

## Effective Use of Lecture in Agriculture Extension

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ECHO Summary of MEAS Technical Note:  
*Effective Lecture and Discussion Techniques*

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### Introduction

The lecture is one of the oldest and most widely used methods of teaching. In agriculture extension, field agents often use lectures as a method to share information with farmers. However, many lecturers are ineffective because they do not properly prepare and structure their presentations. Drawn from the MEAS Technical Note, [Effective Lecture and Discussion Techniques](#), this document examines the strengths and weakness of using lectures and explores what makes them effective.



*Community leaders attending a training on tree nursery management in rural Haiti  
(Source: Brian Flanagan)*

<b>The Strengths and Weaknesses of Lectures</b>
<p><b>Strengths of Using Lectures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A large amount of information can be shared in a brief period of time.</li> <li>• The instructor has control of the teaching and there is little threat to the learners.</li> <li>• Information can be shared with a large group of participants at the same time, saving time and money.</li> <li>• New information that is not available in other formats (i.e. written or electronic) can be shared quickly.</li> <li>• Information drawn from various sources can be consolidated and adapted to the audience.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses of Using Lectures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants are not active in the learning process and can become disengaged or disinterested.</li> <li>• The presenter has little opportunity to receive feedback from the participants.</li> <li>• Lecturing does not account for participants who have different levels of understanding or learn at different paces.</li> <li>• An effective presenter is required for a good lecture.</li> </ul>

The MEAS / USAID Technical Note on Effective Lecture and Discussion Techniques lists ways to help presenters effectively engage with their audience and communicate information in an impactful way. Those suggestions are highlighted in the table below.

<b>Making Lectures Effective</b>
<p><b>Preparation and Organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design the lecture to the audience, developing material that addresses true versus assumed needs.</li> <li>• Decide the main emphasis of the lecture, and provide context for the content.</li> <li>• Create a written outline.</li> <li>• Organize the material into three or four key points.</li> <li>• Provide detail for each key point.</li> <li>• Choose examples that illustrate the key points.</li> <li>• As appropriate, present both “sides” of the issue.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Presentation and Clarity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak so the audience can hear and understand.</li> <li>• Avoid distracting mannerisms, such as over-use of gestures.</li> <li>• Verbally share the outline of the presentation in the introduction.</li> <li>• Stress key points, principles and concepts in the lecture and repeat two or three times.</li> <li>• Take pauses so that the learners have time to absorb the material being shared.</li> </ul>

<b>Making Lectures Effective</b>	
<b>Stimulation and Interest</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be enthusiastic about the content and the participants.</li> <li>• Start with a question, a problem, a concern, or issue that the audience can relate to.</li> <li>• Make the material relevant to the needs of the group.</li> <li>• Use appropriate humor.</li> </ul>	
<b>Feedback and Interaction</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make eye contact with the listeners; it is the only way to “engage” them in lecture.</li> <li>• At the end, or periodically during the lecture, allow for the audiences’ questions.</li> </ul>	

A lecture can be an effective method to teach new agriculture information to farmers. To be effective the presenter must take the time to properly prepare and present the lecture while stimulating and soliciting feedback from the audience.

## References

Barrick, Kirby. 2012. [Technical Note on Effective Lecture and Discussion Techniques](#). Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services.

## Further Reading

Barrick, Kirby. 2012. [Methods and Techniques for Effective Teaching in Extension and Advisory Services](#). Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services.

