



**Beginning a Lesson: Establishing Relevance**  
(part 1 of 3—see also *During a Lesson* and *Closing a Lesson*)

One of the most important things we can do as instructors is prepare our students for the day's lesson. If they do not know why certain content is important or how it pertains to their own lives, the chances of them retaining it drastically decrease.

When preparing the structure of your daily lessons, instructors should consider the first 10-15 minutes of class the Preparation Phase. Ask yourself, "*What is the purpose of today's lesson?*" The answer to this question should be more than "because it's on the exam" or "because it's the topic of the next chapter." Students want to know the relevance of the material they are studying. Why is it important for them to learn these concepts? Thinking through the purpose of the lesson will be helpful as you consider how you will make the lesson's purpose transparent to students.

**During the preparation phase of the lesson, instructors should emphasize the following three things:**

**1. Motivation**

Before introducing any new content, consider how you might pique students' interest in the topic. This can be done in the opening segments of the class by sharing facts and figures related to the topic, reading the headlines of a news story, sharing a personal story, reading a quote, or posing a difficult problem. The important thing is to focus on ways to inspire students to learn.

**2. Link**

Next, provide a link that connects your motivation to the lesson topic for the day. Good instructors are able to weave together how the motivation used to create interest actually ties to the lesson.

**3. Overview**

Finally, provide the overview of the lesson. Inform the students of the lesson goals or objectives. Give them the big picture of what you want them to know and be able to do at the end of the lesson.

The Preparation Phase—motivation, link, and overview—gives the instructor purpose for each day's lesson, and makes the content relevant and interesting to students.