



PART 5—THE CLASSROOM SETTING

Notes



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section *The Classroom Setting*
5.1, 5.2, 5.3.

5.1 Introduction

When was the last time an instructor captured your imagination before he or she even started speaking? If you dress up the classroom it shows that something is about to happen and demonstrates that you're prepared. A nice classroom setting with handouts can help set the stage for the excitement ahead.

Beginning, Middle, and End. The students should be anticipating that the program will have a beginning, middle, and an end. Try to have props within sight so the students think, "I wonder what those are for? This seminar is really going to be something." At the beginning of the presentation you should tell them what you're going to teach them. During the middle of the presentation you should teach them, and at the end you should provide a summary that tells your students what you taught them. Feedback should be gathered using an evaluation instrument that will ask students what you taught them.

Control. Don't teach in an unacceptable environment (such as in a supply house or warehouse), and don't teach a topic you're not happy with or in a manner you believe won't have favorable results. The final class outcome will reflect on you as an instructor, so do all you can to be sure the facilities and class curriculum are correct for the situation.

5.2 Classroom

Be sure the class environment is conducive to learning and is comfortable for you to teach in. If the facility isn't acceptable, request or find something that is. A nice classroom environment is more enjoyable for your students. Teaching a class in a shop or similar industrial area should be avoided.

Motivating Posters. If you're teaching high school classes or young adults, you may be able to motivate your students with posters or visuals of sports cars, motorcycles, boats, or other things that interest them. Encourage them in their studies by pointing out that these things are attainable if they become trained professionals. Share information about high-wage jobs in the field that they may wish to pursue.

Noise. Be careful when setting up your facilities if teaching in a hotel, hall or conference area. Be sure the room next door isn't booked for a wedding or other noisy party that could cause distractions. If there's an occasional commotion or outburst, try to ignore it and not draw attention to it. If it's very noticeable, you may be able to relieve any student tension or distraction with a subtle joke about the situation. (For example; it sounds like they're

having lots of fun next door, they must be studying trigonometry!) Don't acknowledge minor commotions caused by students leaving the room or catering staff bringing in soft drinks, water, coffee, and so on.

Room Quality. The quality of the room makes a big difference in the moods of the students. Make an effort to use the most professional facilities you can. Don't worry about intimidating your students, they like nice facilities. You can never have a facility that's too nice.

Chairs are another important part of the learning environment. Sit in one yourself and imagine how this will feel after an hour or more. Make certain your students have tables, and not just chairs.

Room Temperature. The temperature of the room is an important factor. Too cold and your students are wondering how they can get warmer. Too warm and they'll relax and possibly fall asleep. Find out how the temperature is controlled and if you need to have it changed, do so in one-degree increments.

If the temperature is just right (just a little cold) the body will attempt to keep itself warm. Blood circulation increases and provides more oxygen to the brain and results in improved attention span. Drinking coffee can help keep people alert as well.

Pay attention to the temperature during the day and make adjustments as needed. In the information students receive before coming to class, suggest they bring along a jacket or sweater.

5.3 Classroom Layout

Where possible, have the room set up in a classroom style layout with two people per 6-foot table or three per 8-foot table. A herringbone pattern is good for small groups. If there are more tables set up than you'll need, remove the ones from the back rows before students arrive. This will move the class together.

When selecting meeting room space, order a room based on the number of tables you want, not on the number of attendees you expect. Also order it 50 percent larger than your actual needs. If you're expecting 30 students, plan for 45 and order 23 tables (assuming 6-foot tables) with two chairs per table. This will give your students sufficient working space and if more people than expected arrive you can add chairs to the tables.



Notes

There should be sufficient room between tables (at least three feet) so it doesn't feel like the chairs are cramped together without enough space to move. Be sure to specify this when you order the room. Make sure there's enough space between your instructor table and the student tables so you'll be free to move around. Slide the rows away from the center if necessary to make enough room for yourself.

Avoid round tables as they can lead to student cross conversations and inattention during the presentation. In addition, if the tables are round, only about 25 percent of the people will be facing the right direction! Avoid auditorium style seating where possible as the students can spread out and "get lost" in this type of arrangement. It's better to have everyone grouped together.

When making meeting room arrangements for a two-day event, be sure you have the same room both days. Don't allow the facility's event planners to move you to a different room for the second day.

Be sure the proper equipment (such as an AV screen and projection table) is provided and don't allow the screen to be set up in a corner. Specify the screen size as follows:

- One 8 x 8-foot screen for a class of up to 40 people
- One 9 x 12-foot screen for a class of up to 100 people
- One 12 x 12-foot screen for a class of up to 150 people
- Two 12 x 12-foot screens for a class of up to 300 people
- Four 12 x 12-foot screens for a class size of over 300 people