

PREPARE

“Always come to class prepared to be taught and to teach... Think about what you have done and be ready to explain what you have learned and what you think.” Kim B. Clark, Devotional Address, September 5, 2006

PURPOSE

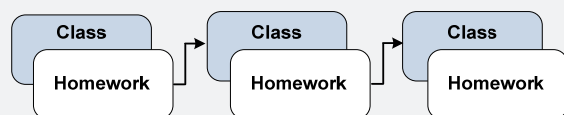
Preparation is the first step in the learning model process. Before students can teach one another, they must qualify themselves through appropriate preparation. You must also prepare by structuring pre-class and in-class experiences that actively engage students in learning and teaching.

DESCRIPTION

You play a primary role in preparing students for learning and teaching.

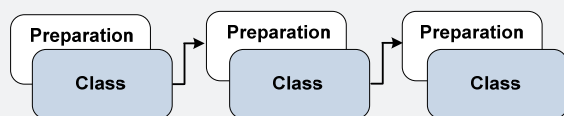
A common pattern of student behavior begins as students listen to the class lecture. This is then followed by a homework assignment to review the material covered in class.

Traditional Student Behavior



The BYU-Idaho Learning Model suggests that students prepare before class so they can contribute to in-class learning and teaching experiences.

BYU-Idaho Learning Model



This approach shifts student effort so that foundational knowledge is studied before meeting. Doing so opens up class time for deeper learning, such as comprehension and application, while still allowing for the use of homework as a follow-up to ponder and prove what was discussed in class.

Develop a Culture of Preparation

Instructors who are most successful with student preparation develop a learning culture where students feel a responsibility to come prepared. One student explained this as “not wanting to let [his] classmates down by being unprepared.” Such a culture fosters a feeling of partnership between you

and the students as common goals are established and pursued. Four key principles are essential in establishing and maintaining this culture:

- **Explain why.** Early in the course, take time to help students understand how their investment in preparation can pay large dividends in learning. Class time becomes more productive and learning deepens as students prepare to contribute. Lack of preparation not only cheats students of the learning they might have had, but also cheats their peers, who will not benefit from their insights.
- **Show how.** Further develop the culture by being explicit about how preparation fits into the learning cycle of the course. Show how class sessions will build upon preparation to explore, expand, and deepen student learning. Explain the students’ role to prepare and actively contribute as well as your role to design learning experiences. Preparation not only “sets up” individual classes, but bridges and develops ideas from one class to another.
- **Keep preparation relevant.** Design class activities that build on preparation and implement it in new ways. This reinforces the culture of preparation as students find that they must come prepared in order to participate.
- **Always hold students accountable.** Be vigilant in maintaining the culture of preparation. If students are unprepared, do not bail them out by reviewing the preparation material. Build incentives into the class structure for student preparation and have consequences for the lack thereof.

EXAMPLES

A number of approaches can be used to reinforce a culture of preparation. Consider using a variety of methods that include intrinsic motivation, social encouragement, grades, etc. Consider the following before and during class.

Before Class

- **Pre-class assessments.** Have students take a quiz or exam online. This allows you to see how well students understand assigned reading material prior to class.
- **Structured online interaction.** Create forums where students can interact with material that stimulates learning and teaching prior to class.
- **Pre-class assignments.** Well-crafted assignments can focus students on desired learning outcomes before the in-class learning occurs.
- **Learning groups.** Structure face-to-face learning groups that interact with the content before class begins.

During Class

- **Build lesson plans around prepared students.** This will leverage the learning you can gain from these activities and promote preparation.
- **Allow students to demonstrate preparation.** It is vital that class is structured in such a way that students demonstrate their preparation. Examples of this type of teaching include:
 1. Cold calls
 2. Mutual peer tutoring
 3. Student presentations
 4. Group work/teams
 5. Questioning, discussion, etc.
- **Create class time for processing preparation.** Help students refresh their memory and reframe their preparation with learning activities that build up to your lesson.
- **Comment on pre-class online assignments.** Make reference to specific student's statements or comments from online preparation. Students' motivation increases when they know you are reading and drawing upon their assignments.

TIPS

- **Preparation material must be purposeful and given in appropriate amounts.** Design preparation outcomes and plan to meet them. Realistically gauge the time the preparation will require and keep it within acceptable bounds.
- **Always check preparation.** Failure to follow-up signals to your students that it is not important to prepare. Students will be quick to regress to poor habits. Re-establishing the commitment to prepare can be more difficult than obtaining it in the first place.
- **Consider attaching a percentage of the overall grade to preparation.** Some faculty assign between 10-25% of the overall grade to effective preparation.

PITFALLS

- **Irrelevant preparation.** Students are quickly turned off by pre-class "busy work" that is not correlated with the classroom experience.
- **Not setting the example.** Post class materials, resources, and tests on time. If students detect that you are behind or unprepared for class, they may justify themselves for coming less prepared.

CAMPUS PRACTITIONERS

[Stan Kivett](#), [Anne Marie Harmon](#), [Evan Hansen](#),
[James Helfrich](#), [Bill Riggins](#)

KEY ARTICLES

[Felder, R.M., Brent, R., \(1996\). Navigating the bumpy road to student-centered Instruction. *College Teaching*, 44\(2\), 43-52.](#)
[Wiggins, G. P. \(2004\). *Assessment as Feedback*. New Horizons for Learning.](#)

OTHER RESOURCES

- [Tips for Getting Students to Prepare for Class](#)