SEGi
University &
Colleges

Effective Student Engagement
in 4 Easy Steps

~ A Lecturer's Toolkit ~

Important note:

- Assume you were the student and ask what would peak *your* interest in this lesson?
- Occasionally, say something surprising and unexpected so students don't feel the lesson is predictable

Create an initial interest in the subject and prepare the context even before teaching begins

- Share an incident related to the lesson

- Show a video or run a short activity which touches some of the issues. E.g.:

    - If you're talking about investment portfolios, maybe start by introducing a Ponzi scheme.

    - Or if you're talking about education, maybe ask the students the top 2-3 things they dislike most about education.

Use humour or irony to generate (appropriate amounts) of unpredictability and fun

- "OK, what kind of lesson do you want? Just the knowledge or knowledge _ real-life experiences? You like me to joke or not?"

- "Today we're going to park the syllabus aside. I want to hear what you truly want to learn on this subject…"

- "Assume you're Tan Sri – how would you behave as a student in this class? What kinds of questions would you ask? What activities would you prefer"

2. Use Stimulating Slides and Visuals
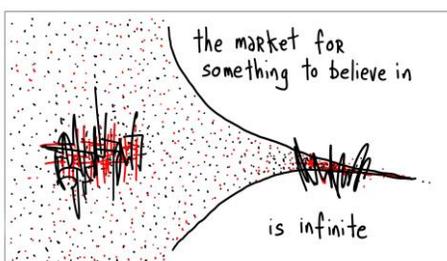
> **Important note:**
>
> - Avoid using too many words in your slides
> - Regularly use eye-catching graphics and photos

Do not make your slides too wordy

- Unless you're quoting someone or showing a definition, keep your words to between 6-10

- **"Limit each slide to a single core idea"** (Chris Anderson, founder of TED)

- Never *read* from the slide

- Remember that your slides are *not* your hand-outs (nor vice-versa); if your slides are exactly the same as your hand-outs, students will already be reading ahead and thus pay less attention

Ensure your presentation is full of quality photos and images

- Search for **high-definition photos** which can evoke students' emotion

- Use your own photos if possible

- Reject Clipart images and 'brochure'-like photos (use sites like flickr.com instead)

- Fill the *entire screen* with your one (or at most two) photos; do not 'scatter' your photos across the slide

A helpful online presentation is *[Death By Powerpoint (And How to Fight It)](#)* by Alexei Kapterev.

> **Important note:**
>
> - To be in the 'flow' (or 'being in the zone') is to be utterly immersed in an activity, completely energized and fully enjoying
> - How you say something is far more important than what you are actually saying
> - Your voice and body language are the keys to effective communication

Use your vocal skills and body language to maximum effect

- Speak with excitement, like you're sharing something wonderful with friends

- Never sound as if you're merely *reciting* something (this is why we should never read from our slides)

- Make eye-contact and smile

- Walk around the class (if possible) and use gestures to further connect with the class

- Remember that almost 60% of human communication is non-verbal

Use humour

- Find something humorous about the topic (e.g., "Yes, today we're studying mechanical engineering. No, we're not going to watch Iron Man."

- Prepare a **cute remark** in case something goes awry (e.g., if there is no whiteboard maybe say, "I guess we'll just have to write on the walls?")

Show vulnerability and park your ego aside (without overdoing it)

- Share a personal struggle (or even failure); make a confession?

- Avoid making references to your own achievements or credentials (unless specifically asked)

- A little self-deprecation is not a bad thing because it combines humour with vulnerability (but don't overdo it)

3. Teach with "flow"!

Use interesting stories as often as possible without disrupting the class. Stories help to:

- Break the ice or lighten up a dense topic (or a sleepy class)

- Illustrate a complex concept or add significance to an idea

- Make a connection with students

- Infuse the lesson with emotion

"Story-telling is teaching"
Frank McCourt

- Tell stories that everyone can relate to (e.g. use terms or names which most people have heard of)

- Tell the story with your body as well i.e. use all your body language to 'perform' the narrative as best you can!

- If you're telling a story about yourself, ensure it's true; fabrication will result in lost credibility

Avoid spoon-feeding students the 'correct' answer

- If the students can respond, let them

- Only in very technical cases should you supply the 'correct answer'; and even them allow students a chance to reply or work at it first (or even guess the answer)

- When explaining very complicated topics:
    - ❑ Start by creating curiosity
        - ✓ Ask a question
        - ✓ Raise a common problem associated with the topic
    - ❑ Bring in concepts one by one; move from the simple to the complex
    - ❑ Use examples; the more 'extreme' the better as it captures students' imagination
    - ❑ Use metaphors or stories
    - ❑ Simple quizzes to assess understanding

4. Practice Learner-Centered Teaching

**Let students 'discover' their learning by themselves:**

- Initiate a discussion or 'search' process

- Get students to create something

- Encourage your students to be *autonomous* and eventually *master* the topic, as these are the key ingredients of engagement

- Popular learner-centered methods include:

  - ❑ Problem-Based Learning
  - ❑ Case-based studies
  - ❑ projects
  - ❑ Collaborative projects
  - ❑ Student seminars

You are encouraged to search the Web or discuss with your colleagues on the various learner-centered methods available; for a start you are welcome to [download this list of methods](#).
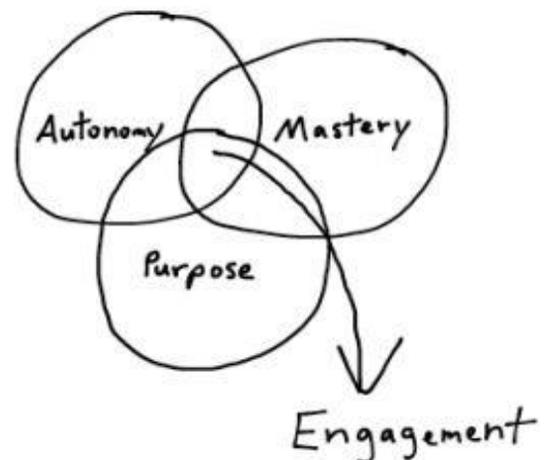
For questions and comments on this toolkit or inquiries on training courses
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