

# Terry's Teaching Tips

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These few notes, based on my experiences as a teacher for over 30 years, might be useful to trainee teachers. In no particular order:

1. Start strict for the first three months or so. This sets the tone for the rest of your lessons. You can lighten up and relax the rules later. It is very hard (impossible?) to regain control if you start off too soft and then try to harden up.
2. Be immensely patient and good-humoured. As far as is possible, be consistent and fair. Be enthusiastic about your subject. Enthusiasm is infectious.
3. Start on time, every time. Never be absent. You are setting an example to every student. Encourage students to be on time as you are. If you allow five minutes or so for latecomers to arrive before starting your lesson, then you are teaching them that it is ok to be late, and they will then arrive even later. Students always test where the boundaries are.
4. Be well prepared. Plan and create your lessons well in advance. Follow your plans. But do not be afraid to abandon a plan if the lesson seems to be not working, or if you think of a better way of presenting the subject. The aim of every lesson must be that every student learns something. Set a range of graded exercises, from easy to hard, so that the weakest students can learn something, achieve and gain confidence, and the stronger students can be stretched. By having lessons prepared well in advance you never run out of teaching and learning material. And being well-prepared improves your knowledge of the subject, helps your self-confidence.
5. Create useful student notes. Put them on your own website of teaching materials. So, if students ignore you in class, or if they are absent, at least they can then refer to your notes at their leisure. Remember to quote the sources of the information you used to create your notes. This sets a good example to students. Provide a method by which students can contact you at any time, perhaps by email. Some students work best outside the class.
6. Be generous in your praise of effort and attitude. Praising effort (rather than achievement) helps to encourage most students to work even harder. Avoid criticising students and their work. In your comments mention how students could improve their work.
7. Be focussed on getting students through their exams. A student pass rate is perhaps the best marker of teaching ability. Teach students how to pass exams. Remind them that genius is usually the result of focussed effort, a refusal to be distracted. (I seem to remember that Einstein said something like that.)
8. Teach the students how to teach themselves, how to think for themselves, and how to solve their own problems. You have succeeded if you find that you are redundant and the student does not need you. Whatever you do, the aim must be for the students to learn.
9. Refer the students to useful sources of information such as websites and textbooks. This helps save their time and directs their effort. Expect students to quote the sources of their information. Scholars stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before them.
10. Remember your favourite teachers. Be inspired by them. What did they do to make their lessons enjoyable for you? Learn from them. Above all, enjoy your teaching.