

Keeping Students Interested

Experienced speakers and teachers know there is an art and science to keeping student audiences engaged and interested. Here are some tips that may help.

Know Your Audience

Middle Grades – Senior Elementary (Grades 6-8) Students:

- Are easily bored and are eager to get moving
- Like small group activities
- Challenge authority
- Are concerned about how they are perceived by others
- Can handle 30-40 minute sessions
- Are easily offended and sensitive to criticism
- Prefer active, hands-on over passive learning experiences
- Are more focused on social/personal concerns than academics
- Are ready for in-depth, longer learning experiences
- Are beginning to think about future, goals, and careers

High School (Grades 9-12) Students:

- Have a strong need for status
- Are looking for life-planning guidance
- Are influenced by peers
- Need diverse learning experiences
- Fear rejection or ridicule
- Need numerous opportunities to talk and interact
- Require choice within structure

How to Keep Your Groups' Attention

- Use nametags or tent cards in order to call the students by name.
- Give praise to good answers, participation, and volunteers.
- When possible, alternate speaking with activities or demonstrations.
- Vary the pitch of your voice; move around and make eye contact.
- Participation counts; Use activities, questions, demonstrations, role-plays, and give-a-ways, ask students to summarize points, break the class up and move them around.
- Use humour and stories. Share your own experiences!
- Talk in short sentences and everyday words.
- Use coloured markers, slides, props, products, cartoons, music, photos and drawings, and index cards.
- Keep the pace lively; be enthusiastic!

