

## Want to Give a Lecture in *Your* Class?

Lectures are oral presentations by the instructor or an expert in the content to a group of people. They are primarily used when the goal is to give a group of students a great deal of information, and are seen as the traditional form of content delivery in higher education settings.

Lecture At-A-Glance	
<b>Prep</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Write an outline or script of the main points of the lecture.</li><li>● Create visuals.</li><li>● Choose engagement activities.</li><li>● Rehearse the lecture.</li></ul>
<b>During</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Set expectations.</li><li>● Engage your listener.</li><li>● Leave time throughout the lecture for questions and short activities.</li></ul>
<b>After</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Share your visual aids with the students.</li><li>● If recorded, post the video of your lecture.</li></ul>

### Prep

Write an outline or script of the main points of the lecture.

- It is very important to establish a roadmap of the content you plan on covering during your lecture. Articulate your plan at the very beginning so students are aware of what they should know by the end. It is also vital you create “guide posts” along the way. These can be quick reviews of the roadmap at the end of each major content takeaway, highlighting what has been covered and what is yet to come.
- Some instructors provide handouts with the lecture outline and key terms to students. Other instructors put slides online prior to the lecture so students can follow along.

Create visuals.

- Many students have difficulty learning solely by listening. It is useful to create some sort of visual aids to call attention to the major points of the lecture or ideas that students need to remember.
- The visual aids *should not* simply present the words of the text you are speaking. Instead, bullet points or pictures that highlight the points of your text are more interesting and engaging.
- There are several products that are available for this purpose. Some include:
  - [Microsoft PowerPoint](#)
  - [Apple Keynote](#)
  - [Prezi](#)
  - [Haiku Deck](#)

Choose engagement activities.

- Research shows the average attention span is approximately 20 minutes. Think of ways to break up your lecture with brief activities to re-engage your audience and check for understanding.
- Some options include:

- Using clickers for polling
- Think-pair-share
- Two-minute “turn and talk” with a neighbor
- You can also ask the students questions throughout your lecture, with or without clickers.

Rehearse the lecture.

- Practice the lecture in a setting as similar to the actual class as possible to make sure you have enough time to cover all necessary material. Do this ahead of the class session to allow you the opportunity to make changes.
- If you are using visuals, they can help you keep track of your time. Discussing the content on a well-designed slide takes approximately two minutes.

## **During**

Set expectations

- Before you begin, let students know what you will need from them during your lecture to minimize distractions. Common distractions involve laptops or cell phones.
- It is helpful to share the outline of your talk - including scheduled breaks - so students know what to expect.
- Encourage students to take notes. Research shows students generally retain information better when they take notes by hand rather than by typing; however, be sensitive to students with disabilities who may need a computer.

Engage your listener.

- A popular misconception is that the information you present will automatically be as fascinating to your listeners as it is to you. Yet, *how* you present is equally as important. Some ways you can capture students’ attention include:
  - using a clear, loud voice.
  - moving about the space, whether it be just the front or the entire room.
  - incorporating funny or poignant stories to elucidate your points.
  - by using short engagement activities

Leave time throughout the lecture for questions and short activities.

- At the beginning of the lecture, articulate your rules for questions. Some instructors prefer students to hold questions until the end of the lecture; however, allowing questions throughout the lectures aids in student engagement. You can make room for questions during the rests at the “guide posts” of your lecture.

## **After**

Share your visual aids with the students.

- As soon as possible after the lecture, post your visual aids to a place where students can easily access them.

If recorded, post the video of your lecture.

- Post the recording of your lecture online so students can review it at their own pace.

Written by Lauren Britt-Elmore  
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education  
Harvard Graduate School of Education