

TUTORIALS

Some Important Do's and Don'ts

There are different styles of tutorials, but whatever the style, the following general comments apply.

Make sure that you can be heard comfortably from all parts of the room. It is usually necessary to check, because different rooms can turn out to be very different. (One way to check is to ask.) Of course, being audible isn't simply a matter of speaking loudly enough; it also involves speaking slowly and clearly—and to the students, not the chalkboard! Another thing: please speak with inflection and not in a monotone. (How many times have you heard people talking about Professor So-and-So "droning on as usual"?—and how enthusiastic were they about the person and the course?)

The audibility of your students is more likely to be a problem than your own audibility. Especially when they are timid about speaking, students often speak too quietly to be heard by everyone in the room. This problem can be fatal to any discussion if something isn't done about it, but at the same time you need to be careful about how you deal with it, in order not to make students regret having spoken at all. Maybe you can say something about not having caught the last bit of what was said; or, instead of saying anything to the student, paraphrase what was said as a preliminary to inviting comment from other students (or whatever it is that you want to do next). It is a good idea to mention at the first meeting that it is necessary to speak quite loudly to be heard by everyone "in a group this size" or "in this room."

Pauses are another important aspect of speaking. After you ask a question, wait—to allow every one time to think. Also, after a student asks a question, again there needs to be time to think: time for you to think, and probably a longer time for your students to think enough so that their minds will be ready to come to grips with somebody's response to the question. Similarly, statements other than questions are often simply wasted if time is not allowed for them to be absorbed before something else is said.

If English is not your first language, and you do not understand something a student has said to you, please ask them to repeat things slowly or rephrase what they have said. Ask them to let you know if they cannot understand you. Don't pretend to understand, if you do not. Try to SLOW DOWN your speaking speed, to project your voice, to talk directly to the class, and to avoid mumbling. You can also ask the Undergraduate & Graduate Administrator or the Associate Chair of Graduate Studies about university services that are available to help you improve your English if you are interested. Check the department bulletin boards for notices about such classes.

Besides what you say, there is also what goes on to the chalkboard. Be sure that it is legible and visible, large enough and dark enough, and not hidden from students by an obstacle such as a lectern or desk—if in doubt ask the students if they can read what you have written. At the end of the first meeting, have a *look for yourself*, from *a* back corner of the room, at what you have written.

If you think it is worthwhile for students to copy something from the chalkboard, remember that they will need time to do it.

Of course: be well prepared; arrive a few minutes early; and don't run overtime. **Classes begin at 10 minutes past the hour, and end on the hour.**