



**At a Glance:** Plan and deliver learning experiences using pre-determined learning outcomes. Facilitate discussions, organize interactive sessions, and provide constructive feedback to participants.

## Understanding Teaching

Teaching is the process of conveying knowledge, skills, and ethical norms to meet the educational, professional, and social needs of students.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the conventional classroom setting, teaching has other forms including supervision, mentorship, tutoring, coaching a team, and facilitating a workshop.

### Why does it matter?

The passion for communicating knowledge, the joy of helping others to succeed, and the desire to improve society – are some factors motivating individuals to pursue a teaching career.<sup>2</sup> Some may simply want to teach because they had bad teachers. Do you aspire to be the teacher you wish you had? Beyond the classroom, teachers are role models who influence students' ethical behaviours and professional choices<sup>3</sup>

If you value lifelong learning, teaching is a career path that requires an ongoing learning process so that your teaching material remains consistent with the latest knowledge and practices in a given field.<sup>4</sup> For instance, if you are seeking an academic professorship career, teaching courses reflecting the latest research developments in an area is inevitable. While mainly assessed based on research success, professors are also teachers and therefore need to possess the skills and abilities to deliver a message, explain their research, and inspire students. In fact, the Teaching-Learning-Research connection is highly valued for the academic success of students and professors equally.<sup>5</sup>

## Cultivating Teaching

While aspects of good teaching are subjective, cultivating oral and [written](#) communication skills and continuously replenishing your [knowledge](#) are important steps toward developing the ability to explain an idea or answer a question with clarity and precision.<sup>6</sup> To improve as a teacher, identify your strengths, weaknesses, and the gaps to fill by interacting with your students and considering their feedback, and by seeking advice from peers or teaching experts.

Teaching assistantships allow you to practice and experience teaching a class or a lab/technical course during graduate studies. The skills acquired while teaching, such as [interpersonal](#) and [presenting](#) skills, are highly transferable to other professional contexts beyond graduate school.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, this experience can also help you to decide whether a post-degree teaching career is right for you.

McGill Teaching and Learning Services (TLS) offer an extensive list of [teaching resources](#) covering various topics including: Learning theories and assessment, creating teaching portfolios, diversity in the classroom, answering students' questions, and others.

## Quick Guide to Being a Successful Teacher

- Be empathetic, open-minded, and accessible to students with questions, concerns, or suggestions, acknowledging that students learn at different rates and in different ways.<sup>8</sup>
- Be the class leader: Communicate learning outcomes, set clear expectations, and encourage teamwork and peer support.<sup>9</sup>
- Conduct self-evaluation to improve as a teacher, taking into account feedback from supervisor, peers, and students.<sup>10</sup>
- Adopt innovative teaching strategies that address the diversity in your classroom and follow the advances in your field.<sup>11</sup>
- Contribute to the content and design of curricula and programs, when possible.<sup>12</sup>
- Overcome common teaching challenges - Consult [TLS practical strategies](#) for more information.

# Taking Action

## Professional Development & Training

- Workshops - [McGill Skillsets - Teaching Competence](#): Workshops to help you build and strengthen your teaching abilities, whether as a TA, course instructor or in a non-academic career.
- Workshops - [T-PULSE - Graduate Teaching Workshop](#): One-day training workshop designed to improve science graduate students' TAing techniques and confidence.
- Check [myInvolvement](#) for upcoming workshops and programs by searching for events tagged with this category: Teaching

## Gaining Experience

- Become a [tutor](#).
- Apply for a teaching assistant position through [myFuture](#).
- Volunteer in the [ExCELR program](#).
- Volunteer in youth mentorship through [local communities](#).
- Volunteer with nonprofit teaching groups, such as [BrainReach](#) at McGill.

# Resources

## Websites & Apps

- [McGill Teaching and Learn Services \(TLS\) - Graduate Student Resources](#): This page provides pedagogical resources to support student instructor or TA to improve teaching, facilitation and presentation skills. For a list of comprehensive resources on topics related to teaching and learning, consult this webpage: [Teaching Resources](#).
- [McGill Educational & Counselling Psychology - Teaching Assistant Resources](#): Helpful resources for graduate students interested in, or currently holding, a TA position in the Faculty of Education.
- [McGill Career Planning Service - Teaching English Around the World](#): Resources for students interested in teaching English abroad.
- [Universal Design Learning](#) - McGill Office of Students with Disabilities: Tips to design course materials to be accessible by students with various disabilities.
- [Teaching and Learning Technologies](#) - McGill Teaching and Learning Services: A list of tools and technologies recommended to instructors.
- [Emaze](#): presentation design tool with many free available templates for presentations, websites and others.

## Groups & Associations

- [AGSEM](#) - McGill Teaching Support Union.

## Books, Articles & Reports

- Ambrose, S. A., Lovett, M., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/468969206>
- Bowen, J. A. (2017). *Teaching naked techniques: A practical guide to designing better classes*. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/967512609>
- Brown, P. C., Roediger, H. L., & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). *Make it stick: The science of successful learning*. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/859168651>
- Willingham, D. T. (2009). *Why don't students like school?: A cognitive scientist answers questions about how the mind works and what it means for the classroom*. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/255894389>
- Zull, J. E. (2002). *The art of changing the brain: Enriching teaching by exploring the biology of learning*. Sterling, Va: Stylus Pub. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/49673202>

## References

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- <sup>1</sup> Teaching and Learning. Prozesky, D.R. (2000).
- <sup>2</sup> Motivations for choosing teaching as a career: An international comparison using the FIT-Choice scale. Watt, H.M.G. (2012).
- <sup>3</sup> Encouraging students' ethical behavior. Prohaska, V. (2013). Prohaska 2013
- <sup>4</sup> Importance of the Lifelong Learning for Professional Development of University Teachers - Needs and Practical Implications. Duta, N. (2014).
- <sup>5</sup> Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) 2011.
- <sup>6</sup> Teaching and Learning. Prozesky, D.R. (2000).
- <sup>7</sup> Professional Development: Shaping Effective Programs for STEM Graduate Students. Denecke, D. (2017).
- <sup>8</sup> Teachers' empathy: can it be predicted by self-efficacy? Goroshit, M. (2015).
- <sup>9</sup> Oakley 2004
- <sup>10</sup> Gathering Feedback from Students. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching.
- <sup>11</sup> McGill Teaching and Learning Services (TLS).
- <sup>12</sup> Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) 2011.