



101 Tips for Effective Teaching

Getting to Know Your Students

1. Ideas for learning students' names early:
 - Note physical characteristics
 - Make a seating chart.
 - Make a rhyme with the name.
 - Have them make their own place cards.
2. Have students interview and introduce each other.
3. Have students discover things they have in common, e.g., same brand of toothpaste, same hometown, same middle name, etc.
4. Have each person tell three "truths" about him/herself, two of which are really true and one of which is a lie. Classmates try to determine which statement is the lie.
5. Have students make name tents (folded cards) to display on their desks.
6. Require that students find your office sometime during the first three weeks of class.
7. Give students an "excuse" to come to your office.
8. Have students keep journals that you regularly collect, read and respond to.
9. Have students report on news articles and explain their own personal views or interests.
10. Arrange desks/chairs in a circle or a U-shape to encourage interaction.
11. Use students' names frequently, e.g., when handing back papers, asking for responses, etc.
12. Meet with small groups informally outside of class.

Team Building

13. Use collaborative learning techniques to build effective learning groups.
14. Have students exchange phone numbers with several other class members.
15. Create a "treasure" hunt for information related to the assignment.
16. Set up and encourage the use of out-of-class study groups.
17. Use group testing in such a way that all members of the team benefit.

18. Occasionally assume responsibility yourself for a member of a team who cannot be there.
19. Have students complete information sheets on each other.
20. Use positive interdependence principles in setting up collaborative groups, i.e. "all for one and one for all" attitudes.
21. In awarding points for group activities add points to each team member's individual score when all members of the group score, for example, 90 percent or better on a given task.
22. Define and assign specific roles for getting group work accomplished, e.g., recorder, reporter, clarifier, cheerleader, checker, etc.
23. Form "base groups" that stay together all semester to exchange information and provide support and assistance in mastering course material.
24. Use cooperative reading pairs whereby students pair up to read to each other and discuss what they are reading.
25. Assign group projects to be completed inside/outside class.

Living Up the Lecture

26. Know your subject and wallow in it.
27. Know your audience, their interests and experiences.
28. Create energy, move around, vary vocal inflections, be animated, show enthusiasm.
29. Incorporate videos, music or other media to give variety.
30. Use short-term case studies for reactions and discussions.
31. Break the lecture into meaningful units of approximately 10 minutes and summarize after each segment.
32. Establish a collection of cartoons and use them to make a point.
33. On Mondays, discuss weekend activities that relate to class.
34. Incorporate current events; update lectures!
35. Include humorous stories and anecdotes to give the topic life.
36. Apply information to real-life situations relevant to your students whenever possible.
37. Use a bit of drama.
38. Deliver a lecture from someone else's perspective, maybe even dress in character.
39. From time to time, videotape yourself as you lecture and see yourself as others see you.
40. Have a colleague you respect and trust critique your video.

Motivating Students to Learn

41. Hold three-minute "town meetings" to discuss an issue or concern.
42. Have students write a one- or-two paragraph paper on "What would you do differently if you had it to do over?"
43. At the end of class, ask students to write an answer to the question, "What part of today's class was fuzzy?" Use the results to clarify before moving on.

44. Write the day's objectives on the board and refer to each objective as you cover it.
45. Have students keep a "learning journal."
46. Have students write a "subject autobiography," detailing both positive and negative experiences they have had in dealing with the subject (e.g. math anxiety).
47. Group students and have each group teach part of a chapter to the rest of the class.
48. Use opinion polls and student surveys to give students a voice.
49. Encourage the formation of study groups, then give pointers on how to establish and maintain effective study groups.
50. Have students verbalize the connection between concepts and ideas, e.g. how the new topic fits with the topic just studied.
51. Play devil's advocate to stimulate thinking and discussion.

Maintaining Student Involvement

52. Have students role-play situations.
53. Break students up into small groups to come up with three points with which they disagree or about which they have questions.
54. Have students pair up and share what they've just heard, seen or learned.
55. Have students construct test items.
56. Ask open-ended questions and listen to the answers.
57. Establish the practice of having students give short oral summaries at intervals throughout the lecture. (Alert students to the fact that they may be called on at any time to summarize.)
58. Let students teach each other.
59. At the end of a class session ask, "What were 'keepers' (ideas worth keeping) today?"
60. Have the class create a collective concept map on the board.
61. Group students and have them construct concept maps on transparencies; share them with the whole class.
62. Invite students to write questions that need attention on the board before you arrive each day.
63. Using the four-square idea (each corner of the room representing a different point of view), have students take a stand on a controversial issue and then defend the stand they have taken. Allow them to change their positions after hearing others' arguments.

Managing Difficult Students

64. Encourage individual responsibility by assigning students to groups in which they have a specific responsibility.
65. When appropriate, lighten up and use humor, but not sarcasm.
66. Have students identify and offer solutions for disruptive, bothersome or irritating behaviors and incidents that occur in class.
67. Ask students to describe a student-centered classroom.

68. Use management by objectives: set the agenda for each class session and stick as closely as possible to it.
69. Talk over negative or potentially negative situations with your colleagues.
70. Always be open to legitimate student input.
71. Be honest and consistent with your students.
72. Confront an overt disrupter when the behavior occurs by stating clearly what you observe is happening and what you expect to happen.
73. Deal with the subtle disrupter in more subtle ways, e.g., "That line of thinking takes us away from the topic at hand; let's get back on target."
74. Model expectations through your own behavior and state your expectations in the syllabus.
75. Always go to class well-prepared.
76. Expect the best from each student.
77. Show genuine concern by listening carefully to your students' concerns.

Questioning Effectively

78. Ask open-ended questions to encourage thoughtful answers.
79. Ask follow-up questions to probe further.
80. Ask a question, pause for think time, then call on a student by name.
81. After a student has answered a question, ask a second student if he/she agrees or disagrees with the answer of the first student and tell why.
82. Ask clearly phrased questions; do not change the wording when repeating the question.
83. Rather than asking, "Are there any questions?" have students generate questions for each other as oral quizzes at intervals during the lecture.
84. Don't be afraid of silence after a question; wait long enough (10 seconds) for students to formulate a thoughtful answer.
85. Teach students to recognize the various cognitive levels of questions and ask questions at the various levels.
86. Ask questions that have neither right nor wrong answers.
87. Do round-robin questioning; have one student respond to another student's question, then ask a question to be answered by yet another student.
88. Use different techniques to involve all students in answering at once. (Thumbs up if you agree, etc.)

Giving Feedback

89. Make sure your feedback is informative and explicit; "good" is not enough.
90. Start with something positive.
91. Write your comments in statements and questions that probe the thought process as well as critique the work.

92. Do not ignore a wrong answer given in class discussion; seek to clear up miscomprehensions by probing for where the thinking went wrong.
93. Use checklists that are consistent with stated expectations.
94. Compliment students for jobs well done, but don't stop there; tell them what was done well and why.
95. Give feedback in a timely fashion.

Getting Feedback

96. Use classroom assessment techniques (CATs) that probe for class comprehension of material presented.
97. Make feedback an interactive dialogue.
98. To help you know what needs clarification, have students respond to specific parts of the lecture with two-minute papers that you collect (but don't score).
99. Have all your sections evaluate the course each semester.
100. Have your students write "legacy letters" to future students telling what to expect in taking this course, then read these letters to your next semester classes.
101. Ask a final test question, "What have you learned from this course that you can take with you?" (Let students know early in the semester that they will be answering this question at the end of the course.)

Adapted from Joyce T. Powlacs
Teaching and Learning Center,
University of Nebraska-Lincoln