

Explaining the Bird View

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One of the things I learned from a specific professor I had in my undergraduate studies is to always share the bird view with the students. Students can easily get lost in the details and lose track of where we are and why we are learning this. This specific professor that I am referring to has a PhD in electrical engineering, but he also teaches some of the math classes. I was in his differential equations class. The difference between him and other math teachers, who had a math degree, was that he knew exactly where and in what courses we will be using the equations he was teaching us about. So he would explain the usage of the equation and why it is important to us first, and then he would get into how to analyze and solve it.

I do the same thing in my course. At the beginning of each class, I will lead a group discussion about what we have done so far and where exactly are we. I also sometimes use little charts or tables to keep track of the topics that we are discussing in one session. For instance, if we are going to learn 3 different types of joining tables with 2 different methods for each one, I will draw a tree chart on the white board, and when I am explaining each one, I'll show it to them on the tree so that they exactly know where we are and what we are talking about. I have heard a lot of good feedback about this from students, as it really helps them to get to know the big picture all the time, both regarding what we are doing in class and regarding the entire path that we are following throughout the semester.



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