

# Tactical and Structural Recommendations

1. Design coverage so that students grasp more. Plan instruction so students attain organizing concepts that enable them to retain more of what you teach. Cover less when more entails that they learn less.
2. Speak less so that they think more. (When you do lecture....)
3. Don't be a mother robin-chewing up the text for the students and putting it into their beaks through lecture. Teach them instead how to read the text for themselves, actively and analytically. Focus, in other words, on how to read the text not on "reading the text for them".
4. Focus on fundamental and powerful concepts with high generalizability. Don't cover more than 50 basic concepts in any one course. Spend the time usually spent introducing more concepts applying and analyzing the basic ones while engaged in problem-solving and reasoned application.
5. Present concepts, as far as possible, in the context of their use as functional tools for the solution of real problems and the analysis of significant issues.
6. Develop specific strategies for cultivating critical reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Assume that your students enter your class-as indeed they do-with limited skills in these essential learning modalities.
7. Think aloud in front of your students. Let them hear you thinking, better, puzzling your way slowly through problems in the subject. (Try to think aloud at the level of a good student, not as a speedy professional. If your thinking is too advanced or proceeds too quickly, they will not be able to internalize it.)

8. Regularly question your students Socratically: probing various dimensions of their thinking: their purpose, their evidence, reasons, data, their claims, beliefs, interpretations, deductions, conclusions, the implications and consequences of their thought, their response to alternative thinking from contrasting points of view, and so on.
9. Call frequently on students who don't have their hands up. Then, when one student says something, call on other students to summarize in their own words what the first student said (so that they actively listen to each other).
10. Use concrete examples whenever you can to illustrate abstract concepts and thinking. Cite experiences that you believe are more or less common in the lives of your students (relevant to what you are teaching).
11. Require regular writing for class. But grade using random sampling to make it possible for you to grade their writing without having to read it all (which you probably won't have time for).
12. Spell out explicitly the intellectual standards you will be using in your grading, and why. Teach the students, as well as you can, how to assess their own work using those standards.
13. Break the class frequently down into small groups (of twos, threes, fours, etc.), give the groups specific tasks and specific time limits, and call on particular groups afterward to report back on what part of their task they completed, what problems occurred, how they tackled those problems, etc.
14. In general design all activities and assignments, including readings, so that students must think their way through them. Lead discussions on the kind of thinking that is required.

15. Keep the logic of the most basic concepts in the foreground, continually re-weaving new concepts into the basic ones. Talk about the whole in relation to the parts and the parts in relation to the whole.
  
16. Let them know what they're in for. On the first day of class, spell out as completely as possible what your philosophy of education is, how you are going to structure the class and why, why the students will be required to think their way through it, why standard methods of rote memorization will not work, what strategies you have in store for them to combat the strategies they use for passing classes without much thinking, etc.

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{In Critical Thinking Handbook: *Basic Theory and Instructional Structures*}