



During a Lesson: Engaging Students

(part 2 of 3—see also *Beginning a Lesson* and *Closing a Lesson*)

The body of the lesson (after the motivational introduction and before the conclusion) contains the greatest amount of content, and it is imperative that students remain engaged throughout the duration. Unfortunately, it is typically during this phase of the lesson when students become the most disengaged, especially if the instructor does not provide any change to the flow of the lesson's delivery.

Variability is one of the key characteristics of effective teaching, and is an essential component of an engaging learning environment (Rosenshine & Furst, 1973). Therefore, effective instructors plan for multiple and varied experiences within one class period (Tyler, 1949).

Student-Active Lecture Breaks

One of the easiest ways to incorporate variability into your lesson is by implementing student-active lecture breaks. Research indicates that adults can attend to a lecture for no longer than 15-20 minutes before attention begins to wane (Nilson, 2016). Embedding lecture breaks that cause students to process information after each 15-20 minute lecture segment—such as participating in a Think-Pair-Share, writing a reflective paragraph, or analyzing a case-study related to the topic—requires students to actively engage with the content, and increases student engagement and retention (see ITLE video *Delivering an Effective Lecture* video and related PDF for more detailed information regarding lecture breaks).

Planning and implementing strategies that incorporate variability increases the likelihood that students will retain the content from your daily lessons.

Nilson, L. (2016). *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rosenshine, B., & Furst, N. (1973). Research on teacher performance criteria. In B.O. Smith (Ed.), *Research in teacher education: A symposium*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Tyler, R. W. (1949). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.