

Our Advice for Preparing for Teaching Presentations

Find out what course you'll be teaching. Contact the regular instructor if you can to find out what they're studying so you can make your presentation relevant. Ask the instructor if there are any specific topics that he/she would like you to cover. If you're scheduled for a "fake" class then you can prep nearly anything you want.

Don't try out something new. Teaching demonstrations are not the time to experiment. Stick with topics you know well and methods that have been successful in the past.

Frame your demonstration. This is your chance to show your future co-workers how you teach. If time, space, or resources constrain your usual teaching activities or methods then suggest how you would normally teach the material in a different classroom, in a computer lab, using ITV, etc. What type of material would have led up to this lesson? How would you follow it up? What type of assignment would be based upon the lesson?

Get them interested and keep them awake. Try to make at least part of your demonstration interactive. Stage a mock debate, ask questions, plan a project.

Advice from Friends

Don't pretend to teach. For the purpose of the demonstration the audience IS a group of students and you ARE the teacher. When they leave the room they should have learned something.

Use a variety of teaching methods. Don't lecture for 50 minutes, even if you're brilliant. Don't present a 50-minute PowerPoint presentation, even if it's the best PPT presentation in the world. Don't use the Socratic method for 50 minutes, even if you're Socrates. Mix it up. Divide your allotted time into three or four sections, then use a different method for each section. For example, start with a Q&A to get the students thinking, then present a short PPT to narrow the focus, then conclude with a small-group activity to help the students apply the principles you covered in the PPT. The committee wants to see that you can successfully use a lot of teaching methods/styles.

Be careful with humor. Don't be self-deprecating. Don't be humorous on-the-spot. If you have a joke, make sure it's planned so it doesn't bomb and make you look like an idiot. Yes, this was real advice. Which was so very appropriate to give to me, as you probably know. :)

Demo it for someone first. Preferably someone with no sense of humor and an *extremely* concrete thought process, who can help you identify when you're being too obtuse for polite company. That, and spit out your gum ahead of time. Gum makes you look stupid.

Provide the students with a "takeaway." In your own classroom, you would probably have students read an article or chapter *before* they come to class, but that probably won't be possible for your teaching demonstration. Instead, bring copies of an interesting article or chapter and send it home with the students. Even if no one reads it (and they probably won't), bringing some type of handout shows that you have thought about how to make connections between your in-class activities and your at-home readings. Even better than an article or chapter would be a one-page quick-reference guide that summarizes the key concepts covered in your teaching demonstration. This type of handout, of course, would take much more effort to create.

Do NOT talk too long at your demonstration or presentation. It's rude at conferences but it really sends the wrong message at interviews. Practice and time yourself, but don't overpractice yourself into a panic. And realize that you probably won't have a full 50 minutes anyway. The teacher may have some business to conduct before you begin, the search committee will introduce you, and you need to leave 5 minutes at the end for questions.

Have a Plan B. You might get to the classroom and find out that the bulb in the projector has burned out and you won't be able to show your PowerPoint presentation. Or you might have planned for a 20-minute discussion, only to have the students stubbornly refuse to participate. Whatever the case, make sure you have a Plan B of extra material or different activities that you can use to fill in.

Do not drink pop during or right before. Burping could occur. Or an excessive need to urinate, which would be horribly distracting.