The following teaching tip was taken from the University of California - Berkeley’s web site “Berkeley Compendium: Suggestions for Teaching with Excellence,” 9/2005. If you would like to visit the site for other tips, the web address is: http://teaching.berkeley.edu/compendium/.

Focus your lectures on a few main points

• Explain clearly
• Emphasize conceptual understanding
• Emphasize the main point
• Help students follow explanations or difficult concepts

YOU MAY WISH TO CONSIDER:

• Focusing your lecture on a few main points and omitting unnecessary exceptions, complexities or details.
• Limit the amount of material covered by a single lecture. An error made by many faculty members is to include too much information in a single class period.
One economics professor noted: “I generally focus on three main points and repeat these in various ways throughout my lecture. Beginning undergraduates do not need to be exposed to the intricacies and complexities of a discipline; indeed, introducing them to these will only confuse them. Introductory course are best taught by focusing on the fundamentals, using generalizations, and avoiding too many exceptions to the rule.”
• Do not get into complex debates with undergraduates because many are not sophisticated enough to appreciate or understand the complexities.
• Rephrase explanations of major points several times from different perspectives or in different words.
• Empathize with students’ difficulties in learning the material for the first time.
• Color-code difficult lecture notes and make a special effort to make those points clear.
• Ask yourself questions about your lecture notes in particular areas students might have trouble with. Ask ‘What examples might make this more clear?’
• Make notes on what worked well in class and those that didn’t.
• Keep records of the most commonly made errors on tests and assignments and use that information to make modifications to your teaching.