

The importance of having a script

If you are used to teaching on-ground classes, scripting your lectures may be the most unnatural step in developing your content. While scripting may feel unnecessary to some experienced educators, it may be the most crucial step in the course development process especially if you are delivering your course in English for the first time.

Writing a script will allow your speech to sound and flow better. It will allow you to avoid hesitations. By writing a script you will have the time to find the best sentences to deliver your ideas clearly and simply. You can insert storytelling techniques that will make your message more engaging (an aspect we will be looking at closely in the second live session). Writing a script is an opportunity to look for the right terminology and avoid repetition and hesitations. Your script can include pronunciation cues such as word stress, pauses, and thought groups.

Having a script doesn't mean you will be reading your lecture. We really don't expect you to read the script in class. Once the script is ready we advise you to rehearse it until you know the script well enough to deliver it without looking at your notes so you can look the students in their eyes and see how they are reacting to your content. Already the process of having written a script and searched your words and structured the ideas will for sure help you then deliver your message more accurately and fluently even if you aren't using exactly the same wording.

Pausing and dividing your speech into small pieces

Adding pauses and dividing your speech into small pieces makes your message clearer and more intelligible for your listener.

What will happen if I don't divide my speech into small pieces and mark the pauses?

You might overwhelm your students with too much information. Without dividing and pausing, it will be hard for listeners to follow your meaning.

Look at these examples. Try reading both of them out loud. Which one do you think a listener would understand better?

Sample 1	Sample 2
Does it really matter whether people speak with an accent as long as they can be easily understood many people now believe that in an increasingly globalised world we should accept variations in pronunciation that is accent. However there's no point in speaking with an accent if people can't understand you is there?	Does it really matter / whether people speak with an accent / as long as they can be easily understood?// Many people now believe / that in an increasingly globalised world / we should accept variations in pronunciation / that is / accent. // However / there's no point in speaking with an accent / if people can't understand you / is there?//

Please note, speech pieces and pauses are marked with a slash / or // for a longer pause.

When writing your script, please divide your speech into pieces and mark the pauses.

More practical tips

Signposting

It is a good idea to build a repertoire of phrases that signal your progression as you move through your lecture. This is called signposting language. Here are some examples of signposting phrases that indicate you have finished talking about a point/item/concept and you are moving on to another one: Now we come to, or Turning now to, or Moving on now to. It is also important here to pause and signal with our voice that we have come to a new part of the session.

It is good practice to balance general information with specific examples, this helps reinforce coherence and relate new information to existing information.

It is important for you to feel comfortable with the language you are using; choose expressions you feel comfortable with.

Deliver your lecture without reading your notes

Know your material well enough to present it without notes. This communicates to students that the material is important enough for you to have internalized and assures students that you will be able to answer their questions (i.e., that you know more than is in your notes). This will also allow you to make eye contact with your students and be attentive to students' reactions. Research shows that students are more receptive when lecturers seem at ease,

are energetic, and use colloquial speech, self-disclosure, and humor when appropriate (Bligh, 2000)¹.

Encourage students to ask questions

Tell your students that you expect questions, that you will give plenty of time for them, and that you will do your best to answer them thoughtfully and respectfully. Students are more likely to ask questions if you pause and solicit questions throughout your speech, especially when dealing with complex issues and before moving on to new topics. The way you invite students to ask questions is also important. For instance, *'are there any questions?'* is less likely to get a response than *'what questions do you have?'* and when the instructor does not move on until at least one question has been asked (often one question will spark another). It might be a good idea to pose specific but open-ended questions to your students.

Create a friendly environment where students feel safe to ask questions

Create an atmosphere that encourages your students to participate by using a conversational tone and not criticizing their questions or comments in front of the class. Students take a risk when they talk; you need to deal tactfully with their contributions.

Pay attention to your body language

Your body language can also influence student participation. Consider moving closer to the students rather than speaking from behind the podium. Explain your reasons for varying the traditional lecture style. Students tend to more willingly participate in class if they understand the reasons behind an approach that may be unfamiliar.

¹ Donald Bligh, 2000. *What's the Use of Lectures?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers