

## Simple Rule: ENGAGE YOUR CLASS!

Why should you engage your learners instead of just standing before them, lecturing?

An old Chinese proverb sums it up best...

tell me and I forget,  
teach me and I learn,  
engage me and I remember.

### How do you engage a class?

The attention span of an adult learner is short. Some suggest that most adults can only stay focused for 10-15 minutes at a time. Combine this with the idea that we only retain 20% of what we hear, and what you have as an instructor—if you are only lecturing to your class—is a room full of blank stares within 10-15 minutes after you begin.

Here are a few suggestions for **ENGAGING** your class:

1. Use a **variety of media**. Media types should be varied at least once every 10 minutes. For example, you could start with lecturing and writing on the board, then migrate to a PowerPoint presentation, video clip, or having students work on a computer. This provides a nice mixture of media types that will keep your class engaged.
2. **Ask questions that promote discussion**. This is a great way to keep your class alert and will provide feedback on their understanding of the concepts.
3. **Provide exercises and activities** that provide group interaction, an opportunity to move, or be engaged in **discovery**.

### How do you present your content in a way that ENGAGES?

1. **Relevance**— is your content relevant to what your class needs to know or do?
2. **Are you telling a story?**— teaching is really about storytelling. Think of your content in this way. Does it tell a story? If not, structure the content into smaller chunks that are linked together in a logical flow.
3. **Your physical position**— Do not block the learners' view of your visuals and try to move around the room as you present.
4. **Establish rapport**— comfortable learners are more likely to learn. Call learners by name when you can and never compromise anyone's self-esteem (e.g., never criticize in public).
5. **Be a good conversationalist**— look your participants in the eye and talk **with** them, rather than **at** them.
6. **PowerPoint**— more slides are not necessarily better. When preparing PowerPoint presentations, consider the 6<sup>3</sup> rule: never more than 6 bullet points per slide, 6 lines per slide, or 6 text-only slides in a row. Also, ensure your text is readable from the back of the room.
7. **Self-evaluate** yourself at the end of the class to determine what went well or could be improved. This will benefit your lesson on its next offering.



Participants engaged in a simulation of the Internet using string.

### For more information:

Send an email to:

[irri-training@cgiar.org](mailto:irri-training@cgiar.org) or visit the Rice Knowledge Bank at <http://www.knowledgebank.irri.org>.

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