

Modified Session Packet

Dustin De Felice defelic5@msu.edu

Please email me for answers to any of these activities.

Preparation for the First Day of Class

1. My biggest concern about the first day of class is...I can address this concern by...
2. On the first day of class, the best teachers I had in college did this: The worst did this:
3. I can express enthusiasm and motivate students on the first day by.....
4. I would like students to know the following things about me:
5. I would like students to address me as:
6. My expectations for students on the first day of class are:
7. My expectations for myself on the first day of class are:
8. I will know these expectations have been met if.....
9. I can learn the following about my students on the first day of class:
10. On the first day of class, I will require the following (e.g. dvd players, sound, software, etc....)

101 THINGS YOU CAN DO THE FIRST THREE WEEKS OF CLASS

By Joyce T. Povlacs, Teaching and Learning Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Helping Students Make Transitions

1. Hit the ground running on the first day of class with substantial content.
2. Take attendance: roll call, clipboard, sign in, seating chart.
3. Introduce teaching assistants by slide, short presentation, or self-introduction.
4. Hand out an informative, artistic, and user-friendly syllabus.
5. Give an assignment on the first day to be collected at the next meeting.
6. Start laboratory experiments and other exercises the first time lab meets.
7. Call attention (written and oral) to what makes good lab practice: completing work to be done, procedures, equipment, clean up, maintenance, safety, conservation of supplies, full use of lab time.
8. Administer a [learning style inventory](#) to help students find out about themselves.
9. Direct students to the Learning Skills Center for help on basic skills.
10. Tell students how much time they will need to study for this course.
11. Hand out supplemental study aids: library use, study tips, supplemental readings and exercises.
12. Explain how to study for kind of tests you give.
13. Put in writing a limited number of ground rules regarding absence, late work, testing procedures, grading, and general decorum, and maintain these.
14. Announce office hours frequently and hold them without fail.
15. Show students how to handle learning in large classes and impersonal situations.
16. Give sample test questions.
17. Give sample test question answers.
18. Explain the difference between legitimate collaboration and academic dishonesty; be clear when collaboration is wanted and when it is forbidden.
19. Seek out a different student each day and get to know something about him or her.
20. Ask students to write about what important things are currently going on in their lives.
21. Find out about students' jobs; if they are working, how many hours a week, and what kinds of jobs they hold.

Directing Students' Attention

22. Greet students at the door when they enter the classroom.
23. Start the class on time.
24. Make a grand stage entrance to hush a large class and gain attention.
25. Give a pre-test on the day's topic.
26. Start the lecture with a puzzle, question, paradox, picture, or cartoon on slide or transparency to focus on the day's topic.
27. Elicit student questions and concerns at the beginning of the class and list these on the chalkboard to be answered during the hour.
28. Have students write down what they think the important issues or key points of the day's lecture will be.
29. Ask the person who is reading the student newspaper what is in the news today.

Challenging Students

30. Have students write out their expectations for the course and their own goals for learning.
31. Use variety in methods of presentation every class meeting.
32. Stage a figurative "coffee break" about twenty minutes into the hour; tell an anecdote, invite students to put down pens and pencils, refer to a current event, shift media.

33. Incorporate community resources: plays, concerts, the State Fair, government agencies, businesses, the outdoors.
34. Show a film in a novel way: stop it for discussion, show a few frames only, anticipate ending, hand out a viewing or critique sheet, play and replay parts.
35. Share your philosophy of teaching with your students.
36. Form a student panel to present alternative views of the same concept.
37. Stage a change-your-mind debate with students moving to different parts of the classroom to signal change in opinion during the discussion.
38. Conduct a "living" demographic survey by having students move to different parts of the classroom: size of high school, rural vs. urban, consumer preferences...
39. Tell about your current research interests and how you got there from your own beginnings in the discipline.
40. Conduct a role-play to make a point or to lay out issues.
41. Let your students assume the role of a professional in the discipline: philosopher, literary critic, biologist, agronomist, political scientist, or engineer.
42. Conduct idea-generating or brainstorming sessions to expand horizons.
43. Give students two passages of material containing alternative views to compare and contrast.
44. Distribute a list of the unsolved problems dilemmas or great questions in your discipline and invite students to claim one as their own to investigate.
45. Ask students what books they've read recently.
46. Ask what is going on in the state legislature on this subject which may affect their future.
47. Let your students see the enthusiasm you have for your subject and your love of learning.
48. Take students with you to hear guest speakers or special programs on campus.
49. Plan "scholar-gypsy" lesson or unit which shows students the excitement of discovery in your discipline.

Providing Support

50. Collect students' current telephone numbers and addresses and let them know that you may need to reach them.
51. Check out absentees. Call or write a personal note.
52. Diagnose the students' prerequisites learning by questionnaire or pre-test and give them the feedback as soon as possible.
53. Hand out study questions or study guides.
54. Be redundant. Students should hear, read or see key material at least three times.
55. Allow students to demonstrate progress in learning: summary quiz over the day's work. a written reaction to the day's material.
56. Use non-graded feedback to let students know how they are doing: post answers to ungraded quizzes and problem sets, exercises in class, oral feedback.
57. Reward behavior you want: praise, stars, honor roll, personal note.
58. Use a light touch: smile, tell a good joke, break test anxiety with a sympathetic comment.
59. Organize. Give visible structure by posting the day's "menu" on chalk- board or overhead.
60. Use multiple media: overhead, slides, film, videotape, audio tape, models, sample material.
61. Use multiple examples, in multiple media. to illustrate key points and important concepts.
62. Make appointments with all students (individually or in small groups).
63. Hand out wallet-sized telephone cards with all important telephone numbers listed: office department, resource centers, teaching assistant, lab.
64. Print all important course dates on a card that can be handed out and taped to a mirror.
65. Eavesdrop on students before or after class and join their conversation about course topics.

66. Maintain an open lab gradebook with grades kept current during lab time so that students can check their progress.
67. Check to see if any students are having problems with any academic or campus matters and direct those who are to appropriate offices or resources.
68. Tell students what they need to do to receive an "A" in your course.
69. Stop the work to find out what your students are thinking feeling and doing in their everyday lives.

Encouraging Active Learning

70. Have students write something.
71. Have students keep three-week-three-times-a-week journals in which they comment ask questions and answer questions about course topics.
72. Invite students to critique each other's essays or short answer on tests for readability or content.
73. Invite students to ask questions and wait for the response.
74. Probe student responses to questions and wait for the response.
75. Put students into pairs or "learning cells" to quiz each other over material for the day.
76. Give students an opportunity to voice opinions about the subject matter.
77. Have students apply subject matter to solve real problems.
78. Give students red, yellow, and green cards and periodically call for a vote on an issue by asking for a show of cards.
79. Roam the aisles of a large classroom and carry on running conversations with students as they work on course problems.
80. Ask a question directed to one student and wait for an answer.
81. Place a suggestion box in the rear of the room and encourage students to make written comments every time the class meets.
82. Do oral show of-hands multiple choice tests for summary review and instant feedback.
83. Use task groups to accomplish specific objectives.
84. Grade quizzes and exercises in class as a learning tool.
85. Give students plenty of opportunity for practice before a major test.
86. Give a test early in the semester and return it graded in the next class meeting.
87. Have students write questions on index cards to be collected and answered the next class period.
88. Make collaborate assignments for several students to work on together.
89. Assign written paraphrases and summaries of difficult reading.
90. Give students a take-home problem relating to the days lecture.
91. Encourage students to bring news items to class which relate to the subject matter and post these on a bulletin board nearby.

Building Community

92. Learn names. Everyone makes an effort to learn at least a few names.
93. Set up a buddy system so students can contact each other about assignments and coursework.
94. Find out about your students via questions on an index card.
95. Take pictures of students (snapshots in small groups, mug shots) and post in classroom, office, or lab.
96. Arrange helping trios of students to assist each other in learning and growing.
97. Form small groups for getting acquainted; mix and form new groups several times.
98. Assign a team project early in the semester and provide time to assemble the team.
99. Help students form study groups to operate outside the classroom.
100. Solicit suggestions from students for outside resources and guest speakers on course topics.

Feedback on Teaching

101. Gather student feedback in the first three weeks of the semester to improve teaching and learning.

Characteristics of a Good Instructor Based on your Educational Experience

Complete the following questionnaire by adding your initials to the answer or answers that you think best describe the characteristics of a good instructor based on your educational experience. There are no universally right answers to this questionnaire. Instead it is designed to try to help you realize that values vary from individual to individual.

1. A good instructor
 - a. encourages students to ask questions in class.
 - b. usually answers questions outside of class instead of in class.
 - c. encourages students to answer questions by thinking for themselves.

2. A good instructor
 - a. always knows the answer to student questions.
 - b. is not afraid to admit that he or she does not have the answer to a question.
 - c. must always appear to know the answer to student questions even if he or she does not.

3. A good instructor answer student questions by
 - a. getting as much information as he or she can.
 - b. going straight to the point in answering as simply as possible.
 - c. asking the student, "what do you think?"

4. A good instructor
 - a. asks questions periodically to see if students have understood lesson.
 - b. leaves it up to the students to ask questions if they do not understand.
 - c. relies on test results, homework, and quizzes to determine if students have understood the lesson.

5. A good instructor
 - a. lectures most of the time, believing that students learn best from the voice of authority and experience.
 - b. encourages student participation in class to facilitate learning from student questions and comments.
 - c. organizes experiences for students to learn by doing.

6. A good instructor
 - a. is informal during class but keeps relationships with students more distant outside of class
 - b. treats students formally during class and after class.
 - c. treats students formally during class but treats them like friends after class by socializing with them.

7. A good instructor
 - a. makes the class fun by telling jokes and having the students do interesting things.
 - b. is hard-working and serious. Students often get a lot of work done in his or her class.
 - c. makes the class relevant by having the students discuss how the class material applies to their lives.

8. A good instructor
 - a. is well-organized, has a plan for the day's lessons, and follows the plan exactly.
 - b. has a general plan for the day but deviates depending on how things are going that day.
 - c. is often unpredictable. Students almost never know what to expect. The teacher generally comes without a plan.

9. A good instructor
 - a. tries to make the material simple and easy so that students can understand and get high grades.
 - b. tries to make the material difficult so that it is challenging to even the best students.
 - c. tries to make the material just challenging enough so that most students' grades are average.

10. A good instructor
 - a. presents material quickly in order to cover as much as possible in the semester.
 - b. presents material at an adequate pace and periodically pauses for students to comprehend material.
 - c. presents material rather slowly so that even the slowest students can grasp information.

Adapted from Smith, Meyers, & Burkhalter (1992). *Communicate. Strategies for International Teaching Assistants.*

Cross-Cultural Differences in Classrooms

Classroom behavior in your educational experience may differ from classroom behavior in the United States. For today, begin focusing on these areas by reflecting on the frequency of these behaviors as you experienced them. You should use the following adverbs of frequency for your answers: **always, often, sometimes, rarely, never**. Keep this handout with you and during your first weeks of time on campus make some observations about the classroom behaviors you experience in order to see if any differences exist.

Behavior (Complete the first column today. Fill in the second column during your first three weeks)	My Educational Experience (Complete this column today) Use these adverbs: always, often, sometimes, rarely, or never.	Here in the U.S.
1. Space: How often do instructors move around? (Also pay attention to where they move to and if they stand or sit down).		
2. Gestures: How often do instructors move their arms? (Also pay attention to what those movements might mean. Do you have a different meaning for those movements in your experience?)		
3. Eye Contact: How often do instructors look around when teaching? (Also pay attention to the eye contact they make. Do they focus on an individual? If so, note how long and how often they make eye contact.)		
4. Facial Expressions:		
a. How often do instructors smile?		
b. How often do instructors show anger?		
5. Touching: How often do instructors touch students? (What situations call for an instructor touching a student?)		
7. Time:		
a. How often can instructors be late for class without offending the students?		
b. How often can students be late for class without offending the instructors?		
8. Dress: How often do instructors wear formal clothes or dress up for classes?		
9. Classroom Behavior:		
a. How often do students eat in class?		
b. How often do students drink in class?		
c. How often do students use personal computers in class?		
10. Manner of Speaking:		
a. How many times do instructors repeat key information? (Try to recall in what ways do instructors repeat key information?)		

As you complete your first three weeks, refer back to this list and talk to a colleague about the differences that you found most striking and the implications those differences may have for your teaching in the United States.

Adapted from Smith, Meyers, & Burkhalter (1992). *Communicate. Strategies for International Teaching Assistants.*