

Putting the Life in a Lecture:

How to Effectively Organize and Deliver Your Lesson

Within the classroom, a speaker may use his pulpit to lull his audience to sleep with monotonous drivel, or with the right organization and delivery, he may induce participation and interest by breathing life into what was once merely an outline on paper. This lesson will focus on exploiting the latter.

BENEFITS OF ORGANIZATION

- Organization forces you to make strategic choices in advance.
- It demonstrates preparedness.
- It helps guide the students to what's important in a lecture.

ORGANIZATION OF YOUR MAIN POINTS

- The magic number is THREE. It's a safe and easy number, and people can remember and digest things in threes.
- Where do they come from? Ideally, you can articulate a specific purpose statement for any lecture you present. Even if it's just "try not to bore the audience."
- **The characteristics of a good main point:**
 - **Simplicity.** Find a balance between what you say and what they write down. Make them listen to you. Don't make things too complex. Take a specific purpose statement and boil it down to its essential elements. Slow down and articulate it.
 - **Discreteness.** Can you make the main points separate from one another? Avoid confusion.
 - **Parallel structure.** Ideally when taking notes you want your instructor to use parallel structure so you have the same length and same types of verb usage when you are taking your notes. It makes it easier to remember, to write down and to comprehend.
 - **Balance the amount of time.** One problem lecturers have is that there are some points that they know very well, and others that they feel they have to cover so that students give it attention. Can you balance the amount of time between the main points? Avoid frontloading—putting the things you want to talk about in at the beginning and jamming the rest in later.

- **Coherence.** How easily can you demonstrate a clear relationship between the main points in the specific purpose statement?
- **Completeness.** The idea that you've covered in your main points. The essentials.

ORDERING OF THE MAIN POINTS

- **Chronological format.** This is important for outlining in advance.
- **The simple cause and effect relationship.** Reasoning where you present certain information and students draw their own conclusions.
- **The problem/solution format.** This is the easiest to digest. Start with a beginning orientation that presents a problem that exists and propose potential solutions then weigh the advantages versus the disadvantages. In a lecture format that allows you to engage both sides of an issue so your audience has the capacity to make a reasoned judgment on which ones they agree or disagree with. This can enable better class discussion.
- **Compare and contrast.** Give a historical background then say what are the similarities and what are the differences.
- **Deduction.** A lecture utilizing deductive logic where you get your audience to make a decision. Allows the students' responses to play a part in the form of the lecture.

TIPS FOR THE ORGANIZATION

- An extemporaneous style often times works better because it allows people to keep eye contact and not to think you are just reading off of note cards. The danger of this is if there is specific wording required it doesn't allow for the best notes to be taken. You need to have transitions that are written out in advance.
- You also need to have internal previews that allow for people to realize you are shifting from one area of a lecture to another. This is combined with internal summaries.
- How much conscious time do you take to organize? Take time to write out in advance to force you to

make strategic choices necessary so that you can make quicker decisions on the fly if interruptions occur. In the end, adaptation is what is necessary to making effective communication.

COMPREHENSION

- Use Roman numerals to make the lecture comprehensible. It also lets the audience know that there is an end in sight!
- Clear titles make it more vivid and apparent. Give things names to understand them. Give your audience a vocabulary to comprehend things at a higher level.
- Form and content are intertwined. How you organize material depends on the way you wish to teach and what you want to say.
- Use examples and concrete stories to reinforce ideas in your lecture. People remember concepts through concrete examples. Examples are not representative, they are random, so you have to tie the example to larger trends to show it is applicable.
- Another way to make the unfamiliar familiar is through analogy. Put it in the realm of your audience's experience. People operate through comparison.

VIVIDNESS

- **Repeat the main points.** Tell them what you're going to say, say it, and then tell them what you said. People miss things no matter how smart they are. Utilize repetition and summaries.
- Students are restless in a long lecture, so take advantage of extemporaneous delivery and move around. With movement, it draws the eye and attention, at least at that particular moment. But remember, by moving all the time, you lose the effect.
- People pay attention to humor. It shows them you are human. Self deprecating humor is especially good. Material drawn out of the subject matter helps make it vivid and helps break the monotony.
- Think about emphasis. What do you want to push? Use intonation for effect. Think of it like a play with an introduction, rising action and resolution. Generate discussion in the "down time" in the middle of the class.
- And finally, **REPEAT THE MAIN POINTS!**

GENERAL TIPS

- Consider using images instead of text in your PowerPoint presentations, unless you are analyzing a passage. Don't read something that others can read. Make sure they are listening to you.
- Providing a biographical sketch of individuals connected to your subject matter may aid in illustrating certain ideas. It can help make the difference between an abstract concept and a tangible experience.
- Contextualizing—talk about problems and obstacles that they faced and how they arrived at their concept. ■

Based on the Graduate School seminar "Putting the Life in a Lecture" by John Murphy and Jarrod Atchinson, Department of Speech Communication. To view this seminar in its entirety, visit <http://www.grad.uga.edu>.