

How to **Talk to your Professors**

Getting to know your professors is a great way to enrich your educational experience, and invest in your future.

Eight Good Reasons to Get to Know your Professors

- Your professors can become wonderful mentors and advisors as you progress through your studies.
- They can give you guidance and direction on how to succeed in your classes.
- You can get to know more about their discipline, and find out where to get more information on topics that are of interest to you.
- They may have connections in their field that can help you in the future.
- They may have information on job or internship opportunities in your field.
- They can write letters of reference for you.
- They are more likely to give consideration to special requests, such as extensions on work, if they know you and see you as hard working and interested.
- Getting to know your professors is good way to gain networking skills that will be valuable for your future.



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What Can I Talk About?

There are many ways to begin a conversation with your professor. You can talk about

- Course content
- Topics for papers
- Your professor's research interests
- How your professor became interested in the subject
- Where your professor went to university
- Your interests in the subject
- Job opportunities
- Advice on other courses that you can take in the discipline
- You can just drop by to introduce yourself, and say how much you are enjoying the course!

It may seem intimidating to talk to your professors at first, but remember that they are in their line of work because they love teaching and sharing their passion for their subject, and because they genuinely care about their students.

Tips for Making the Most of your Meeting with your Professor

DO

- ▶ Make note of your professors' office hours, and plan to visit during this time. If you are not available during their office hours, be sure to make an appointment.
- ▶ Introduce yourself, and tell the professor a little bit about yourself, such as your major, your year, etc.
- ▶ Be prepared. Have some well thought out questions ready to discuss.
- ▶ Bring an outline, or a thesis statement for a paper you are working on to see if you are on the right track.
- ▶ Ask how you can improve in the future when reviewing your marks on an exam or assignment. Look for ways to learn from your mistakes.

DON'T

- ▶ Keep your professor after class. Professors have busy schedules, and may have other commitments immediately after the class ends.
- ▶ Assume that the professor will remember you the next time you visit. Introduce yourself again.
- ▶ Expect the professor to do your work for you.
- ▶ Expect the professor to read your entire paper on the spot.
- ▶ Quibble over marks. Unless there has been a calculation error, accept the marks you have been given. Professors do not assign marks lightly. Respect their expertise.

Make a Great Impression!

- ▶ Attend all classes. Be on time! It goes without saying that you shouldn't eat, talk to classmates, talk on your cell phone, or sleep. This behavior is not only disruptive to other students in the class, it is extremely rude and disrespectful to the professor.
- ▶ If you must miss a class, let the professor know ahead of time if possible. Take responsibility for getting class notes – don't expect the professor to redo the entire lecture for you.
- ▶ Participate in class. Ask questions, contribute to discussions. If you are shy, you can demonstrate that you are engaged in the class by sitting front and center, maintaining eye contact with the professor, nodding, and taking notes.
- ▶ Do your homework, come to class prepared.
- ▶ Don't judge. Your professor is not here to entertain or amuse you, but to teach you. Throughout your education, you will encounter professors with a variety of teaching and personality styles. Learn to appreciate this diversity. Take active responsibility for your own learning, and make the most of every opportunity. Remember that you will get as much out of your education as you invest in it!

Created by Suzanne Martin for the Manitoba Advising Professionals, February, 2006