

Confidence in the classroom

“Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker [ethos]; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind [pathos]; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself [logos]. Persuasion is achieved by the speaker’s personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible.”

–[Aristotle 1356a](#) 2, 3

Ethos

voice, gesture, facial expressions, proxemics, body language and movement

- try to deepen your voice and project it further (breath from your diaphragm; put your hand on your belly to check that you’re doing this and see how your voice sounds)
- modulate your voice
- tape yourself: put the recorder in the farthest possible spot in the classroom and see how well you get recorded
- avoid finishing a declarative sentence with a question mark
- stand up, head held high, make eye contact, move around the room, use broad gestures
- minimize distracting behavior : mispronunciations, false sentence starters, volume fade-outs at the end of sentences, pacing, swaying (repetitive movements), leaning on the desk, board, lengthy checks of notes, apologies to the audience
- videotape yourself: you will be able to pick up possible annoying tics (verbal or gestures)
- dress more formally
- body language needs to be synchronized with what you are saying
- ask your colleagues to form sort of a study-group: do micro-teaching sessions together in a low anxiety milieu and ask for genuine feedback
- go observe their classes and ask them to come observe you
- become familiarized with the classroom itself before you start teaching

Pathos

- learn as much as you can about your students
- teach with enthusiasm: it will conquer students too
- avoid appearing too knowledgeable: it can be intimidating to students, who resent you
- try to create a bond with students
- show empathy
- learn students’ names (you might consider addressing them by their last names: Mr. Smith)

- abide by fairness rules (set ground rules and be consistent about them; tell them what you will not tolerate and why)
- when challenged, stay calm (being calm can calm people down as well; if you get worked-out, students will respond to that negatively)
- count to ten, breathe deeply, smile through your firmness
- do not ignore offensive behavior
- you do not need to become the students' friend, so that they "forgive" your lack of experience
- students have to like you in order to be able to learn from you, but that should not be the ultimate goal

Logos

- do not say you are not an expert, or that it is your first time teaching the course; focus on your passion for the subject (you might also want to tell your students why you chose your field)
- plan your lesson thoroughly
- consider practicing your lecture in front of a mirror
- put the agenda on the board
- have a specific goal (or several goals) for each class
- on your own lesson plan assign minutes to any activity you plan to do (no activity should be longer than 15-20 minutes)
- make sure you allow yourself enough time for review
- have extra activities for the end of the class (just in case you run out of material to cover)
- when you prepare your class, spend time thinking of possible problems for your students: anticipating possible questions
- if you struggle with English, write every single word, even the jokes
- choose different examples from the ones in the book (if you are simply repeating what the textbook said, students will not find any reason to come to class)
- deepen your understanding and knowledge of teaching and learning theories
- try new approaches
- evaluate every class, focusing on what you can improve for next class, instead on what you did wrong
- in order to avoid grade complaints: show students what you will cut off points for
- refer to your own scholarship, if applicable
- if you conduct discussions, make sure they are well-structured; improvising most often does not work
- if you chose to use a power point presentation, make sure it is perfect
- develop a teaching statement: it will help you find your own identity as a teacher and it would set up personal goals
- critically examine whether the practice conform to the theory

- what appears as challenging the teacher's authority might also be a sign of a higher learning process
- familiarize yourself with USF policies (e.g., drop dates, HIPPA regulations, etc.)

Challenges of authority:

- Try to maintain a sense of perspective; it is likely that your students will not think as much as you do about your class
- if a student simply asks you a question just to provoke you, simply acknowledge his/her question and then move on
- because you would not do it, or did not do it, it does not mean that students might not attempt to do it
- do not use yourself as a model for how students should behave