Effective Lectures

Lecture Purpose
Lectures provide a framework for:
- Learning new concepts
- Modeling ways of thinking
- Challenging accepted beliefs and attitudes
- Stimulating further learning

Effective Lectures
To create an effective lecture the following aspects should be considered:
1. Careful preparation
2. Organization
3. Audiovisual aids
4. Dynamic delivery

1. Lecture Preparation
Preparing an effective lecture involves a careful examination of the content, learners, and context by:
- Selecting the essential content: a topic can be narrowed by focusing on what the learners needs to know, what is important to learn, and/or what is interesting.
- Connecting content with the needs and interests of learners.
- Considering contextual variables such as time frame, facilities, and type of presentation (large lecture in a course sequence or a single clinical case presentation).

2. Organization: Beginning/Introduction; Middle/Body; End/Conclusion

Beginning/Introduction
- Introduce yourself to the audience when lecturing for the first time.
- Capture the audience attention through concrete and exciting cases, stories, analogies and examples.
- Offer a preview of the entire lecture by presenting the objectives, questions to be answered or an outline of the key points.
- Connect new ideas to the prior knowledge of the audience.
- Establish the atmosphere/tone of the session e.g. establish an atmosphere of openness and invitation to ask questions to encourage active participation.

Middle/Body
- Present a limited number of main points (three to five points are recommended for a fifty-minute lecture): cluster or chunk content into main points and filter out information by focusing on what is important, needed and of interest.
- Arrange main points chronologically, logically, in a problem-solution, inductive or deductive format.
- Add subpoints, examples or supporting material to each main point.
- Vary the methods used approximately every 15 minutes since maximum audience attention is attained at about 12-15 minutes into the lecture, e.g., questions, discussion, demonstrations, video clips, illustration, learning task assignments, self-tests.

For questions/suggestions please contact Maria Blanco at: maria.blanco@tufts.edu
• Use closed-ended questions and show of hands or iClickers responses for large audiences, and open-ended questions for smaller groups (Open: What are major problems that this patient presents? Closed: What specific entity is associated with this behavioral pattern?). Wait 3-5 seconds after asking questions to allow adequate think time.

End/Conclusion
• Summarize and conclude decisively: summarize yourself or ask participants to summarize.
• In ongoing courses, provide a bridge to the next class, e.g., previewing the readings, assignments or key concepts to come.

3. Audiovisual Aids: Black/Whiteboard & Power Point slides
Audiovisual aids increase learning and long-term memory. They must be simple, uncluttered and clear.

Black/Whiteboard
• Provide the audience with: an outline of the lecture; a visual representation of content (charts or diagrams); a record of the audience’s thoughts; a summary of main points.
• Plan how to use the board.
• Use large and legible writing.
• Talk to the audience rather than to the board.
• Use multiple colors to emphasize points or draw diagrams.

Power Point slides
• Check the equipment for good functioning prior to start of the lecture.
• Select a template that is uncluttered and use a white background with dark print or vice versa.
• Use phrases rather than sentences and large type: 36-40 points for titles and 24-30 points for major points.
• Use large type, and upper and lower case letters in a consistent font.
• San serif fonts like Helvetica are easier to read than serif fonts like Times New Roman.
• Limit to seven words per line and seven lines per slide.
• Simplify drawings or charts.
• Use approximately one or two slides per minute.
• Talk to the audience rather than to the board.
• Use an electronic pointer carefully and turn it off when not needed.

4. Dynamic Delivery: Skillful Use of Enthusiasm, Movement, Gestures, Voice and Eye Contact

Enthusiasm
• Enthusiasm is the highest correlating item to overall teaching effectiveness in student ratings of teachers.
• Characteristics associated with enthusiasm include the use of humor, energy and passion. These behaviors motivate learning, spark interest in the topic and maintain interest in the lecture.

Movement
• Body movement can increase interest, emphasize key ideas, communicate feelings and connect with the audience.
• Stereotypical movement can be distracting, e.g. pacing.
• Movement from one area of the classroom to another can capture interest and shift the focus of the conversation to another part of the room.

Gestures

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• Gestures can reinforce your interest in the topic.
• The larger the audience the larger gestures should be.
• Inappropriate movements can distract from the lecture, e.g., keep your hands away from pockets, keys, microphone cords or other distracting objects.

**Voice**
• Vocal variety and verbal pauses can provide energy, boost interest and provide excitement to a lecture.
• Project the voice so it can be easily heard at the back of the room.
• Pauses can be used for emphasis at the end of a series of ideas, as a transition from one idea to the next and after a rhetorical question.

**Eye Contact**
• Make eye contact with all the members of the audience to make them feel that someone is talking to them as individuals.
• Scan the audience from side to side, and up and down the rows of the room. Find three friendly faces scattered in the audience, one at each side and one in the middle, and move your gaze between these faces.

**Strategies to cope with nervousness**
• Good preparation
• Mastery of material
• Knowing the audience
• Rehearsing for success

**References**
