Teaching is an act of communication between knowledgeable scholars and active learners. Effective communication depends on how the information is presented and on its content.

**Rhetorical techniques for Delivering Communication:**

**Verbal techniques** help your audience understand what is being said.
- *Vary the speed & tone of your voice* to keep your voice interesting to listen to.
- *Project your voice* to be easily heard and to show confidence in what you are saying.
- *Pause* to gain attention, emphasize transitions in material, and allow students the opportunity to digest information.

**Non-Verbal techniques** help your audience be receptive to what you are saying.
- *Maintain eye contact* with the audience and stand up straight to project confidence.
- *Smile* to communicate that you value what you are saying.
- *Use movement* to convey energy and enthusiasm but avoid excessive gesturing and distracting clothing, because they can divert attention from your message.
- *Project excitement and energy* to capture your audience’s attention.

**Media** helps to explain complex ideas. Use it to enhance, not distract, from your message.
- *A chalk board or dry-erase board* can allow you to be dynamic, and can be used to show a process unfolding or articulate the reasoning behind a derivation.
- *Slide presentations* are useful for organizing a variety of visual, audio or animated information and can be used to emphasize key points and summarize ideas.
- *Videos and animations* can illustrate dynamic processes and provide a sense of scale.
- *Audio clips* can introduce a new voice into the classroom (often from another time/place) and illustrate the sounds of physical processes (e.g. a heart murmur in a medical class).
- *Artifacts* bring elements of the “real” into the class (e.g., meteorites or historical objects).
- *Handouts*, whether paper or electronic, are an effective way to share detailed information and images with students.

**Rhetorical Techniques for Structuring Communication**

**Get the students interested:**
- *Connect the day’s topic to the students’ interests, experience, and prior knowledge* to spark students’ curiosity and explain why it’s valuable or useful for them.
- *Provide an engaging example or anecdote* that the students can connect to, as emotional connections are more memorable than raw facts.

**Organize the class:**
- *Structure the class in a logical way,* e.g., frame the topic as a story, present a problem then develop its solution, describe events and processes chronologically or show the relationship of interconnected ideas to an overarching theme.
- *Share an outline* to help the students organize and assimilate their learning.
- *Make explicit transitions between topics* to help students follow along; e.g., use verbal signposting such as mini-summaries or link a new topic to the one prior.

**Clarify the purpose or goal of the class:**
- *Repeat key ideas and concepts* to emphasize their importance to students and help students to understand them; e.g., summarize key points, compare and contrast ideas with each other, or provide metaphors and analogies.
- *Focus on major points* and have students seek additional information in other activities.
Techniques for Getting Feedback In Your Classroom:
Seek feedback from your students to judge your pacing and frame your instruction to meet their needs.

Observe the students' body language:
- Are they looking at you or are they gazing out the window? Are they taking notes, raising their hands and nodding along? Do you see yawns, shuffling chairs, students whispering or glazed looks?

Use questions to find out what your students know and understand:
- Encourage students to ask questions to discover their areas of interest and confusion.
- Pose questions for students to answer that get them to test their own knowledge. You can have the students speak in small groups, write out short answers, or ask for a response from ~1-3 members of the class.

Collect written feedback⁴:
- Ask students to complete a brief online survey before or after class to find out what questions they have after a reading, assignment or lecture.
- Prompt students to write a response to an open question during a class to give students the opportunity to organize their own thoughts and provide you with a quick diagnostic of how they are doing.

References:
- The Sheridan Center Handbook - Teaching and Persuasive Communication² by Patricia H. Hamm, 2005
- The Listening Mind³ by Doree Allen from Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning newsletter, Speaking of Teaching, Fall, 2008, Vol. 18, No. 1
- “How to Persuade – with Ethos, Pathos, or Logos?”⁴ by Lincoln Mullen from The Chronicle of Higher Education (8/18/2011)
- How to be an Effective Speaker: The essential Guide to making the most of your communication skills⁵ by Christina Stuart, 1996

¹ Examples of one minute paper prompts: http://www.oncourseworkshop.com/Awareness012.htm
² Links to http://brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan_Center/docs/persuasive.pdf
³ Links to http://www.stanford.edu/dept/CTL/cgi-bin/docs/newsletter/CTLNewsletterFA08.pdf
⁴ Links to http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/how-to-persuade-with-ethos-pathos-or-logos/35431
⁵ There is a copy of this book in the Sheridan Center library.