



# Seminar and Small Group Teaching: Interactive Seminars

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## The ideal seminar?

# Passive vs. Interactive Teaching



- **Passive teaching:**
  - Boredom... deadly silence!
  - Poor attendance, lack of preparation
  - Lack of student participation weakens understanding of material
- **Interactive teaching:**
  - Students less likely to become discouraged/bored
  - Deeper understanding
  - Aids interest and motivation

# Transferable Skills



- Interactive seminars can improve:
  - Confidence
  - Ability
  - Motivation
  - Performance
  - Employment prospects



# Know your class

- Class composition
- Initial tests
- Taking in homework
- Content guided by students

# Who are your students?



- Different backgrounds and goals
- Increase in international students
- Fees – students as customers
- Reluctance – quantitative subjects



# Expectations

- Role of seminars
- Extent of preparation for seminars
- Follow up work after seminars
- Expectations of homework, presentations
- Participation in seminars

# Planning your seminars



- Make seminars independent events
  - Aims and objectives
  - Structure
    - Beginnings  
Lecture Material; Examples; Difficult Parts of Worksheets
    - Endings  
[Perfect Competition](#)
  - Variety
  - Materials
- Introduce interactive techniques that exploit:
  - Varied student abilities and backgrounds
  - Encourage participation
    - Start gently
  - Transferable skills
- Guidance for other tutors



# Seminar content

- Ask preliminary questions
- Worksheets
- Student presentations
- Links with assessment (a great ending)
- Activities
  - Students marking each other's work
  - Filling in gaps and correcting mistakes
  - Games/experiments
- In-class informal quizzes

[Noughts and Crosses: http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/showcase/elliott\\_0x](http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/showcase/elliott_0x)



Interactive Methods that  
have worked for you?



## Barriers to the ideal seminar?

# Top tips for exercises



- Keep notation consistent and explain it
- Make steps in the reasoning explicit
- Use questions to guide students through the reasoning
- Provide intuition – plan examples/ask students to find examples in advance
- Identify possible pitfalls or cases – anticipate areas of difficulty
- Link material taught to the lectures
- Try and offer ‘the bigger picture’



# Never...

- Skip parts of explanations
- Rush (but keep an eye on the clock)
- Hide errors
- **Follow do's and don'ts lists... look for what works for you!**



# Always...

- Introduce yourself
- Plan ahead but stay flexible
- Contextualise and structure material
- Encourage participation
- **Make the most of your experience and enjoy it!**



# Seminar content

- Problem-based learning
  - [http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/showcase/forsythe\\_pbl](http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/showcase/forsythe_pbl)
- Case studies, current affairs
  - <http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/handbook/casestudies/1>
- Games, experiments
  - <http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/themes/games>