

## 9 | How do I Choose the Right Teaching Strategies?

Choosing a teaching and learning strategy is not an easy task. Strategies need to be chosen carefully in order to contribute most effectively to student learning. Anytime students are actively engaged in learning, exploring new ideas, and grasping the conceptual nature of the discipline, they are learning in a deeper and more meaningful way to apply that knowledge and those skills to other parts of their lives. The following information in this section outlines some strategies that may be used to enhance student learning.

### Lecturing: Ten Things to Remember

*Adapted from Cashin, W.E. Effective Lecturing. [www.theideacenter.org](http://www.theideacenter.org)*

1. Lecturing is especially useful to convey knowledge, but is not well suited for higher levels of learning.
2. Decide what you want the students to know and be able to do as a result of the lecture.
3. Outline the lecture notes — first your major points, then the minor points that elaborate on or explain each major point.
4. Choose relevant, concrete examples, in advance of the lecture, selecting examples familiar and meaningful to the students.
5. Find out about the students, their backgrounds, and their goals.
6. Permit students to stop you to ask relevant questions, make comments, or ask for review.
7. Intersperse periodic summaries within the lecture.
8. Start with a question, problem, current event, or something that just grabs the students' attention.

9. Watch the students. If you think they don't understand you, stop and ask them questions.
10. Use active learning techniques. Use technological aids, such as multimedia presentations.

## **Encouraging Student Participation: Why It Pays to Sweat the Small Stuff**

*By Mary Ellen Weimer*

A recent classroom observation reminded me that student participation can be encouraged and supported by attention to small but important presentational details. In this article I have highlighted these details in the form of questions, and I hope that you'll use them to reflect on the behaviors you're using when seeking, listening, and responding to student contributions.

### **How often do you ask a question and when do you ask it?**

How often does depend on the teacher but there's evidence from more than one study that a lot of us over estimate how often we ask questions. How often should you seek student contributions? More than you do? Do you ask after you've covered a chunk of content and are thinking about how much you still have to get through? Do you ask at the end of the period when a lot of students are hoping nobody says anything so they can get out a couple of minutes early?

### **How long do you wait?**

How much time passes after you've solicited input before you move on or offer some verbal follow up? There's research here too, and the findings are pretty consistent. Most faculty wait somewhere between two and three seconds before they do something else—ask the question again, call on somebody, rephrase the question, answer the question themselves, or decide nobody has anything to say and move on. When asked, most faculty claim that they wait 10 to 12 seconds. Time passes slowly when you've asked a question and there's no sign of a response—it's an awkward, uncomfortable time for the teacher and the students. But waiting longer has its rewards.

See more at: <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/encouraging-student-participation-why-it-pays-to-sweat-the-small-stuff/#sthash.TfSUaHpz.dpuf>

## **Classroom Management: Finding the Balance Between Too Rigid and Too Flexible**

*By: Maryellen Weimer*

For quite some time now I've been interested in a widely held set of assumptions faculty make about the need to assert control at the beginning of a course. The argument goes something

like this: When a course starts, the teacher needs to set the rules and clearly establish who's in charge. If the course goes well, meaning students abide by the rules and do not challenge the teacher's authority, then the teacher can gradually ease up and be a bit looser about the rules. The rationale behind this approach rests on the assumption that if a teacher loses control of a class, it is very hard to regain the upper hand. In these cases, student behaviors have compromised the climate for learning so seriously that the teacher has an ethical responsibility to intervene and reassert control.

But these examples are also extreme and, in my experience, rare. Far more common are classroom environments where the teacher is so in control that students passively perform what look like learning tasks (taking notes, feigning attention, etc.). Lately I've been wondering how much control is necessary to set the conditions for learning and whether that amount of control doesn't need to be offset by a certain amount of freedom so that students can make the learning experience meaningful to them. And then there's the question as to how teacher control affects the motivation to learn? Do students learn more or learn better in classrooms that are rule bound?

More fundamentally, I've been wondering if those assumptions about needing to establish control at the outset are supported by evidence, experiential or otherwise. What happens if you don't? Do students automatically rise up and take control? Why do I have such trouble imagining students doing that? They seem so beaten down already.

More sinister are questions of whether teachers don't benefit more from the control they assert than students do, even though most faculty I know would go to their graves arguing that they only control for the students' sake. A tightly controlled classroom environment certainly makes for safer, saner teaching. If all potential challenges to authority are headed off at the pass, then the teacher can devote full attention to the content, and isn't that where the teacher's expertise really shines? And so the classroom becomes a place that showcases teaching more than learning?

My suspicion is that most teachers overreact to potential threats. Why? Do they question whether they can respond successfully to challenges? Are they in denial about the vulnerabilities that are inherently a part of teaching? Do they like this feeling of control? Depending on the teacher, all these answers may be possibilities, but I think for more teachers, it's a matter of not trusting students or having lost faith in all of them because of the actions of a few.

See more at: <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/classroom-management-finding-the-balance-between-too-rigid-and-too-flexible/#sthash.7ly0j7xa.dpuf>

## Classroom Management Tips for Regaining Control of the Classroom

By: Rick Sheridan

Losing control of the classroom can be one of the most frustrating and intimidating experiences for both new and experienced teachers. Losing control can happen in several different ways. The most common would be where the class is distracted. This could be from a situation outside the classroom such as noisy conversation in the hall, or from an event elsewhere that students find out about, such as a rumor of the football coach getting fired. Losing control can also happen within the classroom, such as when one student monopolizes the discussion, or where there is a general lack of interest in the lecture, and many students are obviously not paying attention. Here are nine possible ways to regain students' attention.

1. Have a distinct sounding object, such as a bell or cymbal. As long as you don't use it too often, this can be an effective way to bring student's attention back to the class discussion.
2. Signal nonverbally, and make eye contact with students when they hold side conversations, start to fall asleep, or show contempt for the lecture material. You can also use hand signals to encourage a wordy student to finish what he or she is saying, or make a time out "T" sign with your fingers to stop unwanted behavior.
3. Remember what your parents told you when a sibling was bothering you. Sometimes it is best to ignore mildly negative behaviors. Often the behavior will disappear if you do not pay any attention to it.
4. Discuss very negative behaviors in private. During break or after class firmly request a change in behavior of those students who are disruptive

See more at: <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/classroom-management-tips-for-regaining-control-of-the-classroom/#sthash.pxqEbXcL.dpuf>