

Why Do I Need to Learn This?

How to Establish Relevance & Enhance Student Learning

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Math phobic's nightmare

What is relevance?

Relevance is blending old knowledge with new.

Why students need it

- How all humans judge if a task is worth doing: is it useful? Important?
- Enables students to create and strengthen neuronal networks¹
- Lessens burden on working memory²
- Gives students a means to tap into intrinsic motivation, perform better, and exert more effort³

¹ Zull, James E. 2002. *The Art of Changing the Brain*. Stylus Publishing, Sterling, Virginia.

² Nilson, Linda. 2010. *Gateway to the Workings of the Learner's Mind*. Session presented at the 35th Annual Professional and Organizational Development Conference. St. Louis, MO. November 3-7.

How do you establish it?

- Establish clear learning outcomes
- Design assessment that models situations in which skills/knowledge will be used
- Ask students how their knowledge relates to their lives, other courses
- Talk about how your own interest developed
- Teach using scenarios or case studies
- Teach through fieldwork or other hands-on experiences
- Introduce a problem before a concept (problem-based learning)

Resources

Tutorial on designing a course:

<http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/coursedesign/tutorial/index.html>

Writing learning objectives: <http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Tools/LearningObj/>

Tips on how to design a course with problem-based learning:

<http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Tools/PBL/>

How to create and teach with case studies: <http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Tools/Cases/>

Establishing Relevance: A Pocket Guide

What

What are we doing in class today? What questions will we try to answer?

What concepts will we address? What activities will we do?

Why

Why are we studying this? How are today's content and activities tied to course learning outcomes?

What should I know or be able to do after today's class? How can the information and skills be used in everyday life?

How

How are we going to address the content? Through lecture? Activities? Discussion?

Adapted from: Fox, Jeff. 2010 Establishing Relevance. *The Teaching Professor* 24(5):1.

³ McClure, Nancy. 2005. IDEA Item #4. *POD—IDEA Center Notes*.

<http://www.theideacenter.org/sites/default/files/Item4Formatted.pdf>