

## TEACHING METHODS - “FOOD FOR THOUGHT”



*The following are some general observations that may help you as you plan your teaching communications. This list is designed to serve as a reminder of a number of key ideas that will make you more effective in planning, conducting and evaluating your presentations.*

- A key need is *early involvement* of the learner as an active participant in the learning experience. Some effort must be made to get him/her to react verbally, with some activity, or just laughing - some level of involvement.
- Audience discussion is important and skill must be developed in asking questions to get learner response.
- Patterns of audience involvement will have to change as the audience size changes. If the group is too large, buzz groups may be used, or involve a representative number of people in the group - the rest will feel a part of what is happening.
- Good eye contact with your audience is a must!!
- Show some facial expressions. Don't be too serious or stiff. Learner reactions frequently reflect the presenter's actions.
- When the audience is involved, such as passing an object, or if they start to visit about a point that was made, STOP - let them talk and then regain their attention before continuing. Don't go on without a change of pace if your audience attention has been diverted.
- When you ask the audience to do something - like answer questions or pass objects - give them time to do it!! Then give them a chance to tell and/or show some reaction.
- Be sure to give the audience a chance to think before they do what is requested. If the silence is too great, you might need to rephrase the question or coax a response.
- Keep your voice going up and down; variety helps keep their attention.
- SMILE, SMILE, SMILE - even when it's tough.

- Select your words with care and remember the audience when using slang expressions and/or “profanity.”
  - Don't assume anything about your audience - get acquainted with them so you better know how to communicate with them.
  - Don't be afraid to use humor or cartoons to present ideas or concepts. It also can “loosen up” your audience.
  - Use notes - most of us need them, but be sure they don't detract from your presentation.
  - If you must read your notes/speech, it takes considerable skill to do it in a manner that gets positive response from the learners. Practice *if* you feel you must read.
  - Watch pet words, expressions, and/or gestures. We all have them and they can be deadly with an audience. Ask friends, family, and others to help you eliminate them. Video taping your presentations is an excellent way to see and hear yourself and others see and hear you.
  - Be sure visuals are appropriate, large enough and that people have time to read them.
  - Admit mistakes and joke or fun with the learners about them. After all, you're human too!
  - Research shows so clearly the need to use visuals when making presentations. The question is not *whether*, but *which ones*.
  - Try to avoid absolutes - people are aware that with the topics, concepts, ideas, etc. that we work with, they are apt to be perceived as “plaid or shades of gray” rather than being black or white.
  - Using a variety of methods in your communications is a must. People will learn more, you don't get in a rut, and different learning outcomes require different methods.
- The involvement of the learner on an active basis usually means that you will cover less material in the available time. However, learners will retain more, be able to apply it, and they tend to find the learning experience more enjoyable. This tends to mean “repeat” learners for your program.
- REMEMBER - it is important what you do and how you cover the material in any learning setting. The *real key* however, is what the learner does and is the determining factor in what and how much he/she learns.

*Source: Dr. Glenn A. Klein, Extension Education, Oregon State University*