



TATP TIPSHEET

## Time Management in the Classroom

Teaching assistants always have a long list of things we need to accomplish – and generally, too little time in which to do them. Here are some helpful hints on how to make the best of your classroom time while maintaining a realistic approach to how much you can accomplish.

### Basic principles of classroom time management

- Define your objectives for each class and try to remain focused on them. Allowing the class to digress too far, or for too long, may sacrifice more critical discussion or activities.
- Become comfortable early on with compromise. You'll rarely accomplish everything you ideally would like to accomplish.
- "Getting out of the way". Recognize when you should step aside and let the students take over; be responsive to the classroom dynamic.
- Be flexible. Be able to reshape your lesson plan on the fly, to respond to the demands of different groups.

### Assessing time demands

- Review the assigned material, *even if you've taught the material before*. If you're working through problem sets with students, make sure you do the problem sets yourself first. Work through any exercises yourself first, etc. This will allow you to identify potential problem areas and plan your lesson accordingly.
- Take into account other time demands, such as the need to review assignment requirements.
- Allow for time for questions on difficult topics/concepts. Build time for questions into your lesson plan.
- Estimate the time each task will take, and be prepared to find out that your estimate is low.
- Be aware of course objectives, not just class objectives. Longer-term planning allows you to make connections between material across weeks, as well as divide other tasks such as preparing for assignments into more manageable 'units'. It also lets you see where there are 'lighter' weeks in the syllabus.

### Writing the lesson plan

- Assess what your students already know, and the time available versus the number of tasks that need to be accomplished.

- Keep the classroom dynamic in mind. Is the group fond of debates (allow more time) or do they have difficulty participating in discussion? The extra time it takes to get a discussion going will affect your planning for the class. Try to experiment with allowing time for individual writing in response to a question instead of always running a discussion.
- Prioritize your established tasks to ensure that you cover the most important concepts/subjects.
- Consider making use of time-controlled activities (group work, role-playing, in-class writing, individual presentations, etc).
- Be aware of hidden time demands (administrative issues, explanation of test procedures or assignments, questions from lectures, setting up technology, rearranging the room, etc.).

### **Some final tips**

- Make students aware of your learning objectives for the day. It is sometimes helpful to put an outline for that day's class on an overhead transparency or in one corner of the board. Indicate not only what activities you'll be doing and what exercises/problems you'll be working on, but how much time you'll be allotting each part of the class. Indicate what the overall goal is for that day.
- Always keep an eye on the passage of time during class.
- Assess the success of the lesson plan after each class and adapt for the next week.

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