1) **How do you strike a balance between making the course challenging vs. easy?**
A Harvard study by Richard Light found that the most highly respected courses are those with “high demands” but with numerous opportunities to revise and improve their work before it receives a grade, thereby learning from their mistakes in the process. Remember, however, that students construct meanings and may have to change those constructions so that they must be provided with lots of support that will encourage their growth.

2) **How do you strike a balance between being nice and being strict?**
Be generous to your students. Take an interest in them. Have compassion for them. To be sure, explain what students will need to do to achieve the goals of the course, but avoid the language of demands and use promises instead. Invite rather than command!

3) **How do you translate abstract ideas into forms the students can understand?**
The repertoire of metaphors, analogies, cases, demonstrations, examples, stories, images, and so on, will need to be faithful to your discipline, on the one hand, and faithful and responsive to the background of the students on the other. The most useful forms of representation will depend on your understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult, and the conceptions or preconceptions that students bring with them. Be sure to talk to an experienced colleague in your dept about students’ difficulties in courses you both teach.

4) **How much time for preparation?**
The temptation is to over-prepare. Remember to “uncover” ideas not cover them. You can best do this by being empathetic with the novice’s naïve state of mind and by well-designed learning experiences---assignments, cases, exercises, experiences---that will enable the students to master the material. Aim for in-depth coverage of fewer topics to allow key concepts to be understood.

5) **How do you know if they got it?**
- Distribute index cards and ask students to write on both sides the big idea they understand and something they don’t fully understand.
- Ask students display a designated hand signal to indicate their understanding of a specific concept (or have them use the clickers!).
- Establish a location where students may leave or post questions about concepts or processes they do not understand.
- Present students with an analogy prompt “A designated concept is like…”
- Ask the students to create a concept map, flow chart or time line to show elements or components of a topic or process.
- Engage in oral questioning of the who, what, when, where, how, why variety.
- Follow-up with probes.
• Present students with a common misconception and ask them whether they disagree or agree and explain why.

For more suggestions please see “Classroom Assessment”
http://w4.stern.nyu.edu/faculty/citl/articles.cfm?doc_id=3377

6) *How do I keep the students engaged?*
Mimic real world problems, use active and collaborative methods.

For more suggestions please see “Active & Cooperative Learning”
http://w4.stern.nyu.edu/faculty/citl/articles.cfm?doc_id=3379

7) *How do you manage the variation in abilities?*
As Dean Blount-Lyon revealed, there is not a lot of variation in ability in our undergraduate students. What we do know is that a student’s approach is context dependent. We will create optimal conditions for all learners if we adopt teaching and assessment methods that foster active and long-term engagement with learning tasks, excellent feedback on learning, clearly-stated goals, and opportunities to exercise responsible choice in the method and content of study.

8) *How do you pace the material?*
This will depend on the feedback you are getting from your students (see #5 above). From this feedback you will learn which concepts need more work. Retention of a few crucial things over time brings far more benefit than superficial mastery.

9) *How much homework and how many exams?*
Don’t make the homework excessive or busy work, otherwise students will resort to surface learning. Exams that concentrate on reproduction will also have the same effect. Homework should be carefully designed to enable students to construct their understanding of the material. Exams should align with the learning goals for the course.

For more suggestions please see “Grading”/”Testing & Assessment”
http://w4.stern.nyu.edu/faculty/citl/articles.cfm?doc_id=3377

10) *How technical do you get?*
In subjects like accounting, finance, econometrics, statistics, linear programming etc. students have to know enough to apply concepts precisely in particular situations. Students are understandably anxious about this. A carefully thought-out and tightly organized course structure is probably the most important thing you can do to allay their fears. Remember that knowledge of procedural details and important organizing ideas
are mutually supportive. Embed the details in a simple organizing narrative, and share it with students repeatedly.

11) **How do you encourage class participation?**
   The simple process of dividing groups into smaller groups of two, three or four will guarantee that almost all the participants will have a good opportunity to contribute. Above four the gap between the most talkative and the next most talkative begins to grow until, even with relatively small groups of eight, there is a long tail of participants whose participation is very small. Approaching participation this way can be a much easier task than continually trying to encourage reluctant students to participate in the larger group or preventing more talkative students from dominating the discussion through a range of gestures or even direct verbal intervention.

   For more suggestions please see “Class Participation”
   [http://w4.stern.nyu.edu/faculty/citl/articles.cfm?doc_id=3379](http://w4.stern.nyu.edu/faculty/citl/articles.cfm?doc_id=3379)

12) **Do we have wikis at Stern?**
   Not yet. But if you would like to have your students develop one in the short-term, CITL has access to tools that can allow you to do this. Please contact Chris Jennings for more information (x 80994).