

GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTING WITH DIVERSE LEARNERS

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Learning statistics can be challenging, especially for students with additional learning needs. Tutoring statistics can be equally difficult. Here are some quick tips for working with diverse learners.

.....ASSUME

Students come from all backgrounds — variation in data! — so don't assume that they have, or can remember, all the prior concepts related to the question they're asking.

Instead, check by asking them to tell you what they know. If they appear completely lost, take some time to briefly review the concepts before returning to their main question.

.....ASK LEADING QUESTIONS

Leading questions are questions that suggest a particular answer. They don't reliably reflect students' learning because students may genuinely believe they understand, or feel that they should answer a certain way (social desirability bias). Examples of these questions include:

- Do you understand/know ...?
- Does this make sense to you?

Make sure to ask concept-check questions, e.g. "What is the definition of...?", or "What were the steps we went over just now?".

.....USE TRANSLATION TOOLS

Translation tools can provide a quick solution for understanding course content in a foreign language.

However, solely relying on machine translation is not beneficial for students' long-term learning, nor when they need to sit tests and exams in English. If you're comfortable with doing so, it's worth pointing this out to students. Additionally, try to only use translation tools help you communicate when you've exhausted other tutoring strategies.

.....USE BRIDGING LANGUAGES

Building on the previous suggestion, sometimes you share a common language with students, and they may ask you to explain something in that shared language. Using a common language has a positive impact on learning when done correctly. However, you may not be familiar with the correct term in your shared language, nor feel confident in explaining it in your shared language. In that case, try using the shared language for encouragement and the language of assessment for course content.

.....PAUSE

Speaking too quickly can prevent students from understanding your explanations, but interestingly, just slowing down isn't all that helpful either. The trick is to ensure you have pauses when speaking. You can record yourself and play back to see what you sound like, but in general:

- Pause — about a beat, less than a second — after sentence sections, e.g. "This question // is asking you // about ..."
- Use short sentences and easy words to explain complex concepts.

.....USE VISUAL GUIDES

Lastly, sometimes students learn differently. Try drawing out what you want to explain while checking students' understanding along the way — you can also ask students about the techniques that work for them!

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