FIVE COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE LECTURES

From a study of effective lectures sponsored by
Ken Bain, Director of the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence, Northwestern University

We discovered that the most highly rated lecturers nearly always have five elements in their lectures:

A. **Begin with a question.** What question will the lecture help students to understand? How can you most effectively raise that question? Is there a story that will raise the question?

B. **Help students understand the significance of the question:** Call attention to significance; explain significance; tie to previous and larger question; raise question in provocative way so significance is self-evident; help students understand what they will understand better or be able to do better after listening to the lecture and thinking about it.

C. **Ask students to make a judgement and provide them with some basis for making the judgement.** In some cases this might mean to judge the argument you are about to make. In others, it might be to decide when and how to use the procedure, the method, the explanation your offer. In still others it might be to determine the implications of what you are concluding or to make a judgement between different methods of solving a problem. Or it might include all of these, and more.

D. **Answer the question (the heart of the lecture).** Every point that a lecture might make is an answer to some question. Make the question clear and answer it.

E. **Leave students with a problem or question.** What’s the next question? Where do we go from here? What are the implications of this material? What are the problems in accepting this interpretation?

If you want to communicate in ways that will stimulate students to think, question, construct their understanding, learn how and when to use procedures, to make good judgements, and so forth, you should adopt an organization that promotes thinking: Begin with questions, make significance clear, call for a decision, make an argument, raise additional questions.

**Less effective lectures often offer only the fourth element. Highly effective lectures may sometimes leave out that element and include all of the others.**

Source: [http://president.scfte.nwu.edu/bestorglechtm.htm](http://president.scfte.nwu.edu/bestorglechtm.htm)