

# Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Instructional Development  
Unit UWI, Mona



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*The New Learning Science: Improving Teaching in Higher Education*

## Scaffolding

The new learning science tells us that the “sage on the stage” approach to teaching courses, which has been used and continues to be used extensively in colleges and university in many countries across the globe has not been very successful in helping learners grasp new concepts and skills. We know that learning takes place when students are actively engaged with the material or the content of the lesson; goal-directed, receiving targeted and meaningful feedback on their work and of course, when students learn to monitor their own progress. This is not the typical approach to learning in a large lecture class. In a university classroom, the lecturer is the person who is usually continuously engaged. Some students will take notes; others might be texting or doing something else. Learners need to be actively involved with the course content. One approach to ensure that they are actively involved with the course content is to provide scaffolding. When we provide scaffolding for our students we offer structured explanations, detailed examples, problem solving frameworks, progressive hints and perhaps frequent directed practice. Scaffolding works when teaching sessions are lead by learning facilitators who are well prepared. Scaffolding improves learning when university teachers create space for individual consultations with their students. Scaffolding works when the student’s progress is being monitored with frequent and rigorous assessment.

### Scaffolding Strategies

Here are some scaffolding strategies that you might want to try. Perhaps you have tried some of these strategies before and just want to be reminded about how they can be made to work effectively in your classroom.

#### Special points of interest:

- The **Teaching Tips Newsletter** is a publication of the Instructional Development Unit (IDU) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/idu/>) as well as in the office of the IDU.
- If you have an area that you would like to explore using this medium, do not hesitate to contact us at the IDU.

### Show and Tell



The age whole concept of “show and tell” has been a powerful teaching and learning strategy in all areas of education. Show and tell or modeling for our students is an important aspect of teaching and it certainly works well in providing scaffolding for learners. When we demonstrate to students in tangible ways what they are expected to do, they appreciate it, they will appropriate it and they usually act with it in mind.

Show and tell or demonstrating some aspect of the lesson can be done by using the fish bowl (for instance) as a teaching strategy. In employing this strategy, a small group of learners will sit in the centre of the room and allow the rest of the class to encircle them. They will proceed to discuss an issue or in this case (show and tell) will model the activity. The small group will model the activity or show how it is done for the larger group.

It is always good for you to show students the outcome of an activity before it is done. Even in crafting a persuasive essay, it is good to have a model and then show step by step, how the complete product might be developed.

In the act of facilitating learning (the teaching act), it is also good to model the thought process. This can be accomplished by using think alouds. As you read a text, solve a problem or design a product, expose the thinking process to your class.

## Tap into Prior Knowledge



Learning is always more efficiently done when prior knowledge can be used to advance new concepts. Accordingly, as a facilitator of learning you will ask students to share experiences, hunches and ideas about the topic or the general content of the class. They should try to connect these concepts to their own lives and to experiences they have encountered.

### Discussion Time



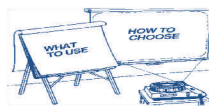
Students need time to process ideas and this can be effectively done as they share their ideas with each other. Build a discussion component into your class for instance, think-share-pair, turn and talk, triad teams or some other discussion group approach.

### Vocabulary Extension



In many of our classes, we are confronted with new words or the technical vocabulary associated with the area or the discipline. The idea of a vocabulary extender is always good for active teaching and learning. In fact you can assign someone or group to come prepared to creatively deal with new vocabulary or technical vocabulary (the vocabulary extension officer/s) in creative ways, for instance using the fish bowl.

### Visual Aids



Visual aids can come in many forms including graphic organizers, charts, pictures and even diagrams. You can insert these in PowerPoint presentations or prezi presentations or other presentations. Visual aids can be found on various web sites or a website might become the visual aid. A graphic organizer is a wonderful scaffolding tool that will help to guide learners, visually represent ideas, shape and organize the students thinking.

## Pause, Ask Questions, Pause, Review



This is a proven strategy at various levels of the education system. Students should be asked to do an assigned reading or the concept is shared verbally. There should be a pause and then a strategic question should be asked followed by a pause to provide time for learners to think deeply about the question and formulate a response. The best questions are designed ahead of time so the strategic question will most likely be better designed and work much better if it is designed ahead of time. The question should be specific and open-ended. It is always good to provide think time and if students are unable to respond, then invite or call on someone to provide a gist of the discussion or that which was questioned. You might also consider asking your students to discuss the concept/idea or aspect of the content under review with a neighbour.

### Blog with us

The IDU blog is up and running. Blog with us regularly at: <http://uwiidumona.blogspot.com/>

### 20 years of the IDU

This academic year, the IDU is celebrating 20 years of service to the UWI Mona Campus and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve as the hub of teaching and learning innovation on the campus. Look out for our celebratory activities and participate meaningfully.

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