

Language that supports structuring efforts

Introductions and conclusions

Introductions and conclusions frame a lecture. Regardless of how compelling a topic is, what you say about it at the beginning and at the end is what will most likely remain fresh in your students' minds.

Introducing a topic and establishing its relevance. At the beginning of a lecture, when the levels of fatigue are low, and students have not yet been exposed to an influx of new information, the introduction has three main aims: to gain attention, to communicate your purpose, and to set the scene for what follows. This is also the point at which you can convey your enthusiasm for the topic and encourage your students to connect with it.

Today, I am going to focus on/discuss/talk about...

Today's topic is very important because...

What we are going to cover today is...

Today's topic is of particular interest to those who...

Stating your purpose. Regardless of which teaching style you prefer, when preparing a lecture, it is crucial to bear in mind its desired objective. What should the students know after the lecture? What should the students be able to do? This would need to be clearly communicated to them.

Our goal is to determine how/the best way to...

What I want to show you is...

Today, I'd like to update you on/inform you about...

In the next few hours, we'll be working on...with the purpose of...

By the end of this lecture, you will be familiar with...

Announcing the lecture structure. It is useful to put yourself in the shoes of your audience. You surely know what you set out to do, but if you make it explicit for the students as well, they will follow you more easily. Thus, it is advisable to give them a roadmap or an outline of your lecture. At this point, you can also inform your students of how you would like to tackle questions.

I have divided my presentation into X (main) parts.

In my presentation, I will focus on X major issues.

First, I will deal with... Next, I will talk about... Finally, I will discuss...Let me know if you have

any questions at any point.

Concluding a lecture and summarizing the main points. It is difficult to maintain the same level of attention throughout a lecture, especially when we are exposed to a wealth of new information. At the end of a lecture, students tend to focus again, as they expect you to reiterate what they are required to know. In addition to summarizing the main points, conclusions allow you to connect the topic to the bigger picture and to emphasize how the aims of the lecture were fulfilled.

We'll now briefly refer to the key points.

Before I stop, I'd like to recap/sum up/go over/run through the main points, which were...

As we wrap up, let me briefly summarize the main issues.

First, I covered..., then we talked about... and finally we looked at...

I think we can conclude that...

Today I wanted to... and I'll finish by saying...

Ending the lecture. After you have finished summarizing the topic of the day, you may want to leave the audience with a “take-away” message – the final point you want to underline. Before the very end, you can thank your audience for their attention and invite them to ask any questions they may have.

I'd like to finish by emphasizing...

Finally, may I say...

Thank you for your attention.

Let's call it a day, and I'll see you next week.

REFLECTION POINT

- Think about a very successful lecture or presentation you attended. How was it structured? Which elements helped you follow the presenter's train of thought?
- Reflect on your own lectures and try to estimate to what extent you utilize the structuring elements mentioned above. Do you familiarize the students with the lecture purpose at the beginning of the class?
- Do you provide the students with an outline of the lecture?
- Do you recapitulate the key points of the lecture at the end of the class and refer to the fulfilment of the class objective?
- Think about your own teaching style. Do you prefer lecturing without interruptions or a more interactive approach? When do you like to handle students' questions?
- Do you inform your students when they can ask questions relating to the covered topic?

The core of the lecture

The central part of the lecture is when we deal with the actual content. We present the main points, support them with examples, and walk the students through the steps of argumentation, while 'weaving' in how different aspects relate to one another and to the bigger picture. In other words, we perform many tasks and, correspondingly, many communicative functions.

It is important to remember that in order to stay on topic (for both our own and our audience's sake) the body of the lecture should be organized around a limited number of main ideas. The following section presents phrases that help us achieve clarity as they reveal the relationships between concepts and ideas, mark the direction of the lecture, and orient the audience by reminding them of what has been said and what is to follow. It also shows that it is useful to supply mini summaries before moving to a next point, to highlight certain points and provide supporting examples. Finally, as we typically present a fair amount of content in the central part of a lecture, it can be useful to provide accompanying visuals; hence a set of useful phrases for referring to visual aids (see *Referring to visuals* below).

Referring to the previous lesson. By reminding students of the issues that you have already covered, you help them activate their schematic knowledge. This not only helps them focus on what follows but may also reinforce their understanding of previous topics, and, consequently, lead to the construction of new knowledge more easily.

Let's review some of the concepts we talked about last time.
Last time, we were looking at..., so today we'll discuss/move on to...
In our last class, we dealt with..., and today we continue with...

Internal summaries. If a segment of a lecture goes on for a while, it is quite possible that your students' attention will wander. Using these signposting phrases will alert them to the fact that you are restating what you have already explained.

In the previous part of today's lecture, we've covered...
So, this gives us context for...
What I am trying to say is...
So far, I've presented...

Moving from one point to another. Marking topic changes helps maintain the students' attention and makes it easier for them to follow the lecture. Here are several phrases that might come in handy when you want to indicate that you are moving from one point to another.

Now, let's look at/move on to/consider/turn our attention to...
This leads/brings me to my next point/question, which is...
This raises the following issue(s)/question(s)...
So far, we have looked at... Now I'd like to...

Backward reference. There will often be a need for you to show how one aspect of the topic relates to another one already introduced. Before you establish the connection between such parts, you might want to signal to your students that they have been exposed to the information you are about to mention.

As we saw/noted earlier...
Let's go back to...
As I pointed out in the first section...
If you consider what I've told you about X at the beginning of today's lecture...
The other aspect of X that I mentioned compares to Y in the following features...

Emphasizing important points. Given that we present our students with a multitude of new information, it is well worth the effort to highlight the most significant points to facilitate student learning.

I would like to draw your attention to...
It should be underlined /emphasized that...
This brings us to our major question...
The point to understand is...
This is exactly what/why...

Providing examples. Our aim is to help students understand the concepts we present and their interrelationships. Examples make our claims clearer, give students more information and reduce the possibility of misunderstanding. (see Section 2.5. *Engaging*)

I'd like to illustrate my point with an example.
For instance, ...
To clarify, here is a common/well-known/typical example...
A less well-known/similar/different/recent example is...
An example you might be familiar with is...

Referring to visual material. Different disciplines make use of charts, diagrams, illustrations and similar visuals to demonstrate relationships, changes or trends related to relevant concepts. If you use visual material, make sure you explicitly address it and point out what students should be looking at and how exactly it supports or illustrates your argument.

As can be seen/you can see from the chart/ table/ picture...

This slide/ table/ diagram shows...
I'd like you to look at this illustration of... On the X side you can see...
The vertical/ horizontal axis shows...
The coloured segment represents...

Digressions. Lecturers sometimes feel the need to briefly move away from the main topic. It is useful to signal such moments to your audience; here are some phrases you can use to digress from and get back on topic.

I'd like to digress here for a moment and look at/consider...
If you'll allow me to stray for a moment, ...
You might be interested to know...
To get back to the point...
Getting back/returning to what we were discussing earlier...

REFLECTION POINT

Do you use any of the transition phrases mentioned in the previous section? Make note of the ones you often use. Read aloud the following excerpt on types of language assessment. Where could you add transitions to improve its flow? Try to add transition phrases and read the excerpt aloud again.

And now... erm... we look at... hmmm... this other type. It's called performance assessment. It's different because it integrates skills. Traditional tests focus on one or two skills at the time. Performance assessment integrates, so it's more authentic. Giving a presentation is more authentic... a more authentic language use than a grammar test. And... erm... yes, traditional tests look at product. Performance looks at process. Here... see how they differ. But it doesn't mean one is better than another. Depends on the purpose. If your assessment construct is the recognition of some grammatical structure, you can use multiple choice. OK. Then portfolios. They are also performance assessment, and you can look at the process and the product.

PLACEHOLDERS: Sometimes your students might ask a question you have not anticipated. You may, then, wish to use some of these placeholders to help you while you are thinking of a coherent reply:

- Right, that is an interesting point.
- Let me try to answer by addressing one part of your question at the time.
- Thank you for asking that/pointing that out. It is a very good question.
- That's an interesting idea. I haven't thought of that.