

# Cleveland State University

## Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE)

### Best Teaching Practices for First Year Classes

#### General Student Success

- ❖ Use [Starfish](#) – for taking attendance and flagging students who may need extra help.
- ❖ Plan to give a [graded assignment](#) no later than the [third week of the semester](#). Make it something that you can grade quickly. Students find out how they are doing and this can direct your attention to students who may be having difficulties.
- ❖ [4-5 shorter assignments](#) over the course of the semester [rather than just a mid-term and a final](#) promote better student learning and assessment.

#### Syllabus Related

- ❖ Clear, complete syllabus-Here is a sample: [syllabus template](#)
  - Guidelines of expectations including classroom behavior
  - Include a semester schedule with due dates, test dates, assignment requirements and due dates, [academic calendar dates](#) (e.g. last date to withdraw)
  - Policies for class attendance, disability notification, use of electronics in class
  - Include your office hours and best way to contact you
  - [Video](#) on constructing a syllabus:

#### First Day of Class

- ❖ Meet and welcome your students
  - Help students meet one another as you learn their names. For instance, ask them to introduce themselves by naming one thing someone would not know by looking at them. For instance, number of siblings, favorite hobbies
  - Welcome latecomers, ask them to introduce themselves and urge them to catch up by conferring with a classmate
- ❖ Discuss the syllabus on the first day and then refer to it often during the semester
- ❖ Consider a syllabus “quiz” or even short small group discussions to elicit as many questions as possible.
- ❖ Have an activity planned to introduce students to the class material and to model your expectations of student engagement during the semester.
- ❖ Never end the first class early – remember you are setting the tone for the semester.
- ❖ Video: [Meeting a Class for the First Time](#)

#### Effective Learning to Engage Students and Instructors

- ❖ [Welcome student participation](#)
  - Use “A minute of wait time”: offer time for students to think about a question before calling on someone to respond to it. This is useful for those who like to think before they answer and ESL students.
  - Reduce the anxiety of responding by asking students to “talk to a neighbor” for a minute
- ❖ [Make Course Organization Visible](#)
  - Post an agenda for class meetings; students like knowing where they are going
  - Take a restroom break for classes meeting of more than 75 minutes

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- Start a class by talking about something important from the last class
- Create connections: End the class by asking the students to think about something specific that they will be reading between classes or that you will be discussing in the next class

### ❖ Effective Classes

- Plan a variety of activities to illustrate concepts and ideas: discussion, small groups, clicker questions, videos, in-class exercises, case studies, and online discussions, or ask students to supply an example.
- No more than 12 PowerPoint slides for each 50 minutes of class
  - The slides should augment what you say; post to your BB shell with any additional material
- Plan the class so that every 20 minutes you change what you are doing. Insert a clicker question or ask students to pair and share. Research has shown that this resets the brain and improves learning.
- Ask and listen to students' questions, comments, interpretations, and misconceptions – they are signposts of the learning that is happening.
- Students have different learning styles – use as many as possible. A very basic learning style is to use visual, auditory, and kinetic techniques; a more elaborate style is Kolb's 9 styles of learning.

### ❖ Use CSU's Student Resources

- Refer students to CSU resources designed to support their academic success
  - [Writing Center](#)
  - [Library](#)
  - [Tutoring and Academic Success Center](#)
- Rely on campus resources that support instruction, such as the [Center for Faculty Excellence](#): Classroom Instructional Videos can be a good place to start. In addition, check out the [CFE workshops scheduled](#) each semester.

### **Additional Online Resources:**

Seven Principles for Teaching Undergraduates: <http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching-resources/effective-practice/seven-principles/>

First Day of Class: <http://teaching.uncc.edu/learning-resources/articles-books/best-practice/education-philosophy/first-day-class>

Principles for assessing student learning: <http://teaching.uncc.edu/learning-resources/articles-books/best-practice/education-philosophy/assessing-student-learning>

### **Additional References:**

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Fink, L. D. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Svinicki, M., & McKeachie, W. J. (2011). *McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers* (13<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.