

Learning, Teaching & Innovative Technologies Center



The following teaching tip was taken from the University of California - Berkeley's web site "Berkeley Compendium: Suggestions for Teaching with Excellence," 9/2005. If you would like to visit the site for other tips, the web address is: <http://teaching.berkeley.edu/compendium/>.

Focus your lectures on a few main points

- Explain clearly
- Emphasize conceptual understanding
- Emphasize the main point
- Help students follow explanations or difficult concepts

YOU MAY WISH TO CONSIDER:

- Focusing your lecture on a few main points and omitting unnecessary exceptions, complexities or details.
- Limit the amount of material covered by a single lecture. An error made by many faculty members is to include too much information in a single class period. One economics professor noted: "I generally focus on three main points and repeat these in various ways throughout my lecture. Beginning undergraduates do not need to be exposed to the intricacies and complexities of a discipline; indeed, introducing them to these will only confuse them. Introductory course are best taught by focusing on the fundamentals, using generalizations, and avoiding too many exceptions to the rule."
- Do not get into complex debates with undergraduates because many are not sophisticated enough to appreciate or understand the complexities.
- Rephrase explanations of major points several times from different perspectives or in different words.
- Empathize with students' difficulties in learning the material for the first time.
- Color-code difficult lecture notes and make a special effort to make those points clear.
- Ask yourself questions about your lecture notes in particular areas students might have trouble with. Ask "What examples might make this more clear?"
- Make notes on what worked well in class and those that didn't.
- Keep records of the most commonly made errors on tests and assignments and use that information to make modifications to your teaching.