

Strategies from 2015-2016 Cohort

Successful strategies

- Setting welcoming/safe tone (spend time getting students comfortable)
- Showing enthusiasm so students start participating
- Ask questions to students to lead them to the answers, instead of just giving answers
- Refresh students' memory about previous lessons
- Reiterate office hours
- Give enough time so student can answer questions e.g. sing happy birthday in your head

Challenges

- Lost control of 'group formation'. Try to give precise instructions about organization
- Students getting overly excited and chatty
- Not knowing the answers to a question. Feeling unable to help
- Unable to remember everyone's names

Strategies for each skit

1. The Monopoliser

- Call on specific portions of the group (so everyone can participate)
- Talk to over participating students individually
- Have ground rules to begin with
- Ask for contributions from someone who has not talked yet (but be careful on not single out a particular student)
- Have students write answers down (as an outlet)

2. The unprepared student disrupting flow of lesson

- Invite unprepared student to talk after class, acknowledge that the question is valid
- Be honest with students
- Turn questions to the class. Use the incident as a teachable moment
- Inquire about the student background
- Always be respectful

3. Unresponsive group

- Get students attention first
- Start writing stuff down in the board to show that the class has started
- Reorganize classroom. Divide and conquer
- Shhh the class, use lights, bells, whistles
- Use buzzwords (e.g. exam)

- Start talking in a different language
- Walk around and stand by chatty students
- Have student do something physical (jumping jacks or impersonate to answer to a question)

4. Chaos in group

- Clarify course content and course schedule. No debate about course content
- Acknowledge that there are two sides to an argument (remove issue from individual)
- Reiterate that it is important to respect each other's opinion
- Differentiate beliefs from course content
- Linking and/or difference between belief and science (evidence based)
- Stay as objective as possible
- Re-focus

5. Unbalanced attention to groups

- Get students' attention
- Address the part that is most confusing
- Reiterate that readings should be done before coming to class/lab
- Deal with monopolisers' questions (answer or give different parts of the answers) and then move on to other groups. Give equal attention to everyone in the class
- Acknowledge wrong answers and use them as teaching moments
- Be proactive. Know ahead of time what will likely go wrong and provide extra instructions. Ask experience TAs about these situations.
- Break groups so you have unprepared students with more prepared ones
- Have pre-quizzes or flow charts

TOP FACILITATION STRATEGIES

- Establish respect (TA-students)
- Having control of the classroom
- Be fair and inclusive (explicitly)
- Be proactive-establish guidelines and class environment
- Communication! Approachability
- Awareness of entire classroom (catch potential issues early)
- Be prepared and confident
- Engagement/getting feedback