

Seven Ways to Hook Your Students

Just as a good conference paper or theatrical performance begins with a hook that entices the audience, a lesson plan should also include a hook that motivates students to maintain interest throughout the class period.

1. **Music**: Set the mood even before the class begins with topical or playful music. A Calculus TA preparing to give a lecture on limits might play “Take It to the Limit” by the Eagles. A professor of Eastern European Religions might set the scene with appropriate music and then ask his students to consider the music as a relevant cultural example.
2. **A Good Question**: Pose a question that challenges students, that presents a mystery to be solved, or that highlights the connection between the subject and a recent news event.
3. **A Demonstration**: Give a demonstration that presents a puzzle, sparks questions, or displays course principles.
4. **An Activity that Involves Every Student**: Assign a question or problem and have students work together on it. This ensures that each student begins the class awake and engaged.
5. **Explanations that Help to Personalize the Course Content for Students**: Begin class with a discussion that highlights the personalities and human drama of the subject.
6. **Role Play**: Assign students roles in a conflict and ask them to role play that perspective in pairs of two. Since all of the students will be occupied in their own pairs, there is no audience that might cause performance anxiety.
7. **In-Class Writing Exercise**: Ask students to write for a short time about a relevant topic to prime them for a more in-depth discussion about an issue.