



Use a “Teaching” Case Study in your Classroom
10 Easy Steps
“It’s all in the preparation!”

1. Choose a case study. Read it at least twice. Read the Teaching Note and the Epilogue. Adapt Note to your needs.
2. Choose three areas of discussion raised by this case study that intrigue you. What “aha!” moment would you like students to experience as a result of this case discussion?
3. Draw up a class plan listing the topics you wish to cover in the case discussion, plus a strategy for shifting among the chosen discussion areas. Try to imagine how students might answer the case questions, and prepare for those. It is preferable to limit topics to three or so, but debate them in depth—“less is more.”
4. Plan how to creatively use a blackboard, white board, or flipchart to record students’ comments, and how to organize them into logical, coherent categories. Think whether as a group you can create a list of guidelines or tools that students can “take away” from the class. Try to think ahead about the list to make sure it is useful and complete.
5. At least one week before class, assign your students to get and read the case you have assigned; they should read it at least twice. Give students a study question and ask them to answer in an online class forum, if that technology is available. If there is no wiki or blog available, ask them to come to the first class ready to answer the study question.
6. Think carefully about your opening class question. It should start a discussion that is thoughtful and creative. “What happened?” seems like you are testing whether the student has done the assignment. “Whose problem is this?” requires a more thoughtful answer.
7. Just before class, re-read your notes, your class plan, and your students’ online posts (if available). Focus on your opening question and your three discussion areas. You can use students’

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online answers to the pre-class assignment as a reference point during discussion, or begin your class by asking several to read or explain their answers to the group.

8. Listen, listen, listen. Restate student views as needed, and change the direction of the discussion if you feel that would be productive. Feel free to play “devil’s advocate,” deliberately taking an opposing position in order to help students understand which assumptions and biases underlie their views. You are not the expert. You are not a judge. Your role is as facilitator. Guide the discussion, do not lead it.

9. Model a culture of respect for others’ views. Discourage those who talk too much or lecture. Draw out the timid, encouraging them to participate. Challenge stereotypes and conventional thinking. Compare and contrast views.

10. Summarize why you think the discussion was worthwhile. Recap (review) tools or guidelines the class developed together. Distribute epilogue if you wish (or wait a week to stimulate continued out-of-class debate).

CONGRATULATIONS! The next time you teach this case, it will surprise you how different the discussion will be. Students and their variety are what make this teaching tool especially exciting.

Resources:

Case Consortium @ Columbia: <https://casestudies.jrn.columbia.edu>

Check out Case Method How-To’s for summary, guidance

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Christensen Center for Teaching and Learning: <http://www.hbs.edu/teaching/>
at Harvard Business School. Great site for teaching materials.

Harvard Kennedy School: www.ksgcase.harvard.edu

Substantial collection of public policy/public health cases