20 Ways to Engage your Students

First Impressions
Say hello or you’re doomed!
TIPS ON HOW TO WALK THE WALK

Break the Ice
Who was your childhood hero?

21st Century Learners
Want to be challenged and engaged

The Digital Student
FIRE UP YOUR STUDENTS.... BE REMARKABLE!
Top 20 ways to engage your students

1 First Impressions Count
2 Make Connections
3 Build Rapport
4 Share Your Stories
5 Be Organised
6 Real Life Experiences
7 Keep Your Promises
8 Fire Up Your Students
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11 Believe & Never Give Up
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Associate Lecturer, Katharine Jewitt has been gathering feedback from her students through skype calls, day schools, online tutorials and telephone calls to find out how best to improve her teaching practice. She has been investigating how best to engage her students.

Feedback from students about approaches that help them to learn effectively has been captured by Katharine in this magazine.

Katharine has summarised the findings into 20 practical ways to engage learners.
The first telephone call is extremely valued by students. It puts them at ease and motivates them at the start of their course.

Your tone of voice on the telephone, your posture, your demeanour, how you acknowledge your students, if you smile at them and make eye contact, all influence how students are going to respond to you...

By being enthusiastic, you will win the hearts and minds of your students.

The first few minutes of your tutorial are vital in winning a captive audience. What are you hoping to achieve? Think of something remarkable to say at the outset. It could be something from the news or a personal experience or something that shows you care about what follows in the tutorial. Your students care about whether you care about their learning experience.
Share Your Stories

Students love it when you provide context by relating what they are learning to your own work experience and life stories.

Provide Personal Context

Students value Tutors who share their experiences and personal stories and relate what is being taught to real-life work experiences. Tutors who can share a personal context adds value for students. They want the opportunity for real-life work contexts.

Sharing your stories also helps build rapport. Students want to be treated as human beings and having some sort of relationship with you is important.

Students want you to be motivating and inspire them to learn.
STUDENTS APPRECIATE ORGANISED TEACHERS

➤ Be Enthusiastic, Confident and Organised
Your students want the full package from you. They love it when you are enthusiastic, confident, show empathy, knowledgeable and organised. Students hate it when you are disorganised. They want everything to be working, they want you to be ready and they want you to be clear on what they will learn and what they need to achieve. Your students look to see if it matters to you that they enjoy and understand the tutorial. They want you to have the tutorial planned and know what you are doing.

DON’T MAKE FALSE PROMISES
“Don’t let us down.”

“We love practical examples and learning how to relate what we learn to real life. We value your advice on study techniques...”
The use of technology helps students to look up factual content and carry out research for themselves. They can look for information online easily but they rely on you to fire them up and keep them engaged and inspired. If your students have been fired up and engaged, they are much more likely to use technology to explore further online and learn more.
Find out what your students care about

Ask your students the question “What do you like doing?” Make time to chat to your students and be interested. You have to ask it like you mean it. Do not pass judgement on their answers. Asking questions about what they like can help build rapport, but also allows you to find out what students like or dislike about your subject and will provide ideas on how you can go about linking their learning with things they are interested in. Integrate examples of their passions into the content of your class. If you are unwilling to find a link between their obscure music tastes, stamp-collecting and the study of law then how can you expect your students to work hard for you? Find out what motivates your students. Sometimes students may not be able to articulate what they care about. Students are often scared of committing to something because of a fear of failure, be a role model and share what you care about.

"Always believe in us. Never give up on us and show us how not to give up on ourselves."
Find out what your students are not happy about

You can sense when something is not right, particularly when you are faced with a gloomy student. If you’re faced with a student in a bad mood, find out what is wrong. Ask the question “Is there something going on that I need to know about?” Once you have some information you can offer to find out what can be done to help. This then allows you to move on with the tutorial. In this scenario, think about how you can re-energise your student, perhaps a humorous story to share or a video clip to watch. Task them with something to get them engaged.

Don’t single students out

If you have a student who is not engaging, don’t single them out, but rather focus on raising the interest and enthusiasm of the whole group, in order, to encourage disengaged students to become involved from the energy of others. Students want you to support them in facilitating a way for them to understand the material being taught and help them to learn. They said that if you treat them as low achievers, then they believe this and will give up and behave accordingly to the label they’ve been given. They want you to never give up on them, always believe in them and to find an opening to help them progress. Despite appearances sometimes, they do want to learn but often need a confidence boost and they need you to help them find other ways to learn until they understand what is being taught.
Make Use of the Media

Encourage your students to make use of the media as a mentor. They can learn about their subject by reading newspapers and magazines and following people in their industry.

Your students can use what they read to spark discussion in their forum or sharing through a hashtag on social networking sites.

Utilising the media, also helps students to evaluate information and not to believe everything they read. There are excellent resources on The Open University library site to help students learn digital literacy skills, such as “Evaluation using PROMPT” http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/87/index.htm

Using the media can be an additional teacher for Students and a valuable mentor.
Pick ‘N’ Mix

Use a variety of different ways for students to learn. Keep changing the way students interact with the learning material. This is a good way to make use of technology. You might start with students listening to you combined with a mind map or encouraging students to contribute to the discussion through social networking using a hashtag. Allow your students time to discuss what they are learning with you and encourage debate and discussion, you could include something for them to watch, include time for students to collaborate and work together in groups and end the lesson with an interactive quiz. Make sure they don’t spend too much time with one thing, even if they really like it because if they use it too much, their enthusiasm will taper.
Here are some ideas for students to work individually or collaboratively to produce learning artefacts:

- Devise a problem scenario
- Analyse a work-based problem
- Make flashcards using cram.com
- Analyse a case study
- Role play a situation
- Make a mind map
- Produce /present a presentation
- Create a recording
- Use a hashtag# to join a discussion on social networking
- Join a forum conversation
- Share a web link to a news story
- Write an essay or report
- Produce a news report
- Devise an encyclopedia entry
- Short answer questions: True/False / Multiple Choice Questions
- Produce an A - Z of ...
- Create a quiz
- Create a padlet wall
Real Life Practice

Think of ways that you can teach concepts through practical examples wherever possible. Students like seeing how what they are learning relates to them in their real life, work situations and careers.

Embed technology to enhance learning:

1. Allow students to use digital tools to create their own content. It overcomes boredom and encourages active learning.

2. Tutors need to provide some direction for students when sourcing information on the internet, to increase student time and practice, otherwise students can waste too much time watching videos or checking social media. Padlet is a useful digital tool to use for this https://padlet.com

3. Using quizzes like http://www.socrative.com are a brilliant form of assessment and where technology can offer good support to Tutors. Students love Socrative! They want to use this more to test their learning and understanding.

Acknowledge Students’ Contributions

Support students’ contributions with positive feedback and take the time to follow up sometimes with an email or text message or a chat outside of the tutorial or forum conversation, to thank them for their involvement and give their confidence a boost. Make contact with all your students, even the quietest ones. When you acknowledge a student’s contribution, a question they asked, a comment they made, an answer they provided, it will build their confidence and encourage them to contribute more.
Learn from your colleagues

If you have an opportunity, ask another Lecturer or your Monitor, if you can share ideas and find new ways to facilitate learning. Speak to your line manager about arranging to join another day school or tutorial. Ask others how they make use of technology for teaching and learning and discover new tactics.

Also, don’t forget to ask your students. Make it a regular habit to ask them what they like or dislike. Find out what they want to see more of.
Use Ice Breaker Activities at the start of a tutorial

A quick ice breaker activity at the start of a class is a great way to build rapport, engage students and find out more about them and for you to share something about yourself. Ask them who their childhood hero was and why or what did they want to be when they grew up.
This magazine has been produced by Katharine Jewitt

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February 2017