

## Building Relationship

Successful teachers put a lot of thought into the way which they will start their classes at the beginning of the year. One of your main aims, in the early weeks, is to establish a mutual relationship and relaxing environment for you and the students. The following suggestions may help to facilitate smooth and effective classes.

### Using Icebreakers

Being new to any group usually produces some feelings of anxiety. Icebreakers or warmers are activities that help members of your class get to know each other (and you). The sooner this happens, the sooner students will feel comfortable about working together and participating in activities.

When deciding on topics, choose ones that will not be threatening or embarrassing for the students. Here are some suggestions:

#### **For students who do not know each other**

- ▶ Invite students to talk to the person next to them, telling them their names, something about their family, and a couple of their favourite hobbies. When they have done this, students can either introduce themselves or their partner to the whole class. This exercise gets everyone in the class talking about a subject that they know more about than anyone else - themselves!
- ▶ Give each student a sticky label and on it get them to write their favourite kind of food, singer or their Chinese zodiac - or something else that is familiar to them. After attaching the label to themselves they have to find someone in the room that has chosen the same or similar item. They can then tell each other a little about themselves and shared with the larger group.
- ▶ Ask the students to make up, and write down, three questions for their classmates. Each student must then interview at least three students to get their responses to the questions they have posed. Once the interviews have been completed, ask each student to report on one or two interesting answers from their classmates.
- ▶ Organise the students into groups of 5 - 6. Give the students some flip-chart paper and markers to show their talents and experiences. Ask them to construct ONE poster that captures their special features (e.g. hobbies, skills, talents, ambitions) and invite them to present it to the entire class.

#### **For students who already know each other**

- ▶ Have students make up three statements about themselves - two statements that are true and one that is incorrect and write them down on paper. Put students into groups and take turns saying what they have written. The others in the group have to guess which statement is false. The objective is for the students to be so creative that they 'trick' the other participants into thinking that the false statement is a true statement, or a true statement is the false statement. The exercise develops lots of interaction and conversation between participants.

## Warmers

When you plan your first lesson you need to allow quite some time for an icebreaker. In subsequent lessons you should plan a few minutes at the start as a warmer. This could be:

- ▶ An open question such as, "What do you expect to learn in this lesson?" or,
- ▶ Are there any suggestions on the teaching and learning mode?
- ▶ Working on learning problems that students have difficulty with.
- ▶ A topical issue related to this lesson.
- ▶ Speaking to the first few students who come into class individually, asking them to remind you of their names and discussing if there is anything they were unclear about. Check with other students when they arrive if they, too, were unclear.

## Learning names

Students will respond to you more if they feel that they know you and that you know them. Getting their names right is a useful step towards building up the sort of relationship which fosters learning.

Here are some activities that will help you and your students get to know each other's names. You will notice that they are also icebreakers!

- ▶ Give students sticky labels. Ask them to write their names on in bold felt-tip pen and then wear them during class.
- ▶ Give each student a name card that they can place in front of themselves. The students' names need to be written large enough for you and others to see. Ask them to bring it to the next few lessons until everyone knows each other's names.
- ▶ Ask each person in the group to pair up with someone they don't know well and then introduce themselves to each other or interview each other for two minutes. They then, very briefly, introduce the other person to the group.
- ▶ Get the students sitting in a circle. Ask a student to say his or her name, then the person to the left to say, "I am...and this is...". Carry on round the circle, adding one name at each stage, until someone goes right round the circle correctly.
- ▶ Ask students to do a round and say something about their name - why they were given the name - or a nickname associated with it - or the name of a famous person who shares the same name.
- ▶ Everyone, in introducing themselves, talks about their Chinese names and their English names (if they have both), who chose their names, and which they prefer (and why). Ask them - had they a choice - what name they would have chosen for themselves.

Once you find out your students' names, try to memorise and repeat them back and use them as often as you can early on.

## Establishing expectations

Clarifying expectations in the first lesson is very important. Tell them that your lessons will be student-focused and interactive.

### Setting learning contract: Behaviour

Groups work better when there are clear understandings about what things will be done and how people will behave toward each other. 'Ground rules' provide a framework for classroom behaviours and provide students with knowledge about:

- ▶ Teachers' expectations of them e.g., attendance, behaviour, participation.
- ▶ What the students can expect of the teacher e.g., availability and advice.

There are some things to keep in mind about ground rules:

- ▶ They should be tailor-made to each teaching situation. At the same time, there are some common-sense ground rules that are useful in most tutorials such as:
  - ◆ Be on time ( teachers and students).
  - ◆ Turn off mobile phones.
  - ◆ Participate in the activities.
  - ◆ Listen to each other and don't interrupt.
  - ◆ Ask for help when needed and don't understand.
  - ◆ Always bring your finished assignment.
- ▶ While some groundrules may not be negotiable, it is a good idea to talk them through. There are several ways to do this. Consensus is one strategy. Another is to get students to feedback on a list of your suggestions by adding or removing some.
- ▶ Review the groundrules from time to time.

### Setting learning contract: Work

The first lesson provides a good opportunity to discuss assessment and the standard of work that you expect. What are your expectations about, for example, group projects, presentations, case-study work or 'good' written work?

## Working with a diverse student group

There is no typical student. Both across and within modules, you will find students from a variety of social backgrounds, academic experience and subject ability. Set yourself a goal of making all your students - regardless of their backgrounds or experiences - feel that they are included.

Here are some useful strategies:

- ▶ Start with simple rather than complex ideas and tasks to allow students without sufficient background knowledge to catch up.

- ▶ When it becomes clear that some students already know what you are trying to help them learn, think of ways to accommodate these students. One idea is that you can structure group work so that stronger students help students who may find the work difficult. Tell the stronger students that they are developing good coaching skills! Another strategy is to give the students who have already mastered the work some more challenging work to do - either individually or in groups. Remember that bored students do not enjoy the learning process.
- ▶ Students with different educational and social backgrounds may have different expectations and ways of doing things. Make the workings of the class explicit so that all have a common understanding about what is going on.
- ▶ Because English is a second language for most students in Hong Kong, they may be hesitant about - or even avoid - speaking in class. Be sensitive to this when you expect them to respond in English. Try giving them extra time to respond.
- ▶ Always praise students' success and look for other ways to encourage them and develop their self-esteem and confidence.
- ▶ You may have students who have learning difficulties, different impairment or mobility or psychological problems. There may be students with special medical conditions. In all cases get to know these students and establish what might be helpful. Ask the Student Counsellors or Student Development Officers for advice when needed.

## Managing students' behaviour

From time to time, teachers talk about students being disruptive in class. It is a good idea to run a self-check to see where the problem lies before blaming the students. Are the lessons interesting? Is there enough variety? Do students see the relevance? Are activities challenging enough? Is the content too difficult?

If you are convinced that the problems lie with particular students, the sooner you address the disruptive behaviour, the better would be for the sake of other students who want to learn. We recommend the following interventions:

- ▶ Be firm and fair. Don't overreact.
- ▶ Be assertive and confront the situation. Don't allow annoying or bad behaviour to linger in the hope that it will just 'go away'. Use positive confrontation to state your concern about unsettling or disruptive behaviour. Self-disclosure can also be useful, e.g. "I find it difficult to teach when you keep talking". Remind disruptive students about the impact of their behaviour on students who want to learn.
- ▶ Ask the students why they are not co-operating after class. Students may provide you with some valuable insights!
- ▶ Stop teaching until students settle down. Those who want to learn are likely to put pressure on those students who are being disruptive.
- ▶ Review your groundrules with the students as a reminder of their commitments or you may need to work out a new set of groundrules.
- ▶ Always praise good work and good behaviour. It is surprising how well students respond to praise.

## And if this doesn't work

- ▶ Discuss with colleagues for assistance and solution.
- ▶ Consult the Student Counsellors or Student Development Officers on your campus.
- ▶ Ask CLT staff for their opinions and advice.

## Things To Do In The First Few Days

Beginnings are important and especially on the first time you meet a new class. There is a lot for both you and the students to learn, particularly those in their first year. First-year students may have to make new friends, familiarise themselves with a new environment, and possibly adjust to a different approach to teaching and learning than what they have previously experienced. Students in their second and third years are also adjusting to get used to new teachers and new subjects.

In this section we focus on things you can do at the beginning of a module that will create a positive learning environment and help students adjust to life and study on campus.

### Introducing yourself to the class

If you want to build a relationship with your students, then let them know about you. Despite what they think, teachers are REAL PEOPLE! So what is appropriate to tell them (or let them find out)? Some of you may use "fun" approach that will help the students to get to know you. Others may like to be more traditional in how they go about this. Whatever your approach, here are some worthwhile things to cover when you meet students for the first time:

- ▶ Your name
- ▶ Education and work experience
- ▶ Your teaching approach
- ▶ How and when to contact you
- ▶ Your interests and your life

Think carefully about what personal details are appropriate, or that you are prepared to reveal.

### Students meeting other students

Campus can be a lonely place for new students (and sometimes for new staff too!). In the first few days, it will be very important for your students to begin to build up relationships with the members of their class. If you can provide opportunities for your students to begin to get to know each other, you will make them more comfortable with their learning environment, and you will also start to develop the atmosphere of your class as one where communal learning can happen.

#### Group work

In your first few lessons make sure that you include a lot of group work. To ensure that the students get to work with a variety of personalities, have them change groups each session.

- ▶ Interview
- ▶ Interesting facts
- ▶ True or false

## **Whole class activities**

As well as group work, you could include some activities that involve everyone in the class to facilitate interactions; and activities that involve all of the students mingling among each other to exchange information or to interview each other.

## **Learning about your students**

### **Before your first lesson**

Before you meet your class you should try to get a general demographic idea about your students. Speak to the senior or more experienced colleagues to find out some typical characteristics of your students, such as:

- ▶ Age
- ▶ Previous learning experience
- ▶ Behaviour
- ▶ Proficiency of English
- ▶ Stresses
- ▶ Interests
- ▶ Motivations

### **At the beginning of the course**

Make sure you spend time learning all of your students' names. Here are some activities you can use to start learning their names in the first lesson:

#### ▶ Name circle

All the students stand in a circle. The first student says his name. The next student continues. Go around the whole class until the last student in the circle has to say the name of every student before his/her own. It works, every time, and it provides an opportunity for the students to start helping each other.

## Helping Students Learn about the Module

### Module overview

For many, or perhaps all of your students, your subject will be new to them and quite different from the subjects they have been learning in school. For some of your students who have just started on the course, you may find that your subject was not the course they initially elected to do.

Because of this you must make sure that you give your students, in the first few lessons, a good sense of the nature of your course and what it is about.

Talk to the students and excite them with the following brain teasers about your subject:

- ▶ What is it?
- ▶ What are the reasons for studying it?
- ▶ Why do you like it?
- ▶ What jobs does this module prepare you for?
  - Perhaps take in some classified advertisements from the newspaper and see which jobs are relevant to your subject.
- ▶ Why is the subject important in Hong Kong or in the world in general?
- ▶ What are the links to other subjects?
- ▶ How can they get help with any problems they encounter in the course?

### Module outline

A starting point for explaining to your students what they will be learning in the course is to give them a copy of the module. You will be provided with a copy of this for yourself, which you can adapt for your students, or you may be given a copy that is already designed for your students to keep as reference throughout the year. Encourage your students to keep the module outline and use it as a way to monitor their progress through the topics that have to be covered. When you give out the outline, remind your students:

#### Sections

Show your students how the sections is divided up, how these different topics are connected and how they will progress through them. Try to give them an idea of how long you plan to spend on each section.

#### Assessment

Show them the assessment requirements and criteria and draw their attention to the important dates and points.

## **Flexibility**

Point out to the students that some sections of the module syllabus are more important, or more difficult than others. Tell the students which parts will be covered in class and indicate to them which sections they will have to study on their own.

## **Textbook overview**

If your module has a set text, it is a good idea to give the students a quick overview of the book in the first few lessons. It is important that they understand the skills involved in using a textbook. You may be surprised at how many students are not familiar with using elements such as the index, glossary, contents, chapter summaries, headings and reference lists.

A good way to introduce all of these is with a short quiz that draws attention to them.

## **Short subject quiz**

To help provide a general introduction to your subject in a fun way, it is a good idea to run a short quiz in your first or second lesson that shows your students how your subject already affects their lives. With some of the classes you may be teaching in VTC, you can't assume that the students have a great amount (or any) of previous knowledge from studying the subject.



## Setting Ground Rules to Students

### Start as you mean to continue

The experience of meeting a new teacher for the first time for students is one of beginning to learn what his/her style, characteristics, expectations and demands are. That is why it is vitally important that in the very first lesson you start using the teaching style and method that you intend to use throughout the course.

- ▶ If you intend to use group work, then put the students in groups.
- ▶ If you want discussions and debates, start to nurture that atmosphere immediately.
- ▶ If you want your students to be open in asking you questions or querying things that they do not understand, build in tasks to your first lesson that encourage them to do so.

In this way, your students will not be surprised, and will be less reluctant when you ask them to behave in the way you expect.

### Ground rules

Very early in the course it is extremely helpful to establish a set of rules, negotiated between yourself and your students, on the kinds of acceptable or expected behaviour for both the students and the teacher. Doing this will:

- ▶ Provide students with knowledge about expectations, e.g. attendance, behaviour, and participation.
- ▶ Provide teachers with knowledge about expectations, e.g. advice and instructions.
- ▶ Reduce uncertainty.
- ▶ Facilitate a more productive learning environment.

### Establishing ground rules

First of all, you must decide what is important to you as a teacher, what are your bottom lines of behaviour and participation.

You can also use rules as a way of showing your students that they have responsibility for their own learning. Use discussion and group activities for your students to think about what helps them learn, and how they can establish rules to facilitate this. This is also an opportunity to establish ways in which the students can act if they are dissatisfied.

Review your rules from time to time to make sure that they are still relevant.

Here is a suggestion of a sequence that you can go through to set up ground rules with your students.

- ▶ Give a couple of examples of ground rules - one about behaviour (e.g. 'arrive in class on time') and one about learning expectations (e.g. 'when you don't understand, ask questions; ask your classmates, or your teacher').
- ▶ Discuss with the students what other ground rules would be appropriate to best facilitate their learning (perhaps give them time to devise some rules in groups).
- ▶ Encourage them to think about both behavioural ground rules and educational expectations.
- ▶ Give the students time to think in groups about what ground rules are appropriate to require of you.
- ▶ Agree on a final list of rules.
- ▶ Draw your ground rules up on a poster, save them onto a PowerPoint slide, or print them on a paper so that you can display them in class, and refer to them in future.

## My First Lesson Plan

Here is an example of a possible lesson plan for the first lesson in any subject.

**Aims:**

- ▶ To introduce the teacher to the students
- ▶ To introduce the students to the teacher and each other
- ▶ To introduce the course and create a learning environment
- ▶ To provide a brief review of the students' previous knowledge in this subject

**Duration:**

- ▶ 1 hour

Time	Content	Strategy	Resources
15 mins	<p><b>1. Name game and register</b></p> <p>Play a game to acquaint yourself and the students with everybody's name, e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Name circle</li> <li>▶ Memory aid game</li> <li>▶ Registers</li> </ul>	Teacher → student → student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Ball</li> <li>▶ Copies of the register</li> </ul>
10 mins	<p><b>2. Introduce the teacher</b></p> <p>Introduce yourself in a fun way or traditional way.</p>	Q/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Depends on activities</li> </ul>
15 mins	<p><b>3. Introduction to the students</b></p> <p>Use a fun activity to allow the students to introduce themselves to each other and to you.</p>	Q/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Depends on activities</li> </ul>
10 mins	<p><b>4. Ground rules</b></p> <p>The teacher facilitates students to establish ground rules.</p>	Q/A Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Flip board, PowerPoint</li> </ul>
10 mins	<p><b>5. Introduction to the module materials</b></p> <p>Go through all the necessary steps relating to the administration of this module by looking at the module outline and assessment.</p>	Teacher → student Explanation; Q/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Copy of module outline and assessment</li> </ul>

## How Do I Prepare My Lessons?

Well-planned lessons help teachers to teach in an effective manner and increase the likelihood that students will learn. In this section, we will introduce:

- ▶ The importance of learning outcomes in lesson planning
- ▶ How learning objectives should be written
- ▶ How to draw up a lesson plan

### Lesson planning

In planning a lesson, it is common to see teachers, in particular less experienced teachers, trying to fill up their lesson plan with a list of topics that they intend to teach. However, what they actually expect students to learn is often not included. Lesson plan also provides students with clear expectations and to help us, as teachers, to decide on the teaching content and strategies, learning objectives are most important.

### Learning outcomes

'Expected Learning Outcomes' describes what learners are expected to be able to do (achieve) as a result of teaching and learning.

Here are some examples of learning outcomes :

- ▶ At the end of this lesson, students will be able to list the peripherals of a personal computer.
- ▶ Given a 3-page handwritten manuscript, students will use Tsang-jei to type the manuscript within 10 minutes with fewer than three errors.
- ▶ Given a battery, light bulb and socket, and pieces of wire, students will be able to construct an electric circuit by connecting wires to battery and sockets and testing the lighting of the bulb, with 100% accuracy.

### Teaching and learning activities

Besides learning outcomes, 'Teaching and Learning Activities' (TLAs) are also important to the success of a lesson. TLAs can be teacher-directed, peer-directed or self-directed. Each of these types of activity engages learners in different scenarios. The following involves teacher-directed activities:

- ▶ Lectures
- ▶ Tutorials
- ▶ Laboratory sessions
- ▶ Demonstration

Peer-directed activities are often set up by the teacher and then left to the students to run or do outside of the classroom. They involve:

- ▶ Project work
- ▶ Problem-solving groups
- ▶ Learning partners

Self-directed activities involve:

- ▶ Independent learning and study activities
- ▶ Research (WWW search, library search, etc.)

You may like to consider the following points when designing activities:

- ▶ Do the TLAs you have designed involve students actively in the learning process?
- ▶ Do they arouse student interest?
- ▶ Do they encourage different levels of learning and interaction among students?
- ▶ Do they help to achieve the learning outcomes agreed?

## Drawing up a lesson plan

After you have decided on the content, the learning outcomes, the TLAs and the resources to be used, you can then start to draw up a plan for your lesson with the following components:

- ▶ Topic to be taught (extracted from module syllabus)
- ▶ Learning outcomes
- ▶ Level / No. of students (e.g. Year 1 / 40)
- ▶ Prerequisites of students (what do students know/need to know before they come to the lesson)
- ▶ Duration of a lesson
- ▶ Order of content to be taught
- ▶ Strategies to be used (method, teaching & learning activities, etc.)
- ▶ Resources / media (worksheets, PowerPoint, etc.)
- ▶ Time allocation for each sub-section

## Structure of a lesson

A lesson is always structured by arranging the teaching content in the following order:

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Main body
- ▶ Ending

### Introduction

To make the introduction more effective, consider the following:

- ▶ Use current events, interesting topics, demonstration of examples, etc. to draw your students' attention.
- ▶ Give your students a short quiz or discussion on homework, to review the previous lesson.
- ▶ Present them with your lesson outcomes and/or a list of key questions to outline the upcoming lesson.
- ▶ Discuss with them how the upcoming lesson relates to other parts of the module.

## **Main body**

The main body of your teaching content should be split into main points and organised in a logical order. Here are some important strategies for teaching the main points. These will help the students to follow you and better understand the lesson:

- ▶ Move from
  - ◆ simple to more complex
  - ◆ concrete to abstract
  - ◆ what the students know to what they don't know
  - ◆ generalisations to particular examples
- ▶ Signposts and signals
  - ◆ frame (clarify) beginnings and endings (tell students when you are moving onto a new idea or finishing with a concept)
  - ◆ tell students to write down important points
  - ◆ repeat/reframe difficult points
- ▶ Bring teaching to life
  - ◆ use real-life examples and cases
  - ◆ provide demonstrations, practice and application

## **Ending**

The ending is the last, but not the least, important component of a lesson. A good ending helps students to consolidate what they have learned and helps them to be better prepared for the upcoming lesson. You may like to consider the following for ending your lessons:

- ▶ Ask students to do a quiz or a summary, to compare their notes, to fill in a feedback form, or review main points of the lesson.
- ▶ Draw a conclusion or encapsulate the main points in a vivid case or example.
- ▶ Foreshadow the next session, set homework, etc.

## **Example**

The following 'real-life' example illustrates how a one-hour lesson is planned. Depending on your individual needs, you may like to draw up a more detailed lesson plan in which all the teaching content and materials are included.

## LESSON PLAN

- Topic** : Solve quadratic equations in one unknown
- Learning outcomes** : At the end of this session, students will be able to:
- ▶ define a quadratic equation
  - ▶ solve quadratic equations by factorisation
  - ▶ construct and solve quadratic equations and apply them to practical problems
- Year / No. of Students** : CVS Year I students/40
- Prerequisite of Students** : Can solve simple algebraic equations & factorisation
- Duration** : ONE hour

Time	Content	Strategy	Resources
5 mins	<b>I. Introduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Outcomes of this session</li> <li>▶ Recapitulate prior knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explanation</li> <li>▶ Q/A &amp; examples                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. solving a simple algebraic equation</li> <li>b. factorization</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	▶ PowerPoint
5 mins	<b>II. Definition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Definition of a quadratic equation</li> <li>▶ Examples</li> </ul>	▶ Explanation	▶ PowerPoint
10 mins 15 mins	<b>III. Method of solving by factorisation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Demonstration with examples of finding solutions</li> <li>▶ Activity 1</li> <li>▶ Discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explanation</li> <li>▶ Practice</li> <li>▶ Q/A, discussion</li> </ul>	▶ PowerPoint ▶ Worksheet /TLP
10 mins 10 mins	<b>IV. Applications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Demonstration with examples of constructing equations &amp; finding solutions to practical problems</li> <li>▶ Activity 2</li> <li>▶ Discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explanation</li> <li>▶ Practice</li> <li>▶ Q/A, discussion &amp; feedback</li> </ul>	▶ PowerPoint ▶ Worksheet /TLP
5 mins	<b>V. Ending</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Activity 3: further practice</li> <li>▶ Discussion</li> <li>▶ Conclusion</li> <li>▶ Explanation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Practice</li> <li>▶ Q/A, discussion</li> </ul>	▶ PowerPoint ▶ Worksheet /TLP

## Designing Teaching Resources

Research shows that we retain 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, but 50% of what we see and hear. Therefore, an effective teaching aid should be memorable after the lesson. Numerous teaching aids and resources are available to enhance teaching effectiveness. The most commonly used teaching resources are listed below:

### PowerPoint

Among the different available IT tools, PowerPoint is the most popular one used by teachers. If you want to design PowerPoint slides to enhance your teaching, here are some guidelines to follow:

#### **Title page**

- ▶ Centre the title
- ▶ Use bold-face letters
- ▶ Use at least 28 points for title
- ▶ Use short, concise, meaningful titles
- ▶ Limit titles to one or two lines of text
- ▶ Spell out all words, avoid abbreviations

#### **Slide background**

- ▶ Keep a simple background, avoid using photographs or bright, complex designs
- ▶ Keep the background consistent throughout the presentation
- ▶ Use cool tones such as the blue, green, or purple families
- ▶ Insert slide presentation number on lower-right-hand corner



**Text : font size**

- ▶ Use text sizes larger than 12 point for screen display
- ▶ Use text sizes larger than 20 point for presentation with projector
- ▶ Different fonts of the same size vary in readability
  - This is **Arial** 18 point.
  - This is **Times New Roman** 18 point.

**Text : mixture of cases**

- ▶ Use a mix of upper-and lower-case letters
- ▶ Avoid using upper case for the whole screen

**Text : text amount**

- ▶ Short-term memory limits the number of chunks we can read and recall
- ▶ Divide or group 'long text' into digestible 'chunks'

**Visuals**

- ▶ Choose appropriate and content-related visuals to convey messages
- ▶ Break down complex graphics into simpler parts
- ▶ Present visuals simultaneously with corresponding text

**Colours**

- ▶ Use different colours to draw attention on important components
- ▶ Limit the number of colours on the screen at a single time, no more than four colours, if possible
- ▶ Contrast between foreground and background improves dimensional quality

**Embedding animation, sound clips and special effects**

- ▶ Use animation and sound clips to enhance effect only when necessary
- ▶ Special effects should not be overdone
- ▶ Always check the order of animation and sound clips before presentation

## Student handouts

Consider the following points before you design the handouts for your students:

**Headings**

- ▶ Provide headings to allow learners to skim for an overview and to retrieve information later
- ▶ Use headings to show the organisation of the content (e.g. start each new page with a main heading)
- ▶ Use side headings (words in left margin) to call attention to important concepts
- ▶ Use different type style for headings

**Writing style**

- ▶ State main idea/theme at the beginning of text
- ▶ Put topic sentences at the beginning of each paragraph
- ▶ Use simple sentences and writing style
- ▶ Include technical terms with definitions so they won't be misconstrued or misspelled

**Page layout**

- ▶ Provide ample white space to facilitate initial comprehension, note taking, and location of information for review
- ▶ Increase the space between lines in note-taking handouts to increase the number of words noted
- ▶ Be clear and consistent in page layout

**Type style**

- ▶ Choose typeface styles with simple designs, avoid using comic typeface
- ▶ Use a space and a half between lines
- ▶ Limit the number of words per line

**Visuals**

- ▶ Keep visuals simple
- ▶ Direct attention to visuals through questions and activities
- ▶ Place visuals as close to the related text as possible
- ▶ Use larger visuals if more detail is required

## How Do I Actively Involve My Students?

### Getting Participation

If you wish your students to participate actively in the lessons and in their learning, it is important that you start involving them from the very first lesson.

When you plan your first lesson for the year, include the elements given below and continue to use them to ensure that your students participate fully.

#### Engaging tasks

No matter what subject you are teaching, it is possible to design and use engaging tasks to motivate your students to work and arouse their interest in the subject.

It would be very useful for you to develop a set of task types that you can use with a variety of course content.

Below is a brief summary of some task types that you can use:

#### ▶ Presentation

It is highly motivating for students to perform well if they know that they are going to give a presentation of their results or findings at the end of the activity. This will also develop presentation skills useful for students as they proceed through their education into the workplace.

#### ▶ Brainstorming

When your students are sitting in groups, you have lots of opportunities to mobilise them and brainstorm their ideas on a particular topic. Brainstorming is very useful for:

- ◆ Generating ideas
- ◆ Creating interest in a topic
- ◆ Testing prior knowledge
- ◆ Showing students the extent of their current knowledge
- ◆ Developing team-work skills

#### ▶ Problem solving

Rather than simply lecturing information, or asking students to read passages from a textbook, it is much more involving, productive, and memorable for your students if they are engaged in problem-solving activities.

You can follow these steps for a problem-solving task:

- ◆ Establish a problem with an uncertain outcome.
- ◆ Give the students time to work out the problem using whatever means they have available (whether taught or intuitive).
- ◆ Accept the answers that they give.
- ◆ Analyse the process that was involved in coming to the solution.
- ◆ Look at what solutions are actually correct or acceptable.

#### ▶ Resource-based learning

This activity is similar to problem solving for it involves the students to find answers for their questions or problems.

Provide your students with the resources they need to find the answer to a problem, or to gather information on a particular subject. These resources include:

- ◆ Textbooks and subject literature
- ◆ Examples of previous studies
- ◆ Time to do library searches
- ◆ The Internet

The teacher's role is to help the students to realise the best time management and information collection method.

#### ▶ **Debates**

To extend the group work in your class, try to think of topics in your subject that you could use for a class debate involving all the groups in class.

As well as getting your students highly involved in a topic, a debate will help them to develop their active-thinking and information-management skills.

#### **Personalisation**

Relate the subject matter to the students' own lives and will be much more involved in what they learn, and much more willing to participate. This also reveals personal information about the students, and encourages a friendly atmosphere in the class.

Try to relate the materials to the students' own interests, whether that is pop music, film stars, sports, etc.

#### **Changes of focus**

In order to get participation in a lesson, you need to keep the students interested. One of the best ways of doing this is to ensure that you include some changes of focus in your lesson. With such changes you can also move away from the traditional role of students passively accepting knowledge from the teacher, gradually taking yourself out of the central focus of the lesson.

Try to include a variety of the following in each lesson:

#### ▶ **Individual work**

This provides quiet reflective time, allowing students to work intensively on assimilating knowledge.

#### ▶ **Student to student (pair)**

Students work with a partner when solving a problem, answering questions, sharing information etc.

#### ▶ **Student to student (group)**

Group work gives excellent opportunities for the students to share their knowledge, share and solve problems, brainstorm ideas, participate in discussion and develop team-working skills.

#### ▶ **Student to student (whole class)**

Examples of this are student presentations, student-led activities, student questionnaires, surveys, project work, etc

#### ▶ **Teacher to student (individual)**

Every teacher should take as many opportunities as possible to move around the class and monitor the progress of each individual student on particular tasks or activities. This helps develop rapport with your students as well as giving you clear ideas about individual student's abilities.

▶ **Teacher to student (group)**

When group work is used in class, the role of the teacher is that of a facilitator. In this, the teacher should move from group to group, checking on their progress, helping with any problems, encouraging the generation of ideas and posing new questions and problems if they are progressing well.

▶ **Teacher to student (whole class)**

The classic teaching model of the teacher leading the whole class is, of course, still very valid.

The teacher can lead by:

- ◆ Providing unavailable information or new developments
- ◆ Illuminating and making sense of more difficult material
- ◆ Adding his/her own experience

## Breaks

Generally, the attention span is only fifteen to twenty minutes. Therefore, the students cannot be expected to maintain concentration without getting distracted when a lesson exceeds an hour. In order to allow them to relax, change focus and break the strain of a long session of hard work with a short activity or task during the lesson.

## Atmosphere

If the atmosphere in your lesson is tense, serious or formal, it will be difficult for the students to learn. When the students are relaxed, they will be much more willing to participate in the lesson. Therefore, try to promote an atmosphere that is less serious, more enjoyable, and non-threatening.

- ▶ Don't patronise your students. Treat them as intelligent young people.
- ▶ Don't be harsh when controlling the behaviour of your students. Allow for times when the class can be noisy (within reason). Also allow 'I don't know' and 'I haven't finished yet' to be acceptable answers.

### Humour

Humour can create a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom and increase your students' enjoyment of the lesson. Your students are young people who like to have fun, have a good sense of humour and like to joke. Be good-humoured and don't stop this from happening.

Also, let yourself have moments when you share a joke with your students.

### Enthusiasm

Your enthusiasm will increase the students' participation considerably.

## Presenting a Task

For your tasks to be effective, you must make sure that the students understand exactly what they are expected to do. What you must do is to ensure that you give very clear instructions.

### Giving instructions

Early in your course, start the practice of putting your instructions on a board or PowerPoint.

For each task make sure that you tell your students:

- ▶ What (precisely) they are to do.
- ▶ How they are to do it, e.g. appoint a secretary, brainstorm possible answers, construct a mind map.
- ▶ Why you want them to do it, e.g. 'to check your understanding of the topic', 'to gather extra information', 'to test this theory'.
- ▶ When it has to be completed. This might involve a time limit for short tasks or a deadline date for longer tasks.

## Questioning Techniques

It is important to have a range of different questioning techniques to ensure that you are able to get your students to answer the questions you ask them, and to have your students ask you questions about the things that they don't understand.

As already mentioned, some elements that go into encouraging your students to speak out in class are engaging tasks, encouraging participation, and changes of focus.

Let's look at some other elements that will help.

### Plan well

- ▶ Decide in advance what strategies suit each task.
- ▶ Recognise what parts of the lesson will be difficult and anticipate questions and errors.

### Monitor well

Monitoring of individual students is essential to provide opportunities for students to bring up queries and problems in a situation that doesn't involve speaking out in front of the whole class. By monitoring, you can also see the students' written work and get a better understanding of their knowledge without it being necessary for them to ask.

### Try to make the answering process as easy as possible

Your students will be better able to answer your questions if they are not intimidated or stressed by the questions. It will aid their learning process if they are given the opportunity to attempt or to fully answer your questions using whatever resources are available to them.

## Stimulating Students to Think and Reflect

Teachers have to talk in lessons. But unless you plan carefully you can be trapped into talking too much and students become passive. Also, you want to provide as many opportunities as possible for students to think for themselves - and with others - rather than you thinking for them. Below are some ideas and strategies that get students involved. They can be useful for individuals, pairs, or small groups of students.

### **"Read some material"**

Ask students to read part of a handout and note their response to it. Alternatively, ask them to read from the PowerPoint. This may be followed by a small group discussion.

### **"Write a question"**

Ask students individually or in pairs/groups, to write a question about some aspect of their recent work. These can be dealt with in a variety of ways. An effective way is to put them in a bag, draw them out at random and get the whole group to suggest answers.

### **"Solve a problem/answer a question"**

Set a problem or a question based on a lecture, a chapter from a text, etc. Ask students to solve the problem or answer the question, individually, or in small groups, or individually followed by group work.

### **"Give an example"**

Ask students to invent examples to demonstrate a concept or theory they have just been taught. See how many they can come up with.

### **"List the pros and cons"**

Ask students to consider the pros and cons, or strengths and weaknesses of a theory or of a statement that you give them rather than uncritically accepting it. Follow-up with a debate.

### **"Watch a video-clip"**

Show a short piece of video, giving clear instructions on what to look for- 'What were the main ideas'; 'Note down three examples of...' Then discuss as a class.

### **"Read your notes"**

Ask students to read their recent lecture notes or summary of a chapter in a text. Invite students to exchange and discuss notes so that they can add to their own notes.

### **"Go and find this out"**

Send the students off to the library to complete a small research assignment.