

# The Interactive Lecture

## How to Engage Students, Build Memory, and Deepen Comprehension

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## Let's Get Started

In recent years, the lecture has fallen on hard times. Prominent researchers have raised doubts about its use, claiming that lectures rely on rote learning and fail to promote active engagement. Yet most of us have either attended or delivered wonderful lectures—lectures that have expanded our thinking, provided fresh insights, or opened our eyes to new worlds. Clearly, lectures can be an efficient way of transmitting large amounts of information in a relatively small amount of time.

Take a moment to reflect on some lectures that you have delivered or attended. Think about both the good ones and the bad ones. What are some of the assets of the lecture as a strategy for learning? What are some of the liabilities of the lecture as a strategy for learning? Record your thoughts in the space below. Your goal here is to examine the lecture as a technique for presenting and acquiring information, not to analyze the characteristics of the person who presented a given lecture. After you have come up with some assets and liabilities of the lecture, think about how you might improve the lecture as a presentation technique. Discuss your ideas with your learning club.

### Activity: Examining the Assets and Liabilities of the Lecture

Assets of the Lecture	Liabilities of the Lecture
<p>Suppose you were redesigning the traditional lecture to accentuate its assets and minimize its liabilities. What changes would you make?</p>	

All teaching strategies have both assets and liabilities. We need not abandon the lecture because of its liabilities; rather, we need to find ways to make it work better. In this Strategic Teacher PLC Guide, we'll be taking an in-depth look at the strategy we call the Interactive Lecture. The Interactive Lecture provides teachers with a strategic format for designing and delivering lectures that do much more than flood students' minds with information. In fact, a well-designed Interactive Lecture can help teachers and students meet at least six critical learning goals. Let's take a look at these six goals. Do any of them correspond with your ideas for redesigning the lecture?

**GOAL #1: Increase Student Engagement**

In his meta-analysis of more than 75 separate studies, Robert Marzano (2007) shows that students in highly engaging classrooms outperform students in unengaging classrooms by nearly 30 percentile points. Built into the design of the Interactive Lecture are a variety of brain-based techniques for capturing students' attention and keeping them actively engaged throughout the lecture.

**GOAL #2: Build Students' Information Management Skills**

Students who know how to organize what they learn according to the patterns and hierarchies inherent in the content have a tremendous advantage over students who see each new topic as a mound of "stuff" to sift through. The Interactive Lecture models the use of graphic organizers to put individual pieces of information together to form an integrated whole.

**GOAL #3: Develop Students' Note-Taking Skills**

Becoming an effective note taker is crucial to students' academic careers. That's why the Interactive Lecture places such a premium on note taking—on creating a meaningful record of learning that can be used again and again to review and master new content.

**GOAL #4: Deepen Comprehension**

Sure, we can present information to our students. The essential issue, though, isn't whether we've covered the material, but rather how well students understand it. To enhance students' comprehension of key content, the Interactive Lecture incorporates research-based techniques to help students process content more deeply and derive more meaning from it.

**GOAL #5: Build Students' Background Knowledge**

The Interactive Lecture is designed to help teachers cover large amounts of declarative information more effectively than they would through traditional lecture. Therefore, it is an ideal strategy for building students' background knowledge. Research shows that building students' background knowledge is one of the best ways to raise student achievement levels and prepare learners for future learning challenges.

**GOAL #6: Develop Students' Habits of Mind**

In their years of research into the defining characteristics of intelligent behavior and thought, Art Costa and Bena Kallick (2008, 2009) have identified 16 "habits of mind." By nourishing these habits in our students, we give them the tools they need to use their minds well, thus increasing their chance for future success. Using the Interactive Lecture in the classroom will help students develop these habits of mind: listening with understanding and empathy, thinking flexibly, applying past knowledge to new situations, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, gathering data through all senses, responding with wonderment and awe, and thinking interdependently.

## Memory and the Interactive Lecture

So how does all of this talk about memory translate into something we can use in our classrooms? In this section, we outline four key principles derived from the research on memory. For each principle, we explore specific classroom techniques that you can use to turn a traditional lecture into an Interactive Lecture that students will remember.

These principles and techniques will help you answer four common questions associated with classroom presentations and lectures. Take a look at these questions below. How do you answer these questions when you design and deliver lectures? Use the space provided to record your notes. When you're done, discuss your ideas with your learning club.

### Activity: Addressing the Challenges of Presenting Information

**How do you . . .**

**capture and hold students' attention?**

**organize the information in your lecture for optimal learning?**

**encourage students to actively process the most important content?**

**provide students with opportunities to review and apply their new learning?**

Now let's see how your own ideas and classroom practices compare with the research. On the next page, you will find a matrix organizer (Figure 1.1) broken up into five columns and four rows. On the pages following Figure 1.1 (pp. 14–23), you'll read about the four principles of memory-based lecturing. As you read about each principle, we encourage you to underline any information that will help you complete the organizer, including information related to

- The challenge each principle presents.
- The techniques teachers can use to meet these challenges.
- The effects these techniques have on students.

Work with your learning club to complete the organizer, one principle at a time. Once you've read about each principle, you and your learning club should stop reading to summarize and record key information in the relevant cells of the organizer. Then create a visual icon for each principle that will help you remember what you have learned and record it in the appropriate cell of the organizer. You may choose to develop your icons individually or with the members of your learning club. You'll notice that for each principle, we have already filled in one cell of the organizer as a guide.

We conclude our description of each principle with a discussion question to help you connect the principles to your own experiences and classroom practice. Each discussion question is identified by this icon:

