

Effective Teaching for Humans



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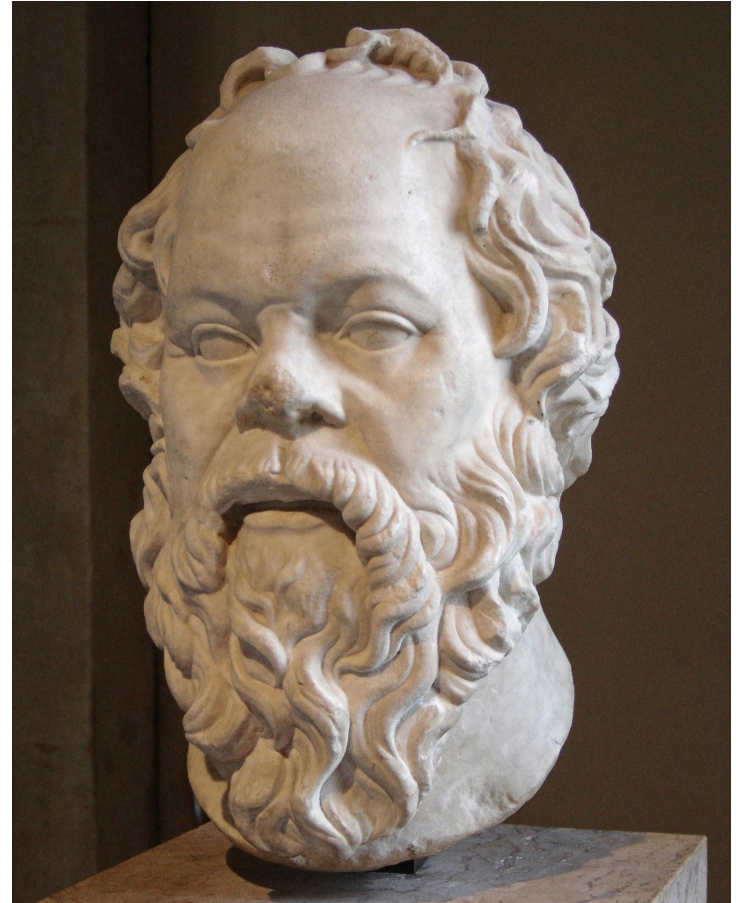
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Teaching is public speaking

Teaching is midwifery

Socrates was a weird
dude, but he got that
right.



**creating the
circumstances and
providing guidance to
let learning happen in
another person's mind**

Everybody is a teacher.
(Some get paid to do it.)
So it's a good idea to
learn to do it well.

Exercise 1: Great teachers

1. In your group, think about someone you consider a **great** teacher
2. Share your example with the group, and name **one** quality that makes them a great teacher.

(7min)

Opening



A great teacher?

Drawing by John Tenniel, public domain,
via the British Library



Let's share back...



So what does matter?

These things matter:

- The public speaking virtues (confidence, integrity, etc.), but most especially
 - Listening and observation
 - Humility and respect
 - Patience and empathy
- Great teaching is amplified by great teaching materials
- What about learning styles?
- Final exercise

Listening and observation

- Most importantly: **connect to people where they are**. Start where your students are, not where you expect them to be, or where it would be easiest to start.
- **Observe and assess understanding**. Is everyone with you? Are 80% with you? [what's missing for the 20%?] Are only 20% with you?
 - Pause, repeat, **rephrase**, or **invite questions**
 - Do a quick exercise

Humility and respect

- You have something to teach, but you're not superior
- Some of your audience may actually know more than you do, or have more (even if different) experience
- Be confident, but:
 - You don't need to know everything. Admit it freely.
 - Your goal is for **learning to happen**, not necessarily for you to personally be its source.
- **Earn trust.** Keep your promises.

Patience and empathy

- **Impatience is the enemy of teaching and learning**
- Basic empathy:
 - Your student isn't you
 - Your student has their own context, distractions
- Difficulty in learning often stems from an assumed step/context that is in fact missing
 - It's **your** job to identify and remove the obstacle
 - Examine your assumptions; break it down
- Just be kind

Crafting effective teaching materials



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Teaching should have goals

Rationale vs. goals

- You should have a clear **rationale** for the teaching to even happen: why teach this at all? Why does this audience need this? (the **why**)
- With a clear rationale, the specific teaching/learning **goals** can be identified (the **what**)
 - Learning goals are the primary measure of the teaching success
 - There can be other kinds of goals (social, experiential)

Rationale/goals examples

- **Rationale:** the group will be handling an image donation, so needs media uploading skills.
- **Goals:**
 - a. Students understand media uploading workflow, limitations, and pitfalls of batch uploads
 - b. Students learn troubleshooting and metadata manipulation techniques
 - c. Students experience executing a small batch upload themselves

Rationale/goals examples

- **Rationale:** the group is already involved with movement organizing, so would benefit from a core set of movement organizer skills
- **Goals:**
 - a. Students learn and practice public speaking
 - b. Students learn and practice effective teaching
 - c. Students network and form connections across communities and languages

Start with the "why?"

Start with the "why?"

- Now **you** know why you're teaching this, but your students do not!
- Human attention is **capricious and pragmatic**
- For effective learning to happen, the learner should be at least somewhat convinced it is **worth paying attention** to the teaching.
- As close as possible to the opening, **offer a compelling answer** to the "Why is this important? Why do I need to learn this?" questions.

Start with the "why?" Ex.

- [A Gentle Introduction to Wikidata for Absolute Beginners](#) does not begin with teaching Wikidata basics, or even showing Wikidata; it begins with "Why does Wikidata exist? Why should I care?"
- What was the "why?" for this talk right now?

A clear structure

- Like any public talk:
 - a. Have an opening, body, and closing
 - b. Have form and proportions serve the goals
- But for learning, it's especially important to **communicate** the structure: **spell out transitions**, and the opening and closing of "parentheses" (**digressions**)
- Be **modular**, if possible - links, extra credit sections, etc.

Side note on 1-on-1 tutoring

- When tutoring a single learner, structure is still useful, but can often be secondary to following the learner's interest, progress, and specific, immediate questions
- It is often effective to teach-by-prompt -- providing guidance only when requested, and only to the immediate question asked
- (works great with very young humans, too!)

Teach for understanding

- The "Packing" versus "mapping" model, or the fish and fishing-rod proverb (both are actually needed)
- Help your learners map, not pack
 - Focus on principles over details
 - Some may need more help than others
 - Some may map differently than you would
- A good mental map is more robust and ready for dealing with the unexpected



Discovering is better
than **being told**

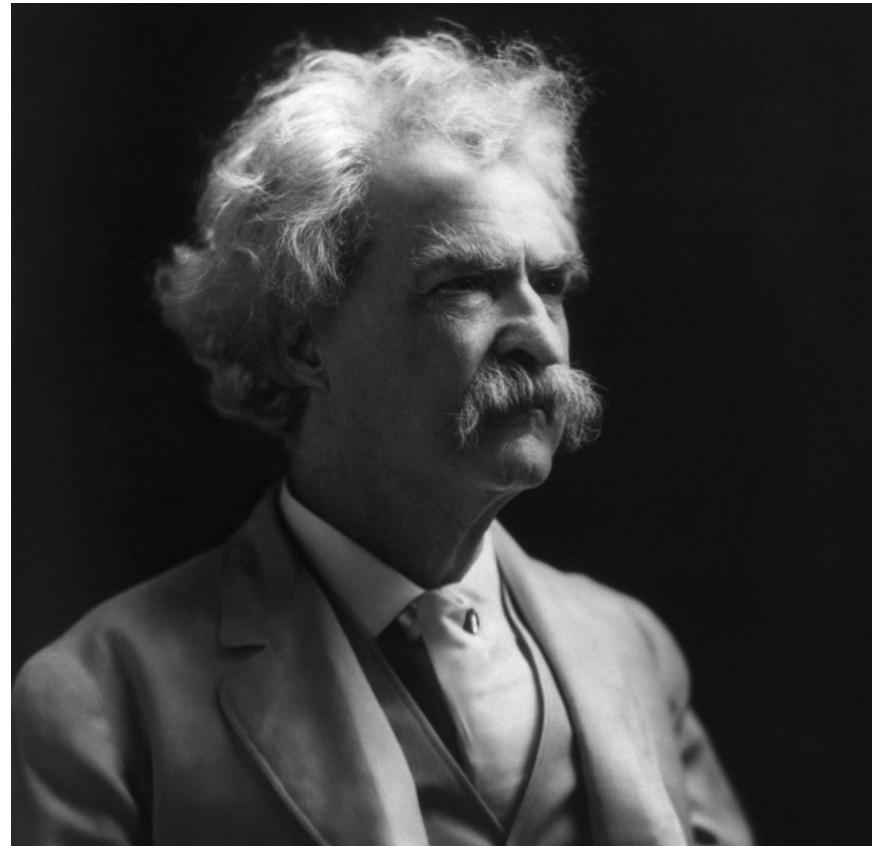


**Work with the energy,
not against it.**


**"I have never
let my
schooling
interfere with
my education"**

--[Grant Allen](#)

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Mark Twain, 1907. Photo by A.F. Bradley
Public domain, via the Library of Congress



Never let
prepared material
interfere with
learning!



What about learning styles?

They're not really a thing

- "Learning styles" are (still) a fashionable theory in education, but its predictive power is very weak
- People **do** have learning **preferences**, but they **do not** correlate to better retention or better test results
- Learners would feel better if their preference is met, but it won't necessarily help their learning
- Source with links to the scholarly works:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/04/the-myth-of-learning-styles/557687/>

Final exercise

Please pair with a partner



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Final exercise: let's teach!

1. Both pick a tool/technique, wiki or not, that you feel you can confidently teach
2. Both take 5 minutes to **plan a 5-minute lesson** (goals, structure, teach for understanding)
3. First partner **teaches** the other for five minutes
4. **Take feedback** from learner partner for **one minute**
5. **Switch roles** and repeat steps #3, #4

Share back?

In conclusion...



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Teaching is learnable! :)

- **Teaching is midwifery**
- The goal is for learning to happen; not "to get through the material"
- Start with the "why?"
- Teach for understanding
- Work with the energy
- Practice makes better!



THANK YOU

Keep in touch!

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