# Tips for Inclusive Teaching Practices

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This list was compiled to provide a brief list of teaching tips, curated based on peer-reviewed articles and reviews. You can find an additional review of research on inclusive teaching can be found on the [University of Michigan’s Center for Research on Teaching and Learning website.](https://crlt.umich.edu/equity-focused-teaching/research-basis)

## General Diversity & Inclusion Tips

You can provide a personalized statement indicating commitment to diversity and inclusivity (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). If you do, you should utilize moral diversity statements rather than instrumental diversity statements (Starck, Sinclair, & Shelton, 2021). Additionally, the diversity statement should focus on multiculturalism rather than colorblindness (Holoien & Shelton, 2012; Wilton et al., 2015). Further, this statement should align closely with your beliefs, values, and actions as a misalignment can cause further harm to individuals with marginalized identities (Wilton et al., 2020). See [Creating an Inclusive Curriculum](https://kimechaney.wixsite.com/uconndeiresources/developing-an-inclusive-curriculum) for more information.

Actively diversify your syllabus and course content by including a wide array of authors, researchers, and perspectives (Good, Woodzicka, & Wingfield, 2010; Howansky, Maimon, & Sanchez, 2021; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2020). Doing so can improve student attendance and sense of belonging. You can add pictures of the researchers with visible marginalized identities, or you can ask some of the researchers to provide prerecorded lectures where they discuss their identities in relation to the field or course content.

Show that you are aware of and value diversity on the first day of class by openly facilitating brief discussions about different experiences and viewpoints (Moore et al., 2010).

Remember that language matters. State that you “affirm” or “accept” diversity and various identities rather than “tolerate” them. “Tolerate” conveys that you are putting up with something that is undesirable (Biaggio et al., 2003).

When bias happens in the classroom, it is important that you acknowledge it rather than remain silent. Silence indicates that you are complicit or agree with the biased incident. If you have been unsure of how to respond in the past, reflect on previous incidents and seek out resources to build a solid counterpoint (Boysen & Vogel, 2009). See this [guide on “Hot Moments” from the University of Michigan](https://8c13aa3e-9e08-4ef4-9cfe-62bc8cbf0ebd.filesusr.com/ugd/0d413f_d7002a2546e44c0a99c2b7f9264f71ee.pdf) for some ideas.

Become familiar with services and resources that are offered to students and what those services can do for them. You should share that information on the syllabus and the course website (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2017; O’Neal et al., 2016; Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014). You can also briefly mention them during class time throughout the semester, provide a point of contact to encourage students to use services, or personally help them navigate services.

Let students know that asking for help is a normal experience for students in college, especially during the first year or transitionary period. Encourage them to obtain tutors, ask them for their “muddiest point,” and provide opportunities for them to complete self-reflection (Saunders & Kardia, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). You can also share your own stories about academic challenges (Pietri et al., 2019). See this great [report on Creating a Culture of Caring from the Association of College and University Educators](https://8c13aa3e-9e08-4ef4-9cfe-62bc8cbf0ebd.filesusr.com/ugd/0d413f_b3cfc09432174f81b7ff7585cd5e9691.pdf).

Provide semi-regular check-ins via surveys for students to provide feedback and encourage students to complete them, and show compassion to students (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Howansky, Maimon, & Sanchez, 2021; Maringe & Sing, 2014). For ideas, see this document on [Classroom Assessment Techniques](https://8c13aa3e-9e08-4ef4-9cfe-62bc8cbf0ebd.filesusr.com/ugd/0d413f_dfbfa6fa58044bc682736f761ce92092.pdf).

Let students know that you care about their well-being by helping them balance burnout and practicing flexibility (Molbaek, 2018). You can offer frequent quizzes or assignments to assess students’ understanding of the material and then drop two of the lowest grades to reduce pressure on students who may be struggling or have a rough couple of weeks. See this great report on [Creating a Culture of Caring.](https://8c13aa3e-9e08-4ef4-9cfe-62bc8cbf0ebd.filesusr.com/ugd/0d413f_b3cfc09432174f81b7ff7585cd5e9691.pdf)

Marginalized students often must see the utility or value in course content as it relates to their real-world experiences or career path. You can help students make the connection between theory, practice, and real-world experiences as that will better solidify their understanding of the material in comparison to abstract homework problems (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2017; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Packard, 2013; Winkelmes et al., 2016).

Do not assume that all students have the same set of skills, knowledge, or ability to seek help when coming into your class (Saunders & Kardia, 1997). Instead, you should develop an integrated teaching approach that values all students and relies on the assumption that all of your students bring a variety of cognitive, linguistic, knowledge, and cultural resources to the learning environment (Hockings, 2010).

You can steer clear of “cold calling” on students during class as this process can make students feel less confident and comfortable attending or participating. You can encourage participation from a wider array of students by providing a “wait time” that allows students to process the material before participating. You can also explicitly ask to hear from a certain number of students and wait to have all volunteers before proceeding (Tanner, 2013). See UMich's guide for Classroom Discussions & Harvard's guide for more ideas.

You can include study groups and low stakes group projects throughout the semester to build community, improve student engagement, and facilitate the sharing of diverse perspectives (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2014; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Maringe & Sing, 2014; Plous, 2011; Rainey et al., 2018). When doing this, instructors should also remain aware of group dynamics and actively support students with marginalized identities who may experience bias or discrimination during discussions (Packard, 2013; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2003; Sekaquaptewa, Waldman, & Thompson, 2007; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

When students are completing group work in the classroom, assure them that they do not have to fill in moments of reflective silence while you walk around to see if anyone has a question. Some students may feel that instructors do not trust them when they walk around unless they are explicitly reassured. When they have time to reflect on the content, they are often able to connect more deeply with the content and produce thought-provoking responses.

You can encourage students to write a brief personal essay (i.e., no more than 500 words) where they reflect on their deepest passions, their personal and family values, what drives them, what moves them, and why they are taking the class/attending college. This can help you connect with students, have a better understanding of student perspectives, and assist students in restoring their self-worth in an educational context (Brady, Germano, & Fryberg, 2017).

## Tips Specifically for Racially and Ethnically Minoritized Students

Students with racially/ethnically marginalized backgrounds often receive solely positive, and less helpful, feedback from instructors when instructors want to appear fair, equitable, and unbiased (Croft & Schmader, 2012; Harber, Stafford, & Kennedy, 2010). This places these students at a disadvantage as they are not told how they can grow and succeed. When providing feedback to all students, you should convey that you have high, consistent standards, and you believe that they can reach those standards (Biernat & Danaher, 2012; Rattan, Good, & Dweck, 2012; Yeager et al., 2014). You should provide specific critiques on how to improve and support them through the process (Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999).

You can include messages that highlight the flexibility of intelligence and knowledge as students with marginalized identities are often demotivated and have negative experiences with instructors who teach from a fixed mindset (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Canning et al., 2019; Rattan, Good, & Dweck, 2012; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

To increase the sense of belonging for Black college students, you may need to consistently work to dispel negative stereotypes and reassure your students that they can excel academically. In addition, you should provide support and guidance to ensure students are given ample opportunities to grow and succeed. Further, you should acknowledge that it is common for racially and ethnically marginalized students to have doubts about whether they belong in college and stress that you believe those students belong in your classroom and at the university (Hausmann et al., 2009).

Use storytelling as a pedagogical process as this can help students learn about theories and concepts. This format can add to what students would typically learn from the textbook, and it is a different way of teaching that could reach and connect with more students. - tip from Leslie Berntsen who is known for her inclusive teaching

Many students of color have been treated less favorably and more harshly by their teachers, particularly White teachers, in comparison to their White peers. At the beginning of the semester, ask your students to complete a brief survey to share their concerns about evaluations from teachers with the goal of addressing your own racial biases and providing a safe learning environment for your students (Downey & Pribesh, 2004).

Consider utilizing a moderate-structure approach for your courses by encouraging in-class engagement (e.g., clicker questions, worksheets, vignettes; up to 40% of class time) and providing graded preparatory assignments (e.g., reading quiz; 1 per week) or graded review assignments (e.g., practice exam problems; 1 per week). In comparison to a fully structured course, this structure helps increase course performance for all students, and is particularly helpful for students of color and other marginalized groups as it minimizes achievement gaps, increases motivation, and increases sense of community for students (Eddy & Hogan, 2014).

You should research how institutional policies may create unnecessary stressors for undocumented students as well as Latino first-gen students. Additionally, you should validate the difficulty experiences that many marginalized students encounter during college. Finally, you should stress that they are not alone and provide resources that will be safe for all students, including undocumented individuals (O’Neal et al., 2016).

You can develop assignments and discussions (e.g., journal entries, discussion prompts) where students can be encouraged to bring their own experiences into the classroom through the lens of relevant theory as students of color often excel and learn more during these activities (Packard, 2013). You can provide a set of key terms that students can use to help describe their experiences.

You can utilize true instruction accommodations (i.e., accommodations that equal the playing field rather than provide an advantage for one student and not another). This can be practiced by providing guidance on APA style to assist students who are unfamiliar with writing research papers or offering extra writing help for students who struggle with writing as this will only benefit students who need the help (Pappamihiel & Moreno, 2011). This tactic can be helpful in retaining ethnically marginalized students.

When assigning exams, projects, or assignments, instructors should highlight their utility in measuring student progress (e.g., a temperature check) rather than innate ability. This approach may help reduce the impact of stereotype-threat experienced by students of color, relieve pressure, allow students to show what they’ve learned, and inform instructors about common stuck points or students who may benefit from additional guidance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). See here for a quick guide on [stereotype threat.](https://8c13aa3e-9e08-4ef4-9cfe-62bc8cbf0ebd.filesusr.com/ugd/0d413f_111bd0d391a044149c216529b209df1d.pdf)

## Tips Specifically for LGBTQ+ Students

​At the beginning of the semester, you can include your pronouns and show students that you care about affirming their identities. Including pronouns signals a fair and safe environment and indicates allyship ([Johnson et al., in press](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022103121000974?casa_token=PkoK6dcA9AcAAAAA:FWBBoQfzUzSU_oCys5jTMGcqfaNL9B7AiD3tflcF2QsjX2t5SURIJt1Jhd3XPIFffhgdwqSwAaY)).

You can also adjust content to increase representation of diverse identities by providing inclusive imagery, using gender-neutral language (e.g., they vs he/she), and more (Howansky, Maimon, & Sanchez, 2021).

* "He" centers men and is androcentric while "he/she" suggests a gender binary.
* See [UMich's Gender Diversity & Pronouns Resource](https://8c13aa3e-9e08-4ef4-9cfe-62bc8cbf0ebd.filesusr.com/ugd/0d413f_bd66924e73294f8884e0cb9d74424437.pdf) & [Language of Identity Guide](https://8c13aa3e-9e08-4ef4-9cfe-62bc8cbf0ebd.filesusr.com/ugd/0d413f_bd66924e73294f8884e0cb9d74424437.pdf).

You can incorporate information about sexual orientation and gender identity throughout the curriculum as appropriate to provide representation. Information can be infused through vignettes, examples, or other activities (Biaggio et al., 2003).

Recognize that sex, gender, and sexual orientation are all independent. Sex refers to biology, gender refers to identity, while sexual orientation refers to attraction. Check out the [genderbread person!](https://www.genderbread.org)

## Tips Specifically for Women and Promoting Gender Equality

State that a certain major or career will take “dedication,” “effort,” or “perseverance” rather than “brilliance” as brilliance is often associated with men, which can discourage women from pursuing related opportunities due to anxiety or a sense that they do not belong (Bian et al., 2018).

You can opt for neutral or varied imagery and metaphors in your slides, classroom, and while you speak as an environment that is filled with stereotypes of the field and who belongs can discourage students who do not share those qualities (Cheryan et al., 2009; Good, Woodzicka, & Wingfield, 2010; Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007).

You can work to adjust your language behavior by using gender-neutralizing language as masculine language is often considered to be the default option. For example, you can use “they” rather than “he” when referencing groups or a person with an unknown gender identity. You can also use terms like “businessperson” instead of “businessman” as these gender-fair terms are crucial for gender equality by reducing cognitive and behavioral male biases that are evoked by exclusively masculine forms (Koeser & Sczesny, 2014; Lindqvist, Renström, & Sendén, 2019).

You can strive to outwardly reject legitimacy beliefs (e.g., men deserve to make more money, women are less qualified to succeed in certain fields) during class. This can be done by frequently evaluating personal beliefs about legitimacy and making brief statements at the beginning of the semester (O’Brien et al., 2015).

Use "gender" rather than "sex" unless you are specifically talking about sex organs or biology.​

## Tips for Disability Visibility & Inclusion

You can educate yourself about and be mindful of the contributions of disability culture to the content of your field. Review your current curriculum and seek out additional works/readings related to disability that will enhance your students’ understanding of the topic (Fox, 2010).

Scan your syllabus and course materials for labels that may devalue individuals or groups of people. Adjust the labels to incorporate person-first language or appropriate identity-first language (Granello & Gibbs, 2016).

You should seek out training opportunities to increase awareness and support students with disabilities (Lombardi, Murray, & Dallas, 2013).

You can develop course websites as this will provide additional flexibility to provide information in text, audio, graphical, or video formats that students can access where and when they choose. Fixed print, like in textbooks, can be an impediment to many students. Students will also benefit from having access to recorded lectures (Orr & Hamming, 2009).

You should refer to assisting students with barriers to learning rather than focusing solely on terms like “disability.” Emphasizing the types of disabilities that will be supported can lead students to interpret that they will not be supported. They may also struggle with identifying as having a disability (Spencer, 2020).

It can be helpful to be open about disabilities at the beginning of the semester as students feel less stigmatized and “othered.” Dr. Kathleeen Bogart from Oregon State University often discloses her disability and other identities, which helps her connect with her students and open a dialogue. Only do this if you feel comfortable disclosing your identities.

You should make course readings available and accessible immediately. Upload everything at the beginning of the semester as this will allow students who are slower readers to pace themselves (Orr & Hammig, 2009). You should also provide clear copies of PDFs when possible. When PDFs are blurry or not properly scanned, students are unable to use their assistive technology and may have to pay someone to type the text for them.

You should be clear about all course deadlines and expectations so students can plan ahead (Langhout, Drake, & Rosselli, 2009; Molbaek, 2018). You should also be clear about the extension policy and what you would need from students. Do not require students to share personal information to receive the extension as this is often harmful to students. Be clear and empathetic about how you will accommodate students (Spencer, 2020).

## Tips Specifically for First Gen and Low-Income Students

Do not assume that your students can afford all course expenditures (Nadworny & Marcus, 2018). Instead, you should make the course materials as accessible as possible by using a previous version of a textbook, placing textbooks on library reserve, or utilizing OpenStax or OFR Commons (Langhout, Drake, & Rosselli, 2009). If it’s absolutely necessary to use certain materials, give students ample time to pay for these items while also seeking funding from the department or UConn’s Office of Undergraduate Education.

Explain your expectations for office hours and encourage students to attend them (Saunders & Kardia, 1997). Many students do not understand the purpose of office hours, do not want to “bother” their instructors, or are worried about being judged by their peers for wanting individual assistance (Nadworny & Marcus, 2018).

You can consider providing academic tutoring and guidance plus individualized mentoring related to college and personal concerns for first-generation college students. If individualized mentoring is not feasible, instructors can still provide support by incorporating class mentoring throughout the semester (e.g., covering personal and college issues for 10 minutes at the end of class; Kim, Choi, & Park, 2020).

As working-class students are often looked down upon and discouraged from pursuing a college education, you should share messages with students that signal that they belong in their classroom and will receive support. You should show students from working-class families that their knowledge and life experience is valued just as much as students from other backgrounds (Pearce, Down, & Moore, 2008).

## General Tips for Teaching Best Practices

Students learn more and fail less when their instructors consult and utilize a large and growing body of research about effective teaching methods and make connections with students (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2017; Association of College and University Educators, 2019; Gyurko & Snow, 2020). As a first step, you can access the [Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines,](https://udlguidelines.cast.org/?utm_source=castsite&lutm_medium=web&utm_campaign=none&utm_content=aboutudl) a research-based tool for designing and implementing inclusive learning environments (Dallas, Sprong, & Upton, 2014).

You can let your students know that you are a human being and have a life outside of the class. Humanize yourself and connect with your students as this will take the pressure off of them and provide more realistic expectations for them and yourself (Linder et al., 2015; Packard, 2013). Explain your rationale for why you do what you do as a teacher for that particular course. This adds transparency and minimizes worse attributions for your decisions as an instructor. Note that this may be more or less effective or comfortable based on your own social identities.

You can offer multiple modes of participation to students throughout the semester rather than one format to enable your students to demonstrate mastery of the course content and learning goals in a way that empowers them and makes sense to them (Macdonald et al., 2019). You can include self- and peer-reflections, “clicker” questions, group dialogue, and other methods (Harbin, Thurber, & Bandy, 2019; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2014; Maringe & Sing, 2014).

You can be engaged and enthusiastic with all students (Tanner, 2013). This can be done by utilizing the discussion board, interacting with students when they have questions or share their thoughts, and being responsive to their reflections about class (Harbin, Thurber, & Bandy, 2019). Be transparent with students to show your investment in their education and success.

You can have students complete a “prior knowledge assessment” at the beginning of the semester as many students often struggle to realize what they do and do not know. For each core concept that is considered a prerequisite for the course, students can rank their knowledge using the following options: I’ve never heard of this, I know we’ve covered it but I don’t remember, I can do it but sometimes I get stuck, I am confident I can do it well, and I know it so well I can help my peers. - tip from Columbia’s Inclusive Teaching Training on edX. [See this PDF for ideas of prior knowledge assessments.](https://8c13aa3e-9e08-4ef4-9cfe-62bc8cbf0ebd.filesusr.com/ugd/0d413f_c4f6c08d76514472bf21df2e2ac82ede.pdf)

## Additional Resources & Trainings for Inclusive Teaching

* [The Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning](https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching)
* [UPenn’s Center for Teaching and Learning](https://www.ctl.upenn.edu/Node/160)
* [The K. Patricia Cross Academy](https://kpcrossacademy.org/)
* [The Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning](https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/inventory-inclusive-teaching-practices)
* [Breaking the Prejudice Habit](http://breakingprejudice.org/teaching/other-resources-websites/)
* [Dr. Kim Case](https://www.drkimcase.com/books/)
* [Dr. Michael Kraus' Sample Lab Wellness Guide](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1D9vc_S00VYM0Pgb4KvHLxcacVRwVg3Qd/view)
* [Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science - Hackathon to Decenter Whiteness in Research Methods Courses](https://osf.io/an6y9/)

### Colby College

* [Colby College's Inclusive Teaching Resources](https://libguides.colby.edu/inclusive_teaching)
* [Positions for Learning Assistants](https://www.colby.edu/ctl/talc/) (help professors adopt inclusive teaching strategies and improve teaching)
* [General Resources](https://www.colby.edu/ctl/resources/)

### EdX

* [Inclusive Teaching: Supporting Students in the College Classroom - Columbia University](https://www.edx.org/course/inclusive-teaching-supporting-all-students-in-the)
* [Teaching & Learning in the Diverse Classroom – Cornell University](https://www.edx.org/course/teaching-learning-in-the-diverse-classroom)

### University of Central Florida

* [Online Workshops](https://diversity.ucf.edu/training/online-workshops/) (workshops focused on cognitive, affective, and skill-building domains for cultural competency)
* [Faculty certifications](https://diversity.ucf.edu/training/this-semester/) (e.g., Inclusion Champion)

### UPenn

* [Teaching Seminars](https://www.ctl.upenn.edu/teaching-seminars) (year-long seminars for faculty members to explore concrete inclusive strategies, incentivized by $800 research fund per faculty member for monthly participation)
* [Teaching Inclusively](https://www.ctl.upenn.edu/teaching-seminars) (online workshop to help explore diverse perspectives and practice skills)