

# TEACHING<sup>for</sup> SUCCESS

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## Professor Sheridan's Compendium of His Best Teaching Success Tips

by Jack H. Shrawder, Executive Director, Teaching For Success

Teaching For Success is all about learning to teach with the criterion of success delimited by how well your students stay enrolled, engaged, learning, and satisfied.

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Teaching For Success is fortunate to collaborate with a number of top higher education professors and instructors who are willing to share their experiences, recommendations, tips and strategies.

In this issue of *Teaching For Success*, we are privileged to publish a compendium of the best teaching ideas from author and professor Rick Sheridan, D.Tech.

I hope you will enjoy and apply his tips to improving your teaching and speed you on your journey to teaching for success for the benefit of your students.

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### An Awareness Approach to Teaching

Teachers at any grade level could use some of the prompts in this article to raise their own awareness of many of the dynamics that affect their own teaching performance...

# Autoethnography: Researcher as Participant

by Rick Sheridan, Doctor of Technology (D.Tech) from Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa; and Assistant Professor of Mass Media Communications at Wilberforce University, Ohio, USA.

**A**utoethnography is a relatively new research method that includes the researcher's personal experience and his or her observations about the group or individuals who are being researched. These observations and insights are not always possible with the more conventional empirical research methods.

Autoethnographers write narratives about what they experience, and are themselves a primary participant and/or subject of the research. Autoethnographers generally reject the idea of research as an objective and neutral process which requires a detachment of the researcher from the subject.

Autoethnography is a form of self-reflection that explores the researcher's perspective on the dynamics of the research scenario, often from a diary or journal that they keep. Towards the end of this article is an example of autoethnography from this author's doctoral dissertation.

## Definition

Carolyn Ellis (2004) defines autoethnography as "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political." Maréchal (2010) defines it as "a form or method of research that involves self-observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing." Ellingson and Ellis (2008) point out, "the meanings and applications of autoethnography have evolved in a manner that makes precise definition difficult."

According to Bochner and Ellis (2006), an autoethnographic researcher is first and foremost a communicator and a storyteller. The researcher shows people in the process of personal discovery, making choices, interacting with other humans, etc. It provides insight into the meaning of their struggles. Autoethnography allows the researcher to move beyond traditional methods of writing by using narrative, poetry, stream-of-consciousness, displays of artifacts, photographs, drawings, and live performances (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2008). This approach is much different than the theory-driven, hypothesis-testing research methods that are based on the positivist epistemology, or the reductionism approach of allopathic medicine.

## Recording thought process is paramount

By including personal thoughts, feelings, and observations as a way to help understand what they are researching, autoethnographers are providing the reader with an insight into their thought process along with variables that are typically not measured with conventional research methods.



Autoethnography is controversial since it relies on a more subjective approach to the research variables. Despite the controversy, it is now being used in a variety of academic disciplines such as performance studies, anthropology, sociology, and communication.

I believe that autoethnography can be effectively combined with the more objective empirical research methods and can add a more well-rounded perspective to all of the variables. Even if the autoethnographical section is relegated to the appendix, it provides the reader with information that could help them understand the total context.

Autoethnography can also be used in teaching. Below is an example of where this author used autoethnography in a first-person account of his experiences teaching a group of 30 elderly individuals how to use computers (this was part of his doctoral dissertation). Teachers at any grade level could use some of the prompts in this article to raise their own awareness of many of the dynamics that affect their own teaching performance.

## A sample report

*“I was continually filled with emotional conflict during the two years that I taught a Computers Made Easy for Seniors class through a small college in California. During the classroom sessions, I had to continually remind myself that this elderly group (seniors) were important members of society and worthy of respect. The reason for this feeling was that most of them had a slow reaction time due to cognitive decline, illness, or other factors, and were not able to learn new material very easily. I had to continually avoid the temptation to shout at them to pay more attention.*

*In fact, several of the other teachers of this same course had begun to treat their class members as small children who needed constant supervision and discipline. I did ask the seniors to take notes and pay close attention to certain learning suggestions, but I tried to motivate them with positive statements such as, “You will love what you can do with this new skill.”*

*What seemed to help the seniors to learn was a combination of techniques. For example, the use of metaphors for learning computers. Almost all of them had used an electric typewriter earlier in their lives. The metaphorical link between the typewriter and computer was obvious. As the teacher, I was able to compare the two and point out the similarities and differences.*

*The motivation for them to learn was due to several goals that many of these individuals seemed to have. The primary motivation, as far as I could see, was a desire to communicate with friends and family by e-mail, along with a curiosity about all of the interesting websites that they had heard friends talking about. There also seemed to be a negative motivator. This was the embarrassment of not being able to keep up with the rest of the class and appearing foolish to their peers. I tried very hard not to encourage this negative motivator, but it seemed to be there, regardless.”*

## Sample autoethnographic prompts

Below are some ideas to start the autoethnography research process:

- What were some of the key activities, conversations, or internal thoughts that I experienced today?
- What are my feelings toward the group, and what are the possible reasons for my reactions?
- What exactly happened today? (This is a description of events, experiences, or a process you have been through).
- What did I find inspiring about this project, and what was good about this experience?



- What was frustrating or boring about this to me?
- What key events did I pay the most attention to?
- What would I do differently next time if I researched the same group or event?
- What in my past can I connect to this incident that possibly impacts my feelings now?
- Are there any assumptions or prejudices that I brought into this research? If so, are they interfering with an objective evaluation?
- How do I feel about what happened?
- What are some of the key details that the typical quantitative or qualitative research might leave out. (This might include descriptions of the facial expressions of the participants, the level of frustration or joy expressed by the participants, etc).
- What did I learn from this experience? What did the other participants learn?
- What would I like to change and why?
- What action could I have realistically taken to change the situation?
- Are there any key principles that others might find useful about this group or event?
- What type of duties or responsibilities did I have?
- Why did I think the process was successful or unsuccessful?
- Are there unexplainable holes in my general understanding of the people or event?
- Will this research help others cope with or better understand their situations?

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# Eleven Ways to Energize Learning

by Rick Sheridan, Doctor of Technology (D.Tech) from Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa; and Assistant Professor of Mass Media Communications at Wilberforce University, Ohio, USA.

Here are 11 effective and easy-to-implement ways that I use to energize learning through better presentations.

## 1. Personal application

Explain to the students how the lecture directly applies to them. Even though you have specific material that needs to be covered in a lecture, you can still explain to them how they will benefit from, and be able to apply, this knowledge to situations that are important to them.

## 2. Vocal adrenaline

Use your voice for impact. Change volume, speed, pitch, and emphasis to hold interest. A typically dull lecturer speaks in a monotone and almost dares the students to fall asleep in class. Warm your voice up before class by reading a short sentence and emphasizing a different word each time. “He really was LATE to the meeting... He REALLY was late to the meeting... etc.”

## 3. Personal connection

Know the opening of your lecture well enough so that you can look directly at the students when you deliver it. Say it with conviction and high energy, and grab them with your eyes. Create a connection with the students at the beginning of class.

## 4. Attitude

The first thing your students will notice when you first walk into the classroom is your attitude.

It is very difficult to hide any feelings of anger, boredom, impatience, etc. It is much better to spend a few minutes before class putting yourself into a positive mental state before you first present yourself.



## 5. Credibility

The “credibility pyramid” for speakers is divided into four categories: Care and concern, Enthusiasm, Focus, and Knowledge. Care and concern is the most important and represents 50 percent of your believability. Enthusiasm and the focus of your message make up the vast majority of the remainder of your credibility.

Your actual knowledge is only worth 10 percent of your believability. Psychological research shows time and time again that it is not what you know, but the way that you communicate what you do know that contributes most to your believability and trustworthiness. (Source: <http://www.thecredibilitypyramid.co.uk/>).

## 6. Mindfulness

Reach out to individuals, not to the audience. One technique is to look at one student for about five seconds while you speak. Then gradually shift your eyes to the next student and hold the gaze. Several of the students sitting behind the one you are looking at will perceive that you are looking directly at them also.

## 7. Loudness and visibility are critical elements

Use a microphone only if necessary. Wear it or carry it. Do not stand behind it. Project your voice to the students on the back row. Don't be afraid to ask the class if everyone can hear what you are saying.

## 8. You can't hide

Don't speak less than 130 words per minute, except for effect. This is the

Psychological research shows time and time again that it is not what you know, but the way that you communicate what you do know that contributes most to your believability and trustworthiness.

~Rick Sheridan, D.Tech

average speaking rate for most people. The best motivational speakers average closer to 200 wpm. Going below 130 wpm will cause your listeners' minds to wander.

## 9. Stay real, stay in the moment

Avoid the adrenaline rush that often happens when you insist on precision and perfection (in yourself and others). While lecturing, trust yourself to continually self-correct as necessary instead of stressing yourself out when things don't go perfectly. Top athletes use this technique to respond in the moment based on factors that they can't always predetermine.

## 10. Move

Show your excitement through body movement, gestures, and posture. Excitement is contagious and students will often respond to your genuine enthusiasm. Choose a topic that excites you, or modify an assigned topic so that it takes on a twist of interest to you.

## 11. The power of the pause

Use the power of the pause, and the unexpected. Avoid using filler words in between ideas or sentences. The pause will allow the impact of what you just said to settle in with the students.

The pause is also a good time to scan the room to see if students seem to understand the material.

In addition, the unexpected change of pace could be the perfect segue into a quick peer teaching exercise, small group discussion, or even directing students to get up and form a human

# Thinking Styles: Know the Basics

by Rick Sheridan, Doctor of Technology (D.Tech) from Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa; and Assistant Professor of Mass Media Communications at Wilberforce University, Ohio, USA.

In this article I contrast two sources that segregate typical thinking process patterns into effective and ineffective.

## Effective

*Thinking for a Change* by Dr. John Maxwell, focuses on effective thinking and breaks the methods down into understandable components:

- Big picture
- Focused
- Creative
- Realistic
- Strategic
- Reflective
- Possibility
- Collaborative
- Bottom line

## Ineffective

In contrast, the *Bilateral Course* by Peter Shepherd zeros in on ineffectual thinking. Some of the categories in this mode include:

- Tunnel vision
- Black-and-white thinking
- Generalization
- Assumption
- Projecting
- Emotional reasoning
- Manipulation
- Mind wandering

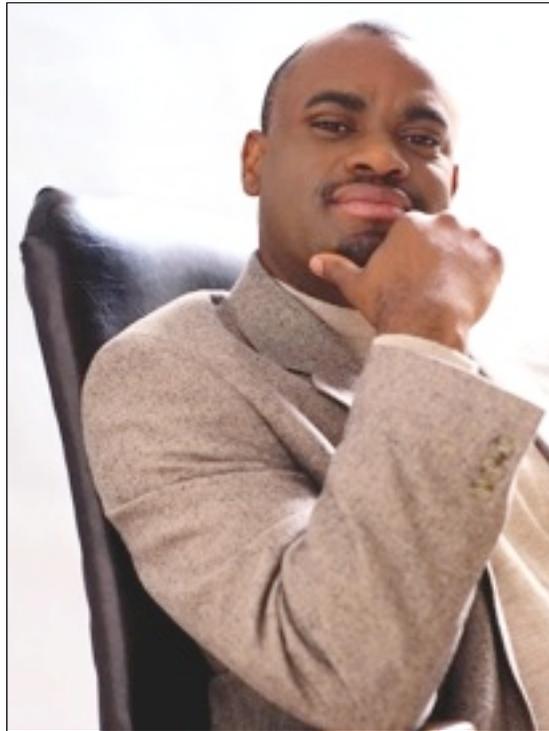
## Effective Thinking Styles

### Big picture

This means to see the world beyond your own immediate pressing demands and requirements. Widen out to a broader perspective and take a top-down view of the world rather than getting caught up in the demands and emotions of the present moment. It's paramount to stay on target rather than constantly bouncing from one objective to another. Effective big-picture thinkers are willing to move into uncharted territory. Their open style allows them to learn something beneficial from each and every experience and person.

### Focused

Focused thinkers concentrate on the major issue and ignore all distractions. They concentrate on areas of their life where they have the most potential to add value. They set



aside blocks of uninterrupted time for focused thought. They regularly question their progress, and are willing to give up many of the things they love in order to focus on where they can make the greatest impact.

## Creative thinking

Creative thinkers come up with new and original ideas and options. They celebrate the unusual and try new things. They enjoy trying to connect the unconnected and come up with some original combination. They don't fear failure; they ask penetrating questions:

- Why are things done in a certain way?
- What underlying problems are being addressed?
- Are there better approaches that can be brought in from other fields?

## Realistic

This method helps one minimize the downside risk by bringing to the fore a pragmatic, worst-case scenario. These thinkers always prepare for the worst—just in case. This preference encourages the selection of a target and a game plan. Realistic thinkers appreciate the facts. Centering on certainties helps them reveal the pros and cons of a decision.

## Strategic

Strategic thinking skills simplify the difficult and help the problem solver break down complex issues and identify the real points of contention. These savants know exactly what resources are available and from those develop a plan that starts with the obvious and ends with the more complex challenges. In this way momentum is built and intensity is sustained. And, each time their strategy is updated, it becomes better.

## Possibility

Creative types use this technique to think about things that are not presently possible or have never been attempted. They stop seeing impossibilities and start thinking about what's really feasible. They always dream one size bigger than others normally do, and then find ways to achieve their audacious goals. Stretching goals helps them believe in even greater possibilities. These thinkers look for possibilities in every situation even when they become ensnared in a negative event. Stay away from "experts" who discourage you, they would say, and take inspiration from the great achievers of history.

### Reflective

This method encourages one to ponder and evaluate what they are actually doing. Society moves at such a rapid



pace that few people take the time to reflect on what they are doing or how their life is progressing. Reflective thinking gives one true perspective. It separates the trivial from the important.

It brings the big picture into focus, and helps you put ideas and experiences into context turning raw experience into valuable insights. Ultimately, reflective thinking enables perspective within context; it allows the academic to continually connect with their journey into knowledge; and it provides clear direction.

### Lemming like

Many people don't want to bother doing their own thinking and therefore they just blindly follow everyone else. If you do this, your fervent hope is that everyone else is right. Popular thinking tends to focus on false hopes like quick-and-easy fixes. At best, popular lemming thinking can produce only mediocre or below-average results.

### Encouraging others

Effective thinkers highly value the ideas of those who make a meaningful contribution and accomplish their goals by integrating the ideas and inputs of others.

They reach effective conclusions faster because they benefit from considering the input from several perspectives.

### Collaborative

Here is an example of unselfish thinking. Instead of focusing on their own problems and challenges, these people help others excel. They regularly check their motives and fight any natural tendency to put their own interests first.

Collaborators invest in people around them. They are determined to never stop working until they have won some victory for humanity.

### Bottom line

This isn't purely a financially oriented methodology. It means looking at objectives and then evaluating whether or not they are delivering on what they promise others. These thinkers benchmark their activities to ascertain whether or not they're doing what they set out to do. They always look for mismatches and work to remove any cross purposes. Their bottom line is to develop a strategy for achieving results. They stick with it until they do.

### Summary

Changing thinking styles is never automatic. Instead it demands real effort and work over an extended period of time before one can establish a new pattern of thinking. Changing personal thinking habits is difficult. The only people who believe thinking is easy are those who never try to master their thought processes, but it's well worth the investment of one's time and effort.

## Distorted Thinking Styles

These next thinking styles are to be avoided and are summarized for you from the *Bilateral Course* by Peter Shepherd. The following are characterized as distorted and ineffective thinking approaches.

### Tunnel vision

When you become stuck in a mental groove, it's like having tunnel vision. Tunnel thinkers tend to see only what confirms their fears, biases, or prejudices. They remember the past and expect it to repeat in the future. Other points of view or the possibility of alternative solutions are ignored such as, "These are always boring."

### Black and white

Black-and-white ideologues auto-think, "You're either for me or against me." Things are black or white, wonderful or terrible, a great success or a total failure, there is no middle ground, no room for improvement, and no room for mistakes.

Their judgments on self and others swing from one emotional extreme to another and are easily triggered. However, it's important to remember that humans are just too complex and that all qualities fall somewhere along a continuum, often containing elements of either extreme.

### Generalization

Generalizers believe they'll never be any good at something as soon as they hit a tough spot. In this distortion mode, they make broad, generalized conclusions, often couched in the form of absolute statements, based on a single piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, you expect it to happen over and over again. This thinking modality inevitably leads to a more and more restricted life and their view of the world becomes ridged and stereotyped.

### Assumption

Making assumptions is built into our brain functions. It presupposes knowledge that you do not have. Assumptions are often popular beliefs that have been adopted without examining their basis in fact, such as, “I’m over the hill now that I’m forty.”

### Projection

Projection occurs when we make false assumptions about what other people think. It is like mind-reading, and putting words into people’s mouths. You imagine that others feel and act the same way. For example, if someone gets angry because you are late, you inaccurately assume that they will never like or respect you again.

### Negative

Negative thinking repels and causes others to avoid the person who favors this mode. For example, “We haven’t seen each other for two days; I think the relationship is falling apart.” Predicting negative consequences is a defense, to protect oneself from disappointment by expecting the worst.

### Self-consciousness

This style is the introverted tendency to relate everything around you to yourself, to think people must be judging you, or to think that everything they do or say is a reaction to something about you. It’s the habit of continually comparing yourself to other people, based on the underlying assumption that your worth is questionable. You’re therefore continually forced to constantly compare yourself to others.

### The blame game

In some way we are responsible for nearly everything that happens to us, including our distress and unhappiness. Taking responsibility means accepting the consequences of your own choices. Ask yourself, “What choices have I made that resulted in this situation? What decisions can I now make to change it?” If you see yourself as externally controlled, you see yourself as helpless, a victim of fate or “the system”. Someone else is to blame and is responsible for your pain, your loss, your failure. The truth is that we are constantly making decisions and every decision affects and steers our lives.

### Unfairness

Life is often not fair, and to insist that it always should be can result in distorted thinking with a feeling of ever-growing resentment. It’s better to say what you want or prefer, without getting involved in the fallacy of unfairness: that people and situations shouldn’t be the way they are.

### Emotional reasoning

Depending solely on emotional reasoning may cause one to feel depressed and feel that life must be pointless. You may believe automatically that what you feel must be real. For example, if you feel guilty, then you must have done something wrong. If you feel angry, someone must have taken advantage of you.

However, there is nothing automatically true about what you feel. Your feelings can lie to you; they can be based on misconceptions. If your feelings are based on distorted thinking, then they won’t have any validity. So be skeptical about your feelings; examine them carefully.

### Manipulation

Here’s an example of manipulation, “If we had sex more often, I’d be more affectionate.” In reality, the only person you can really control or have much hope of changing is yourself. When you pressure people to change, you are forcing them to be different for your own benefit. Strategies for manipulating others include blaming, demanding, withholding and trading all expressed with the intent to make the other feel obliged. This often results in resentment.

### The Game of “shoulds”

Look at this example of a “Should” distortion: “You should never ask people personal questions.” In this twisted thinking mode, you operate from a list of inflexible rules about how you and other people should act. And, any particular deviation from your rules, values, or standards is bad. As a result, you are often in the position of judging and finding fault. When you realize that your rules are not necessarily the “right rules,” the game is defeated.

### Being right

“I’ve been doing this longer than you, so I know what I’m talking about,” says the right-obsessed thinker. When caught up in this distortion, you are usually on the defensive, needing to prove to yourself and others that your views, assumptions, and actions are all correct. Your opinions rarely change. For if the facts don’t fit what you already believe; you ignore them.

### Heaven's reward

This distorted thinking style accepts pain and unhappiness because “those who do good are rewarded in the end.” These thinkers expect all their sacrifice and self-denial to pay off, and they feel hostile and bitter when the reward doesn’t come. Heaven is a long way off and they can get very tired waiting.

### Mind wandering

Many people rarely live in the present moment, allowing their minds to wander from various past events or future worries. This leads to unfocused thinking and it causes their emotional state to continually fluctuate making effective communication almost impossible.

Keep these thinking patterns in mind as you teach and help your students to see these models at work in class discussions.

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[http://www.trans4mind.com/metercourse/Bilateral\\_8.html](http://www.trans4mind.com/metercourse/Bilateral_8.html)  
(Accessed September 2008)

# How to Use Social Networking and Digital Services to Improve Your Teaching

by Rick Sheridan, Doctor of Technology (D.Tech) from Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa; and Assistant Professor of Mass Media Communications at Wilberforce University, Ohio, USA.

Social media tools are rapidly being adopted in many classrooms, from K-12 to college. In a 2011 survey by *Faculty Focus* journal, 56 percent of the college teachers surveyed said they expected their use of social media to increase. Nearly 85 percent of those teachers surveyed have a Facebook account, 83 percent allow students to use laptops in the classroom and 52 percent allow smart phones.

There are many creative and unique ways to use the various social media sites and applications. This article is a combination of the author's personal experience along with a sampling of some of the ideas that are being shared on blogs, teacher's journals, and other publications.

Please see the bibliography at the end for more information. Following are some examples of the social media projects being used in the classroom, along with the specific apps or resources that are recommended.

1. **Answer students' questions:** Be available to answer students' questions via a Facebook page or Twitter feed. If you have more time, you can even set up an ask-an-expert site where you encourage students and members of the community to e-mail questions that are answered and posted on the site.
2. **Author visits to your classroom:** Use Skype to set up a live author visit that would allow students to interact with them directly.
3. **Blogging current events:** Three apps allow students to gather and embed social media messages for use in blog posts and articles. These include: Storify, Curated.by and Keepstream.
4. **Book reviews:** Students can post their own book reviews for the teacher to grade and for other students to read. You can also do a basic Internet search to see book reviews from many other sources.
5. **Brainstorming ideas:** Encourage students to brainstorm about class topics outside class time. This provides more opportunities for sharing great thoughts and ideas.
6. **Cite correctly:** Students can learn how to properly format citations according to APA, Chicago, Harvard, MLA, or other style through CiteMe, a Facebook app.
7. **Class attendance and participation:** Have students tweet one thing you discussed in class as a way of taking attendance and making sure they are paying attention.
8. **Class feedback:** Have a student tweet about your class to receive instant feedback. This is especially helpful for those teaching a large lecture class where everyone has some form of Internet access.
9. **Collaborate with other teachers:** Learn from other instructors around the world by sharing ideas, tips, and techniques through Twitter or Facebook.
10. **Community service:** You could organize a community service class project where students find out about local volunteer opportunities and interact with the volunteer coordinator.
11. **Conference feedback:** If one of the students (or the teacher) is able to attend a conference, they can post regular updates to keep the rest of the class informed.
12. **Connect with other classrooms:** Collaborate with another classroom, no matter where they are in the world, to expand learning opportunities. Many of the social media tools can be used, depending on what both classes have available.
13. **Cultural understanding:** Getting to know small bits about others over time, as happens through social media, provides a greater picture of who those people are and develops a deeper sense of understanding for more openness and sharing in the classroom.
14. **Current events:** The recent public updates on Twitter show the most recent posts from all users and is a great tool to use when studying current events.
15. **Dictionary on the go:** This is an app based on the Random House Unabridged Dictionary. A popular tool, it offers a dictionary, thesaurus, phonetic and audio pronunciation, example sentences, non-standard uses, word origin, and history. It works on various platforms, and it's available on [Dictionary.com](http://Dictionary.com)
16. **E-book access:** There are many academic and general interest books that have been converted to a digital format and are available free from public libraries. Mobipocket and Overdrive are apps that can be used to locate e-books from various libraries.
17. **Field trips:** Use Skype to bring the field trip into the classroom when it is difficult or impossible for students to go to the source.
18. **Flashcards:** Ace Flashcards is an easy-to-use app for creating study flashcards for just about any subject.



19. **Follow famous people:** Many famous people are on Twitter or Facebook. Have students follow someone related to what you are studying, such as following The President or Congress when studying civics or government.
20. **Geography:** Use a combination of Twitter and Google Earth to help teach geography-based lessons.
21. **Guest speakers:** Recruit guest speakers for your class from social media contacts such as colleagues or past students. You can also go to [refdesk.com](http://refdesk.com) and find hundreds of potential speakers and experts.
22. **Homework posting:** Teachers can post homework assignments through Facebook to provide easy access for students who need a reminder of what was assigned.
23. **International perspectives:** This site gives you access to search engines from over 300 different countries. [www.searchenginecolossus.com/](http://www.searchenginecolossus.com/)
24. **Journalism in action:** World events unfold immediately on Twitter, CNN.com, nytimes.com, etc. Ask students to watch both conventional news agencies along with citizen and blog-related journalism.
25. **Lectures at a distance:** Have students attend a lecture or presentation at another campus via streaming media.
26. **Literature:** Have students create a Facebook page for a character from literature that you are studying.
27. **Multitasking:** Twitter can get confusing with several conversations going on at once. Tweetree is an app to group conversations together. QuoteURL is another program that helps you group different Twitter updates from different people into a single page that has a permanent URL, so you can put it on your blog or send it to others.
28. **News analysis:** Use a group like World News Webcast on Facebook that provides video clips of world news.
29. **Organize assignments:** Notely users who are on Facebook can organize assignments, classes, notes, and more with this app.
30. **Photographs:** Share your photos on Twitter with TwitPic or similar tool. Flickr is an online photo management and sharing application where you can share your stories with comments and notes.
31. **Podcasts of lectures:** There are thousands of lectures from universities that have been recorded and are available for free download. One resource is <http://www.openculture.com/>.
32. **Portfolio site:** Set up a Facebook page to showcase some of your best student projects. Here are some of my own examples: <http://RickSheridan.com>
33. **Practice a foreign language:** If students are learning a foreign language, they can practice with native speakers through groups on Facebook or by finding native speakers on Twitter or Skype.
34. **Research sources:** Access articles from journals, magazines, and newspapers on multiple subjects such as current events, health and medicine, business, history, and much more with EBSCOhost (iPhone and iPod Touch app).
35. **Schedule events:** Organize your personal or class schedule and share events with Google's free online calendar, it's easy to keep track of life's important events all in one place.
36. **Shy student participation:** Shy students who may feel uncomfortable approaching their teacher in person can use social media as a way to communicate.
37. **Socializing:** Use CampusBuddy, a Facebook app to help you find students attending your school who have similar interests.
38. **Survey the class:** Use polls as an interactive teaching tool in class using the PollApp for Facebook or PollDaddy for Twitter. You can also use SurveyMonkey, a Website that creates surveys.
39. **Treasure hunting with GPS:** Most web-based cell phones have a GPS program that can be used to send students in search of educational clues. This might be appropriate for an introductory geology or environmental studies (depending on what they are identifying).
40. **Tweet imaginary conversations between historical figures:** Have students tweet imagined conversations between famous literary figures such as Romeo and Juliet, Sherlock Holmes and Watson, or Abe Lincoln and Robert E. Lee.

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## Memory Skills: Are They Still Needed?

by Rick Sheridan, Doctor of Technology (D.Tech) from Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa; and Assistant Professor of Mass Media Communications at Wilberforce University, Ohio, USA.

During a summer break, I had the opportunity to attend a lecture and demonstration by Dominic O'Brien the eight-time World Memory Champion. During the lecture, O'Brien did some pretty astonishing things, such as memorize an entire page of a newspaper, 40 random numbers written on a chalk board by audience members, and later, a shuffled deck of cards.

The author spoke with him an hour after he memorized the shuffled deck of cards and he was still able to name them (forwards or backwards). O'Brien claims that anyone can develop their memory by regularly practicing a variety of exercises. Here are some notes from the lecture and from his book, *Learn to Remember, Transform Your Memory Skills*.

### Location, location

According to O'Brien the art of location memory technique studies show that people who have spent the day traveling are especially accurate in recalling the sequence of events in their day. Even details of conversation seem sharper because the dialog is remembered in the setting in which it



#### Visual Pegs

Visual pegs are relationships between the components of a group.



took place. To use the art of location, walk a familiar journey, linking pieces of the information to various stops along the route. To remember the information, you would retrace your steps in your imagination later, and try to remember the item that you had linked to it. The ancient Greeks and Romans valued this method above all others and O'Brien attributes this to his personal success.

### Mnemonics

The mnemonic technique uses wordplay, ditties, and other associative techniques. For example, I could create an anagram by taking the word HOMES to help me remember the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior). There are many free "anagram generator" programs on the Internet where you can take a random group of letters that represent the first letter of words that you are trying to remember and convert them into a legible word that is easy to remember and triggers off the memory of all the other words.

### Visual pegs

Visual pegs are relationships between the components of a group. If you were trying to memorize sets of five items that had different sized items, you would think of the largest component and progress to the smallest: (for example: bear, badger, mouse, butterfly, and ant).

The art of concentration — To concentrate is to notice what we see, to listen to what we hear, to feel what we touch, savor what we taste and smell and to be mindful of what we think.

**Rick Sheridan, D.Tech**

### The Story Method

With the Story method, you would string together a list of items that you want to remember into an easy-to-remember story. Make the components of the story interesting and add color, suspense, and movement to tie the items together.

### The DOMINIC system

DOMINIC stands for: Decipherment of Mnemonically Interpreted Numbers into Characters. O'Brien suggests linking numbers with characters such as 07 for James Bond, 23 for Bill Clinton (2nd & 3rd letters of the alphabet), etc. This is a time-consuming method of learning how to memorize, but it has incredible potential for the storage of vast amounts of data.

### Mind maps

Mind mapping is a whole-brain method for generating and organizing ideas, largely inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's approach to notetaking. Mind maps use pictures, images, color coding, highlighting to stimulate the creative association and enhance the memory. Write the main idea in the middle of a page and connect other ideas with pictures, images and keywords.

### Recall

Our ability to retrieve memories depends largely on how we organized and store them in the first place. The art of recall is the skill by which we can think of the appropriate link that leads us to the memories that we want to retrieve.

For example, to remember the name of a town we visited, try to recall as many associative details as possible such as street names, sounds we heard there along with other associated impressions. Often the name suddenly comes from the depths of memory. When a sight, sound, or smell unexpectedly triggers apparently forgotten memories, this is called "surprise random recall." It indicates that more memories might be rediscovered if we could only find the right triggers to bring them to consciousness.

### Names and faces

The key with this next technique is to link together the face, name, and place in a chain of association. Are there any distinguishing features of the face? Do they remind you of someone else you know who has those features? Do they remind you of another item you can associate with that person? Repeating the name several times and linking it to related associations can help the recall process.

### Concentration

Concentration is the skill we use to notice what we see, listen to what we hear, feel what we touch, savor what we taste and smell, and to be mindful of what we think. If we try to do two things at once, our attention flits back and forth at lightning speed between the two, and we don't fully concentrate on either. The secret to concentration when formally memorizing something is to focus fully on that information, while at the same time allowing our brain to make appropriate associations.

### Memory and the senses

Memory and the senses—Incorporating all of our five senses into whatever memory techniques we try will make it easier for us to memorize and recall. For example, to remember a tree, think of the image, the sound of the wind, the smell of the leaves, the rough touch of the bark, etc. Smell bypasses the filters of the brain, and connects directly to our memory store. Scent can instantly transport us back to an event or person in our past. Associating smell with something we want to learn could help to lock it in.

### The art of observation

When we observe an object in a fully attentive, fully conscious way (noting color, shape, size, features, etc.), the etchings that are made on the brain are deeper than when we merely receive an overall visual impression.

Being able to recall precise visual details in the mind's eye is part of a discipline of mental focus and alertness that helps our memory training.

### Revision and repetition

Learning by the repetition of facts over and over again has been largely discredited in education (Rote learning).

We now believe that the most memorable facts are those that engage our interest and that involve us in some way. O'Brien believes that it is a matter of rehearsing an act of memory, and going over the process of recall at regular intervals, to fix the various routes of association in our minds.

### Use it or lose it

Keeping the mind young—O'Brien believes that you should exercise the mind everyday just like an athlete stretches their body every day. Crosswords, brain teasers and challenging reading materials can help to keep the mind active.

He also recommends that we engage with all that goes on around us, associate things we want to memorize with all of their sights, sounds and smells. O'Brien believes that memory does not deteriorate with age, only the speed at which our brain processes and stores our memories will change.

Having confidence and avoiding the stereotype that our brain will deteriorate helps overcome the image. Oxygen to the brain is also very important to keep the memory sharp, and physical exercise can help.

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If there is no struggle, there is no progress.

~Frederick Douglass



# How to Connect with Your Students

by Rick Sheridan, Doctor of Technology (D.Tech) from Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa; and Assistant Professor of Mass Media Communications at Wilberforce University, Ohio, USA.

Studies show that more than half of what is communicated by humans is nonverbal. People on the receiving end are much more likely to believe the nonverbal signal than the spoken content of the message. Teachers and public speakers should especially be aware of what and how they are communicating. This article is divided into two parts. The first section will focus on the ways that people communicate nonverbally. The second section has some strategies for fully understanding nonverbal communication and how to present effectively whether student or instructor.

## Nonverbal Factors

### Eyes

Probably the most obvious way that humans communicate is through the eyes. The sender often has very little control over the way their emotions are projected. If they are happy, sad, interested, or surprised, the receiver will often find out by looking in their eyes, (Deep and Sussman, 1988).

### Voice

The way that words are spoken can either contradict or reinforce the meaning that the sender meant to communicate. These factors include tone, pitch, emphasis, inflection, rate, volume, vocabulary, pronunciation, dialect, and fluency. Studies have shown these factors can all influence what the receiver perceives, for better or worse.

### Body

Our society draws strong inferences about people according to whether they are tall, short, fat, or thin. These inferences are not always fair or accurate, but the perception is still there.

### Face

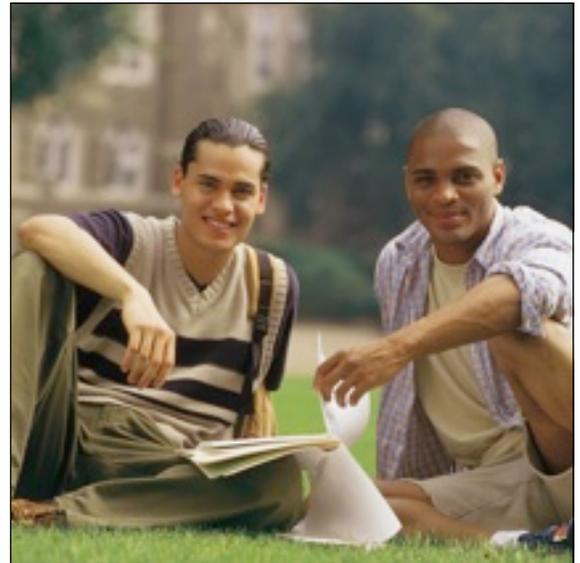
The mouth can scowl, grimace, pout, smile, or communicate cynicism. Flushed cheeks may reveal discomfort, embarrassment, or a lack of physical stamina.

### Posture

The receiver is continually monitoring the way that the sender holds himself or herself. Leaning, slouching, slumping, or standing erect all create distinct images in the minds of others.

### Gestures

Hand movements either reinforce or contradict what is said, and can even serve as effective



substitutes for words. The next section provides several tips for improving your gestures.

### Behavior

The sender is continually on guard for signs of behavior that reinforce or contradict the message that the sender is trying to communicate.

### Personal space

Personal space is the distance you maintain between yourself and others when you speak or interact with them. What is considered to be appropriate personal space often varies from person-to-person or from country-to-country.

### Hair

Some people make judgments of others based upon the color of their hair, as well as whether the color appears to be natural. The amount of hair a man has remaining on his head may speak to some, as well as whether a mustache or beard is neatly maintained. Hairstyle is often viewed as an indicator of a person's character, religious beliefs, or socioeconomic status.

### Clothing

Entire books have been written about the ways that clothes communicate, especially in professional settings. These books often have their own sets of recommendations about dressing appropriately. The basic advice is usually to dress comfortably, but slightly more formal than those who you work with.



## Self-projection

You have to really believe in yourself and what you are communicating! Then, all your nonverbal expressions flow sincerely, naturally, and without conscious effort.



### Cosmetics

Well-applied makeup can create a positive impression; sloppy cosmetics can likewise send unfavorable messages. Perfumes and colognes can positively or negatively influence the receiver.

### Lifestyle

What does your home, car, or office say about you? Is it messy and cluttered? Does it look like you are focused and organized, or not? Details do matter.

### Time

What does your use of time say to others? Trust hangs in the balance. Do you keep people waiting and get to meetings late? Do you often fail to deliver by the agreed deadlines? Time management may make or break your success.

## Verbal Considerations

### Self-projection

You have to really believe in yourself and what you are communicating. Then, all your nonverbal expressions flow sincerely, naturally, and without conscious effort. According to Delmar (1986), unless an actor is playing himself, or something very close to his natural type, he frequently has to work backward.

That is, instead of discovering the emotional subtext in a scene, and letting his postures, gestures, and expressions flow from the emotional source, he has to discover and learn the external gestures of the character, which are different from the ones he would make naturally himself. Thus, he or she builds the emotional sincerity into the external signals.

In other words, the speaker erects the siding and the windows and roof shingles, and then builds the frame and foundation.

Therefore, once you have discovered and learned the nonverbal externals and infused them with life and depth by finding the appropriate emotional subtext, you can mentally record the process and file it for use whenever you need it.

### Posture

Be sure to stand or sit erect, with relaxed shoulders and with no slouch. The body should be held high and light. The walk is a purposeful but relaxed medium stride, with no exaggerated bounce, no loping or lateral swaying or tipping of the head and shoulders. The arms swing in a natural, relaxed manner. You communicate self-assuredness and pride when you project your posture this way.

### Movement and gestures

You should be confident, deliberate, poised, and relaxed. You should gesture primarily from the elbows down. The gesture only supports verbal

communication, never supplants it. Use relatively conservative facial expressions. Allow your charisma to emanate naturally from within, like your aura. Many busy professionals move too fast which puts receivers on guard. You can enter briskly, but once you are in position, slow your arms and legs down. Your movements must be clear, deliberate, and uncomplicated. Don't try to stifle your natural instinct to gesture. Generally, the higher you are on the social scale, the less you gesture and the smaller, slower and controlled your gestures are.

### The Mask

This is the general look or expression that people use in public. The face should be relaxed; muscles are not gnarled or pinched. There is no furrow between the brows from frowning because the person who is in control of their nonverbal communication rarely frowns. The eyes evince an even, controlled temper and are not winced with fear and flinching. The mouth is carried evenly, closed while listening.

A self-assured smile that comes from the conviction that you are in control of things (no Cheshire-cat grin). The brow is held up and away from the eye, in a relaxed, "intelligent," natural arch.

The effective communicator can also achieve the effect of "brightness" or superior intellect by holding the inside tip of one or both brows slightly higher than it would be at rest.

### Dealing with hostile skeptics

Show no fear or hesitation. Meet the immediate assault with an undaunted confidence with your posture, unruffled expression and deliberate movements. Turn to face that person and offer steady, unflinching eye contact. You must meet and vanquish, or at least come to an impasse, with the skeptic before you can go any further with your pitch.

### Summary

By recognizing your own nonverbal characteristics, you can begin to project yourself in the most positive way possible while staying true to your inner convictions. Any instructor who does not have an awareness of their own nonverbal characteristics will find themselves to be misperceived by others on a regular basis, and they will find that much effort is wasted in trying to repair the wrong perceptions of their students and colleagues.

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