

# Teaching Tips

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

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## Special points of interest:

- The Teaching Tips Newsletter is a publication of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the UWI, Mona.
- The newsletter is published three times during each semester and a summer edition. It provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education and is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/cetl>) as well as in the office of the CETL.
- If you need additional teaching tips on specific classroom practices please contact us.

## Using Videos in Your Courses

Videos have become an important teaching and learning tool in higher education for the face-to-face class, blended and online classrooms. In fact, they tend to be highly effective in supporting learning. However, there is no automatic approach to using videos and reaping the benefits. The videos must be appropriately designed or carefully selected and properly integrated into the course. Videos are readily found on the internet, YouTube, iTunes, BBC News etc. Videos engage learners in multiple ways. It is a medium that engages various senses of viewers especially sight and sound. In most instances, it easily generates excitement and interest in a classroom and generally, students love to see videos.

It is for the above reasons and more that more and more faculty are seeking to use videos to enhance the learning experience in their classrooms. The following are some of the ways videos have been used in the higher education classroom:

- Course Welcome
- Icebreakers
- Launching point for group discussion
- Mini-lectures
- Simulations /demonstrations
- Student projects /student-created media
- Feedback for students
- How-to videos

Generally, instructional technology should be used to enhance the teaching and learning in your classroom and similarly, videos should be used in this way. When seeking to use videos in your courses, determine the learning objective that you will want the video to help your learners to realise. Some important questions that could provide a focus for the selection or creation of the video are the following:

- What concepts or ideas are to be learned by the students in your class?
- Will the video be introduced in the class to introduce new concepts, reinforce content already taught, review aspects of the course content or extend lessons/concepts or ideas already taught?

- Is this video being introduced to provoke students to think in different ways and promote critical engagement/critical thinking about the concepts and the issues at hand?
- Is the video merely to provide simple, factual content?

Here are some recommendations concerning how you might maximise the impact of the videos you use in your classroom:

- Keep the videos short and ensure that they are targeted on the learning objectives or the learning outcomes that you want to be realised.
- Use audio and visual components of the video to provide meaningful explanations for concepts in appropriate complementary ways.
- Use signalling to help and this can be accomplished by directing attention to on-screen text or symbols that highlight important information.
- Select video or develop videos with a conversational and enthusiastic style that promotes engagement.
- Embed videos in a context of active learning and this might be accomplished or enhanced by using guiding questions, interactive components or associated activities.

# Avoid these Mistakes in Teaching

## Turning your class into a PowerPoint Show

In this university and several others, it is extremely common for lecturers to design a PowerPoint presentation for their classes. In many cases, the lecture notes are just inserted into the PowerPoint and used as a class presentation. Many lecturers spend an enormous amount of time reading the slides to their students, sometimes without providing additional explanations. Oftentimes the slides are badly constructed with large amounts of text and this might be too much for the students to follow intelligently, they often tune out. If the students do not have copies of the slides, they certainly will be at a disadvantage, however, in many cases, the slides were made available to students on OurVLE. Nevertheless, if all that is happening is a reading of the slides in class, with an occasional comment, this might be a grand waste of the students' time. This so-called lecture will descend into boredom and faculty who teach like this, soon lose their students. Clearly, students will have very little incentive to attend classes similar to the one just described. Do not turn your class into an extended slide-show. Plan activities to engage and let the students do something with the content.

## The lack of variety in the teaching strategies

It is generally accepted that lecturing is one of the least productive teaching strategies. Of course, lecturing will always have a place in the academy, but it should not be overused. Good instructors do use the lecture method and in fact, there are some outstanding lecturers who can have students sitting on the seat of their pants for the entire lecture. However, these lecturers are not the normal ones. If we chose to use PowerPoint presentations, we must also remember that an entire PowerPoint presentation with no visuals is boring. Lectures without visuals- diagrams, photographs, animations, schematics, video clips etc. are also very boring. Of course we can easily insert visuals and audio visuals into PowerPoint presentations or do a Prezi. There is a place for team. Group work in our teaching. Assigning individual work to students undercuts the rich experience provided by engagement in team/group work. In the well-structured and properly functioning group students can learn critical skills such as teamwork, leadership and conflict management. They will need these skills to succeed in life. On the other hand, it is clear that teamwork by itself will not cause the development of the important trait of independent learning. The most effective teaching will use several strategies. Oftentimes, teachers are encouraged to mix things up. Therefore, it is important to use storytelling, mini lectures, multimedia, discussion, role play, guest speakers, classroom assessment techniques (CATS) and even games to mix things up and advance learning in the classroom.

## Assigning Group Work without any individual accountability

Students and teachers are fully aware of some of the pitfalls of group work. Social loafing is rife in some groups. In many groups, one or two students do the work and all members of the group are awarded the same grade. In many instances, students learn very little in the group and the purposes for which the group was established, shared learning, peer instruction etc. are left unrealised. In some groups, these problematic experiences cause much resentment and conflict. Group work is best organized as cooperative learning. There has been much research on cooperative learning and it is highly recommended as a pedagogical strategy. It has been found to promote the development of cognitive and interpersonal skills. One important feature of this approach is individual accountability, each team member is held accountable for the success of the entire learning project and not just the individual component assigned to that learner. There are various ways that individual accountability might be realized, including the administration of an individual examination on the entire area of the syllabus covered by the project. Another approach is to assign individual grades to each team member based on how well each learner fulfilled his or her responsibilities to the team.

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