

### What Else Can I Do Besides Lecture?

Marilla D. Svinicki, Ph.D.

Center for Teaching Effectiveness

The University of Texas at Austin

Many instructors are interested in exploring new instructional methods to break up the monotony of a semester worth of lectures, but they don't have a lot of alternatives from which to choose. The chart below shows some possibilities you might consider, depending on the objective of the instruction.

The five categories (direct, semi-direct, indirect and self-directed individual and group) reflect the allocation of control during learning from instructor to student control. Direct methods are best for information delivery, inspiration or illustration. Some of the self-directed methods are good for the learning of basic information. As the learning tasks become more analytical and complex, the focus shifts to active student participation which is the hallmark of indirect methods. The same is true for those situations where the goal is to explore student attitudes.

As you peruse these lists, you may see something which is unfamiliar or about which you would like to learn more. If so, please feel free to give us a call at the Center.

#### Some Alternative Methods

##### Direct

Primary activity is the delivery of information.

##### Examples

lectures  
panels  
debates  
films  
videotapes  
slide shows  
demonstrations

##### Semi-Direct

Primary activity is to deliver information and provide group practice.

##### Examples

listening teams  
student forums  
demonstration/performance  
case studies  
critical incidents  
reaction panels  
simulations/roleplays/in-basket exercises

##### Indirect

Primary activity is for learners to generate information or ideas and practice.

##### Examples

fishbowls  
discussion  
buzz groups  
trigger films  
bull sessions  
games

##### Self-Directed Individual

Primary activity is student working alone with materials.

##### Examples

computer-assisted instruction  
computer simulations  
self-study, PSI  
competency-based plans  
(contracting)  
auto-tutorial slide/tapes/ videotapes

##### Self-Directed Group

Primary activity is student working together with materials.

##### Examples

inquiry groups  
problem-solving groups  
team effectiveness groups  
team member teaching groups  
performance judging groups  
clarifying attitudes groups

### Selecting a Method

No one method is appropriate for all situations. The instructor must ask certain questions about the content, the learners, the situation and his or her own qualities, the answer to which will favor one or another method. Some of the most important questions are shown below with an indication of how various methods compare with respect to those constraints.

Questions	Lecture	Demonstration	Case Study	Discussion	Simulation	Group Work	Individualized
<b>About the Content</b>							
Type and level of objectives?							
Psychomotor		+					+
Attitudinal				+	+	+	
Knowledge of Facts	+	+	?				+
Application		+	+		+	+	+
Analysis			+	+	+	+	?
Synthesis				+	+	+	
Evaluation			+	+	+	+	?
<b>About the Students</b>							
Number under 30	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Number over 30	+	?	?			+	+
Homogeneous background	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Varied background				+	+	+	+
Beginners	+	+		?			+
Intermediate	?	+	?	+	+	+	+
Advanced		?	+	+	+	+	
<b>About the Situation</b>							
Time available limited	+	?					+
Time available lots	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Special needs		+		+	+	+	+
<b>About the Instructor</b>							
Good speaker	+	+	+				
Good with one-to-one			?	?	?		+
Questioning skills			+	+	+		
Patience and tolerance for ambiguity				+	+	+	
Need for control	+	+	+				?

After answering the above questions, you should have a good handle on what method would fit your situation. You may even find one that fits better than your current one. Don't be afraid to try it. You may like it!