Be prepared for each meeting; review any reading materials that were assigned. Devise a few questions that can be used to assess the student's learning and open avenues for extended discussion and exploration.
- At the beginning of each meeting review the goal(s) of the meeting.
- Create an atmosphere of "exchange" of ideas, and avoid turning discussions into mini-lectures. If the student is doing much writing and little talking, it's time to pause and shift gears.
- Avoid over-scheduling the meeting. Leave ample time for the student to explore ideas and ask questions.
- Take advantage of opportunities to link the content of the independent study to other areas within the discipline, to previous coursework, or to future career responsibilities.

- Keep brief notes concerning what was accomplished during each meeting as well as notes on areas needing further exploration.
- At the end of each meeting review the salient points discussed, outline a plan for the next meeting, and provide instructions for what the student should accomplish in the interim.
- Periodically assess whether the goals of the independent study are being achieved. Encourage the student to comment and offer suggestions for modifications that may be needed.
- Periodically offer an evaluation of the student's progress. Provide constructive comments by suggesting how the student's thinking might develop or alter- native ways to explore material. Offer guidance for the development of critical thinking and analytical skills. Reinforce gains in these areas when you observe them. Remember that one of the goals of feedback is to foster development of life-long learning habits.
- Point out problems, if they exist, with coming to meetings unprepared, and remind the student of the contract.

Tutoring Students

Perhaps the most common one-to-one teaching experience encountered by teachers is the tutorial session. Indeed, the primary responsibility of many TAs is to provide individual or small-group tutoring sessions. Additionally, virtually all faculty and TAs hold office hours that offer students opportunities to drop in with questions and concerns. Because most instructors at Ball State have many demands on their time and most students also have a "full plate," it is important for both parties to make efficient use of time spent tutoring. TAs who provide help sessions have the added responsibility of familiarizing themselves with the subject material covered in lectures delivered by someone else and with the information contained in the text and/or assigned readings. The following guidelines may be helpful:

- Build rapport with the student; find out the student's name and other information that can put the student's questions/problems/concerns in context. Remember that students will feel more comfortable discussing their concerns with

someone whom they perceive to be genuinely concerned about them as individuals.

- Ask the student to define her or his objective(s) for the meeting. Listen to what the student has to say about the nature of the problem and how you can be helpful.
- Assess the student's current capability. Be aware of what the student can do and at what point s/he began to have difficulty. Assess students by having them "walk through" the steps they took while trying to solve a problem or understand a concept.
- Determine those concepts or information upon which the session will focus.
- Break large problems or concepts into smaller components. Avoid minimizing or overlooking components that appear easy or obvious.
- Introduce each component by asking a leading question that will help the student discover a solution to this part of the problem or that will illuminate this part of the concept.
- Provide direct assistance, fill in gaps in understanding, clarify only when needed, then ask the student to restate what has just been conveyed.
- Reinforce the student's mastery and independent problem-solving efforts using praise and encouragement.
- Cement understanding of the concept by providing additional practice before moving on to the next component.
- At the end of the session, after progressing through each component, re-assess the student's understanding and mastery of the problem or concept by asking her/him to apply the concept, to state an interpretation or conclusion, or to solve a similar problem using the solution just learned.

*Field Experience*⁴

When students are working in the field (such as interns or student-teachers), they are typically supervised by two individuals---the course instructor, whom they are likely to see only rarely, and the site supervisor, with whom they are likely to have frequent contact during their external learning activity.

Selection of the site supervisor needs to be made with great care, and it is crucial to enlist her or his full cooperation and to open lines of communication before the student is sent out. The field site supervisor should have full knowledge of what is expected of the student, the present level of the student's ability, what methods will be employed to evaluate the student's progress, and other details of the field experience. A mechanism for providing remedial training should be devised for those few students whose performance is below an acceptable standard. Additionally, procedures for removing a student from field experience for repeated failure to maintain professional behavior or adequate performance should be spelled out in advance.

The field experience is another active learning situation in which a contract outlining the responsibilities, including assumption of liability, of each party is useful. Some departments have standard contracts for field experiences, whereas others allow course instructors to negotiate the specifics of the experience with the field supervisor. In either case, clarifying all ground rules in advance through a contract prevents future misunderstandings. Students at Ball State who engage in field experiences receive liability coverage through the University's insurance policy. It is the instructor's responsibility to provide the insurance officer with the names of students enrolled in experiential learning each semester so that coverage can be implemented before the student is placed in the field.

It is equally important to communicate course objectives and methods of evaluation to students enrolled in field experience or internship courses. If the course instructor will be making periodic site visits to observe a student's progress, it's a good idea to inform the student of this practice and what the instructor will be looking for. Students should also be informed of which staff members, including the site supervisor, will be available to them for help, advice, and evaluative input.

Students with serious problems need to know that they can contact their instructor at any point in the assignment without this being seen as an admission of failure or a breach of confidentiality. It is not only appropriate, but advisable, for the instructor to initiate some contact with students in the field from time to time and to check in with the site supervisor periodically. Doing so can prevent minor problems and misunderstandings from escalating into larger ones.

Site visits for the purpose of observing a student in action and evaluating progress can be intimidating to many students. Inevitably, a student will be more nervous when s/he is observed, and typical behavior may even change. Observers can try to minimize the effect of his or her presence by telling students in advance that they understand that students will be uncomfortable and, at times, awkward during the observation. If the student is in the field for an extended period, there may be opportunities for several observations; students learn to adjust to these observations and they become more comfortable with each successive visit, thus making it easier for the instructor to encounter typical student performance. Observations need to be handled with sensitivity to the possibility of undermining the authority of site supervisors (once this is destroyed, it is often impossible to recover). Feedback, for the most part, is best delivered away from the field environment.

Other Active Learning Methods⁵

Peer Teaching

Research has shown that when students teach, they learn concepts better than if they are taught the material in conventional ways. In other words, teaching can be a more effective learning strategy than being taught. Additionally, pairing students and having pairs present information to the class is more effective than having students work alone.

Peer teaching can be integrated into most classes. For example, students can prepare their own discussion or

exam questions on the reading material; they can work in small groups or pairs to generate hypotheses, solve problems, summarize main points, or develop questions; they can make up original problems to solve rather than the instructor making up the problems. Peer teaching can be used in class or as an out-of-class assignment.

In-Class Exercises

Practicing What Is Learned

Class time can be used for focused activities in which students can practice essential skills. For example, in math-related subjects, after 15-20 minutes of instruction on a particular type of problem, the instructor could require students to work examples on their own for 15 minutes. This technique requires students to try to apply concepts that they have just learned and usually produces questions they might not have thought to ask during the lecture. This method also provides a powerful antidote to boredom. Further, immediate practice in class helps reinforce the explanation provided during lecture.

Cooperative Group Learning

Although many instructors use small groups for discussions, small groups can also be used as a teaching method. A class can be divided into teams that are given certain instructional tasks to complete, either in or out of class. Teams can take turns presenting what they have learned to the class, and the class can be tested on the material that each group presents.

Groups of six to seven students work best. It might also be a good idea for instructors to assign students to groups based on perceptions of students' abilities, motivation and interest rather than allowing students to form their own groups. This also enables instructors to create groups that are diverse with respect to major, ethnicity, gender, age, as well as other characteristics.

Tasks assigned to groups should challenge students to analyze phenomena, solve problems, apply theories, exercise judgment, or perform some combination of these activities. Clear instructions are vital to the success of group teaching, which means that the instructor must be well-organized and able to break down the task into its various components. During the

group exercise, the instructor moves from group to group, answering questions, clarifying instructions, giving advice, and observing group process. Group exercises can vary in time from 15-20 minutes to the entire class period.

Well-designed group learning tasks require little direct intervention or teaching by the instructor.

Some instructors may feel uncomfortable with having less control over how information is obtained and presented. However, the instructor still maintains control over the instructions, tasks, and process of the groups. Cooperative group learning can be utilized along with other more traditional teaching techniques such as lectures and discussions.

Simulations

While providing students with case studies requires them to hypothesize about certain situations, simulations require students to role-play and respond to real-life situations. For example, in a political science class, the instructor might simulate a city council meeting to decide the location of a halfway house for juvenile offenders. Students are given particular roles to play: members of the police department, representatives of neighborhood associations, social workers, and others with conflicting concerns. The task facing the class is to come to agreement about where to place the halfway house. The instructional objectives of simulations are to practice negotiation skills, problem-solving, and techniques for reaching compromise.

Simulations usually take more time in class, although the instructor's role is less directive than in the case study method. Simulations also require more explanation before they are conducted, and when completed, a careful summary of what has been learned by relating the students' experiences to the general principles involved should be presented to students. While time-consuming and more difficult, simulations can be very effective in teaching students how to problem-solve and compromise on complex issues, and provide instructors with a method of applying course content to real-life issues.

Games

Games, although similar to simulations, are a teaching activity in which there are winners and losers, which have definite rules for "how to play," and frequently require props or other materials. For example, in a game used in a sociology class, students are assigned to several different groups and provided with colored markers that represent money. They are told to maximize their funds through negotiations with other groups, but the rules for trading are actually stacked against certain groups--they practically cannot win. This type of game allows students to experience in a small way, life in a rigid class society in which improvement of one's economic condition is made difficult or impossible by the society's rules.

As with simulations and case studies, in order for games to be effective, the instructor must be well-organized. Rules of the game should be explained and posted, materials should be ready and the instructor must be prepared to intercede, or play "referee" whenever disputes may occur.

Out-of-Class Exercises

Students can also be required to engage in out-of-class experiential exercises to emphasize points learned in class. For example, in a psychology course, after a lecture on the psychological impact of being an ethnic or cultural minority group member, students can be required to place themselves in situations where they are the ethnic or cultural minority for a certain amount of time. They can then relate their personal experiences and compare those experiences to what was presented in lecture either in a class discussion or in written assignments.

Writing as an Instructional Technique⁶

Writing is an important tool for creating and organizing thought. To take advantage of writing's role in the thinking process, instructors can use writing as an inherent part of learning in the classroom, creating occasions for students to fit new information into their existing knowledge structure and to expand their ways of thinking. The emphasis on writing stresses the role of the instructor as a

facilitator rather than as the technical expert on points of grammar. Many opportunities to think through writing that do not involve lengthy assignments or create an excessive grading burden for the instructor are available. Effective in-class writing assignments are:

- Meaningful to students;
- Related to the goals of the course and the objectives of the given lesson;
- Clearly defined;
- Practical for both student and instructor.

To incorporate writing as an instructional technique, instructors can employ a variety of methods to get students writing. The following methods have been used effectively across courses:

Brainstorming/Freewriting

This method has students jotting down ideas very quickly in response to a given problem or stimulus. They should be encouraged to focus on generating ideas rather than worrying about the format that their writing takes. Here are a few ideas on when to use this technique:

- Prior to the introduction of new material, to enhance discovery and curiosity, ask students to guess the causes of a historical phenomenon or encourage students to predict the results of a scientific experiment. The ideas can then be shared in groups or in class before the material is formally discussed.
- As a summarizing or synthesizing technique, ask students to write out a synopsis of what they have learned or to apply a particular concept. For example, students could compose a list of things to remember when diagnosing a certain virus or characteristics of abstract art.
- To prepare for a presentation, group project or paper, ask students to write out a list of ideas. Share ideas in class to provide feedback on project topics and offer suggestions on methods or organization.

The Précis

Instructors may assign a very brief summary of the major points of a reading assignment or class discussion. Often it is useful to specify a word limit,

such as 25 words, to stretch students' language skills and to engender further reflection on the material. These may be used in a number of ways:

- To motivate students to keep up with their reading;
- To help focus a discussion;
- To provide feedback on learning;
- To serve as an attendance check.

When collected, the précis may be read very quickly. Elaborate comments are not necessary. Some instructors use the précis the last day of the week, to sum up or apply points studied that week. Points can be awarded, serving to reward students who keep up with their reading and engage in active listening in class. Further, a few can be read at the beginning of the next week to reinforce prior learning and to serve as a segue into the next lesson.

Reading Journals

This method requires students to keep journals to chronicle their understanding of readings for the class. Entries might include:

- Summaries of main ideas reflected in the readings;
- Questions that students have about the readings;
- Possible applications of ideas presented in the readings, including ways in which the material fits with other course readings and material;
- Critical evaluations of the ideas presented in the readings.

Instructors may review the journals periodically, reacting to points they find interesting. It is recommended, however, that journals be evaluated for the thinking, and not the grammar, reflected. Tell students that the emphasis of reading journals is on their ideas and not on format or structure.

Papers

Although the formal term paper can be a valuable learning activity for many courses, some instructors have discovered that assigning one or more shorter papers, usually requiring some sort of analysis of ideas or readings, is both easier to evaluate and more useful for their students' learning. Some instructors use a combination of both the long paper and one or

two shorter papers. Requiring a number of papers provides more and varied opportunities for students to employ and sharpen their writing/thinking skills. Further, by utilizing one or more in-class papers, the instructor simulates time-pressured situations which students may encounter later in their future employment, particularly the writing of short reports. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- To focus students' work, pose a direct question, i.e., "What problems do sociologists encounter in defining 'deviance'?" or "What might be the implications of applying a strict definition in this particular case?"
- Always convey, as clearly as possible, expectations concerning the appropriate style and tone of the writing, the desired length, and the documentation required.
- If possible, provide exemplary papers from past classes to serve as models.
- Encourage students to look in scholarly journals in the discipline for examples of writing models.
- When assigning longer papers, require drafts in advance of the final paper to help students pace themselves and to build the opportunity for instructor feedback while the students are still in the process of writing.

Ultimately, when using writing as an instructional technique, the instructor should recognize that writing is most useful when viewed as a *process* rather than as a *product*. Finally, the instructor should always explain how the writing is meant to serve the objective of the lesson. Students should see writing assignments as tools for learning, through the clarification and development of thinking, rather than as busy work.

Methods for Modern Languages and Classics⁷

Although some teaching methods for Modern Languages and Classics (MLC) are similar to the traditional teaching methods discussed earlier in this chapter, there are some unique features to teaching MLC courses. As indicated in earlier chapters, most of the students at the University have not been exposed to different cultures and thus may have somewhat

inaccurate or perhaps erroneous expectations about MLC courses. (See Chapter 9, [Interacting with Students](#), for a detailed summary of undergraduate characteristics.) Additionally, because of the unique teaching features of MLC courses, instructors need to be especially sensitive to students with disabilities, particularly those students with hearing loss. Instructors of MLC courses need to be flexible in their teaching style to accommodate such students. The following is a brief summary of the teaching approaches used by instructors of MLC courses. Instructors of MLC courses are encouraged to consult the references on MLC teaching methods listed in the bibliography of this publication for more specific techniques.

French, German and Spanish Language Courses

Most of the modern language courses utilize proficiency-based instruction. At each level or phase of learning, proficiency goals are established for each student. In beginning and intermediate language courses, the development of communication skills is stressed. Instructors should speak predominantly in the language being taught, rather than using explanations in English. Emphasis within this communication approach is on listening, speaking, reading and writing the language. This teaching approach is quite different from what students have likely become accustomed to, and may require some extra explanation at the beginning of the course. Additionally, some new instructors might be concerned about "losing" some students, and thus begin to speak English more frequently in the classroom. Although this is understandable, instructors serve as role models for students and are encouraged to consistently speak predominantly in the language being learned.

In the advanced language courses, comprehension of the language is stressed. Again, instructors are encouraged to speak only in the language being learned during class and to provide both verbal and written comments to students in the language being learned. In the advanced literature classes, literature is introduced to students and used both as a tool to understand the language and for the interpretation of writings.

In these modern language courses, a proficiency test for undergraduate majors is required before graduation. Students are tested for proficiency in spoken skills, listening comprehension, reading, writing, grammar, and culture.

Japanese, Chinese and Korean Language Courses

Asian languages differ greatly from the other modern languages and therefore, require different teaching methods. Because of the language differences, the traditional grammar-translation method is most effective for explaining grammatical points and vocabulary. For reasons of clarity and efficiency, explanations are made in English rather than in the language being learned. Grammar explanations are best presented on an overhead projector (it is helpful to have overhead transparencies prepared ahead of time). Text dialogues provide samples of how the grammar is used and are supplemented by video and cassette tapes. Approximately 20% of class time should be spent on teaching grammar and explaining vocabulary.

To reinforce students' understanding of the grammar and vocabulary lessons, pattern practice exercises such as substitution, fill-in-the-blank, and translation are used. These can be performed either individually or with the students in pairs, with the instructor monitoring the students' progress. These activities also make up approximately 20% of class time.

Communicative activities are used to promote "communicative competence," which is the ability to communicate appropriately in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and culture. Pictures, task-oriented role-plays, working in pairs, and authentic cultural materials are used to promote the students' communicative skills. These types of activities should take up approximately 35% of class time.

Students master the non-Romanized writing systems of the Asian languages through systematic writing lessons that include studying each character and its etymology in an isolated fashion, followed by putting

each character in context. Texts and workbooks provide lessons and writing practice. Approximately 25% of class time is spent on mastery of the writing systems.

In addition to focusing on learning the language, cultural lessons are also integrated into the Asian language courses. Such lessons give students an understanding of how the language is used by native speakers. Video and printed materials can be used to teach students about the various Asian cultures.

Classics

Teaching Classics courses differs from the language courses. Unlike the modern language courses that are mostly small classes, Classics are taught in three main ways: large general studies courses, moderate-sized advanced Classics courses, and small Classics language courses. Teaching the larger courses used for Core Curriculum requirements is much like teaching any other large course (see Chapter 4 [Preparing and Designing a Course](#)). Many of the teaching methods discussed earlier such as the lecture method, cooperative group learning, and the case study method are used in these classes.

For the moderate-sized advanced Classics courses, classical culture is emphasized. Again, teaching methods such as the lecture method, discussion method, cooperative group learning, and case studies are suggested. The goals for teaching the general studies and advanced courses are to help the student grasp the content of the literature and to inspire enthusiasm and make Classics more accessible. Emphasis is on teaching students to appreciate not only Classics, but also their own ability to master the material.

The smaller language courses emphasize theory behind the writing. Unlike the modern language courses, which focus on the development of communication skills, a cognitive approach to learning is often used which focuses on understanding the meaning and interpretation of the language, rather than on the development of communication skills. Reading is a major focus in these courses, and a close-literature focus approach is often used. Here, similar to the case study method, one reading is selected,

instead of several, and examined very closely. Instructors emphasize the writing structure and focus on idiom. While no one particular method for teaching Classics languages is suggested, it is highly recommended that instructors be knowledgeable about the theory behind the teaching methods they select.