

**Preparing a Lecture<sup>1</sup>**  
David L. Eastman  
Graduate Teaching Center

1. Introduction
  - a. Me
  - b. Them – their field and the topic of a lecture or possible lecture
2. Goals: At the end of today’s workshop, you will have a general plan for your lecture that will help you define and limit the topic of a lecture, structure a lecture for maximum effectiveness, and present material in a clear and engaging way.
  - a. Topic/content definition and limiting
  - b. Using structure to aid clarity
  - c. Other elements of pre-planning
  - d. Use of teaching aids
3. Group activity: In your experience, what are the characteristics of an effective lecture? (Notice I say ‘effective’ not ‘good,’ and I’ll explain why in a minute.)
4. The Big Picture
  - a. Defining the topic
    - i. Subject may be assigned (syllabus) or undefined; even when topic given in syllabus, there is still usually latitude in terms of what angle you take and which aspects you choose to highlight.
      1. So how do I choose?
    - ii. Goals: What am I trying to accomplish?
      1. What will students know or be able to do?
      2. Consider the audience
      3. Be clear and specific
      4. Be realistic
        - a. Scope – don’t try to do too much
        - b. Objectives – unlikely that you’ll be able to achieve higher cognitive objectives in lecture format
    - iii. E.g. for today, I gave our goals at the beginning, so we have a clear idea of what we are doing and of what we are not doing.
  - b. Limiting the topic
    - i. Realistic, focused outcome objectives will make limiting the topic much easier.
      1. Avoid the temptation to tell everything you know
  - c. Questions/comments
  - d. Activity – Think about your own lecture (or possible lecture). Spend a few minutes making a list of goals for your topic and then work on a list of possible topics that will contribute to these goals. Think about limitations.
5. Structure
  - a. Structure is your friend
  - b. Clarity, clarity, clarity
  - c. Structure from your perspective

---

<sup>1</sup> Portions of this handout include ideas adapted from Henry Ellington, “Some Hints on how to be an Effective Lecturer. Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 6.” Scottish Central Institutions Committee for Educational Development.

- i. You must clearly organize your thoughts in your own mind. If the structure is not clear to you, it certainly won't be clear to your students.
- ii. Many different models for structuring content
  - 1. Simple list
  - 2. Classification hierarchies – topics and sub-topics
  - 3. Chained structures – lead through an argument or proof step by step
  - 4. Hypothesis testing – can be effective if tied to a particular argument they have run across in an assigned reading
  - 5. Rule/example – state principle and then show examples
  - 6. Example/rule (inductive) – start with examples and arrive at rule or principle by induction
  - 7. Problem-centered – state problem, present possible solutions, present a conclusion of some sort
  - 8. Comparative structures – 2 or more systems compared on different issues
  - 9. Matrix structures – more complex comparison of different structures under different headings
  - 10. You may of course use several of these different models within the same lecture
- d. Structure from the student's perspective
  - i. You want students to have clearly in mind the goals for the lecture and the roadmap for achieving those goals
  - ii. Suggestions for achieving listener clarity
    - 1. How this lecture relates to course material – to the syllabus, to previous lectures, to assigned reading
    - 2. Set out lecture plan up front so that students are on board
      - a. You may use several of the above models with a lecture, but students need to know the guiding model for the lecture as a whole
      - b. where we are going and how we're going to get there
      - c. Ex: My Paul and Acts lecture – 3 questions
    - 3. Repetition: "If a point in your lecture is very important, it is worth repeating." 2x
    - 4. Explaining key terms and concepts, esp. those that may be unfamiliar
    - 5. Examples (content and structure) – these will take extra time, but they break up the monotony of content and of delivery pace
    - 6. Clear transition markers
      - a. You are a specialist, so connections may be obvious to you, but they are not obvious to your students
      - b. Summary statements
      - c. Linking statements – how do the different topics/headings relate to each other
      - d. Pauses
        - i. Allows students to catch up with note taking
      - e. How these function: they give people a chance to get back on the bus at a later stop – where we are along the road
        - i. TV shows
    - 7. Summary at the end – where we've been and what we've learned

- e. Questions/comments
  - f. Activity: Now create a general outline
6. Planning presentation
- a. Timing is important – related to defining goals and limits well
    - i. You don't want to run out of time before achieving goals
    - ii. You don't want to have to hurry: If you try to do too much, you will confuse people and may end up achieving very little!
      - 1. Students will give up if they are overwhelmed
  - b. Full text or outline
    - i. I prefer outline but I've used full text in some cases b/c academic lecturing is a special venue
    - ii. My mentor – full text with everything marked
      - 1. Advantage is that you know what you've decided to emphasize and you always know where you are timewise
  - c. Next week we'll talk more about aspects of delivery, but in terms of planning, think about pace
    - i. Pauses for emphasis and to allow catch up
    - ii. Faster/slower for variety
    - iii. Examples
  - d. Outline or text, my advice is to run it to be sure about time
  - e. Questions/comments
7. Teaching aids: Handouts, PPT, charts, images, etc.
- a. Advantages
    - i. They can illustrate complex ideas succinctly
    - ii. They provide some variety of pace and content – keep interest
    - iii. They can be used to prompt discussion
    - iv. PPT posted ahead of time – keep students focused on listening instead of writing
  - b. Potential minuses
    - i. What do you want students to be doing while you're lecturing?
    - ii. Can be a distraction
      - 1. Handouts not synched to lecture
      - 2. PPT poorly done
      - 3. People look ahead (e.g. church bulletin)
  - c. Think carefully in the planning phase about how each part functions, rather than just doing it b/c you think you 'should' be using this or that
  - d. Questions/comments
  - e. Activity: Images, handouts, etc. that you might use
8. Review: We've talked about some key elements to planning an effective lecture, and you've worked on a general framework for the lecture that you'll be delivering.