

When to Use the Lecture Method

And When Not to Use It

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Lecture is one of the most ancient and reliable methods of adult instruction. While some have pronounced the lecture dead in the contemporary classroom, it is still used effectively in universities, seminars, etc. It does have its problems; it does not help students learn to think for themselves, for example. But the lecture still can be the preferred method of instruction in certain situations.

When to Use the Lecture Method

The lecture method is ideal for *transmitting information*. Other methods assist in processing information or challenging students to action. But lecture is often the best way to transmit information in a short amount of time. Thus, lecture may be appropriate . . .

When information is not readily available to the student from another source. The teacher may study a topic that is unknown or obscure to the students.

When the teacher needs to synthesize information from a variety of sources. The teacher will often study several commentaries on a Bible passage. He can thus combine the information and explain why different interpretations exist.

When the teacher needs to highlight relationships and points that students may not recognize. It is easy to overlook facts from one part of the Bible when studying another part.

To deepen the student's motivation to learn additional information. Lecture can be used to raise questions in the student's mind, causing him or her to seek answers. Teachers promote this kind of seeking when not providing "the" definitive answer to the question at hand.

If there is a need to correct a misunderstanding of the Bible or doctrine. For example, Mormon doctrine teaches that Jesus and Satan are brothers. The lecture method can be used to make students aware of this teaching and to refute it.

To remove obstacles to learning, such as inadequate or wrong assumptions. For example, Bible students have developed many assumptions about the book of Revelation. Lecture can provide insight into the assumptions before delving into the text itself.

To resolve conflicting perspectives on a given subject or text. Lecture can be used to explain opposing viewpoints. This may provide an opportunity to search for common ground among those viewpoints.

When the teacher's personality is best seen in a lecture. Teaching is a very personal activity. Lecture often allows the student to go beyond the content of the lesson to learn from the teacher's life.

Thus the lecture method remains a legitimate teaching method. However, this not to suggest that lecture is the *only* valid method of instruction.

When **Not** to Use the Lecture Method

There are at least four factors that should cause the teacher to consider using a method other than straight lecture. Lecture may not be appropriate . . .

If your learning objectives require you to go beyond mastery of content. Every lesson should feature not only a *content* lesson aim, but also *concept* and *conduct* aims. Your learners need to go beyond what the Bible *says* to what it *means* and, especially, what it *demands* of your learners. These aims will usually be best accomplished through some means other than lecture.

If your class has knowledgeable students who can contribute insight to the subject at hand. For example, why lecture about global missions if your class happens to have a former missionary?

If you have time to use more creative teaching methods. Once when I was teaching at an adult retreat, I literally had *hours* of time to fill. That amount of time was ideal for me to use teaching methods other than lecture.

If your classroom is not designed for lecture. If your learning area is equipped with chairs at round tables, with a projector and no lectern, etc., then why force a lecture method into a physical context not designed for it?

In short, lecture is a good method, but not the only good method. Recognizing the times and places that make lecture useful is as important as knowing what other methods are available for those times and places when it is not.