

Successful Tips for the First Week

Preview classroom organization before the first meeting.

- ✓ Locate and figure out how to work the lights, the blinds, and the ventilation.
- ✓ Check any audiovisual equipment (microphone, computer set up, remote control devices or overhead projector) you will be using.
- ✓ Find out how to obtain help if a bulb burns out or a piece of equipment malfunctions.
- ✓ Get comfortable speaking in the room and see how well your voice carries.
- ✓ Make sure your handwriting on the whiteboard is large enough and legible from the back row.

Set the tone for the rest of the semester.

- ✓ Greet students when they enter the classroom.
- ✓ Start and finish class on time.
- ✓ Encourage questions, and give students the opportunity to talk.
- ✓ Stay after class to answer questions, or invite students to talk with you after class or during office hours.
- ✓ Provide contact information such as: email, phone number at the college that you can be reached out, and mailbox location.

Take Care of Administrative Tasks

Write the course name and number on the board.

- ✓ This message will alert any students who are in the wrong classroom to leave before you begin.

Take attendance.

- ✓ Provide a roster excel document with dates and a column for students to sign in.
- ✓ Have a contingency plan if more students than you can accommodate want to enroll.
 - Overrides: check with your department to get the forms needed with department chairperson's signatures. (override and drop/add forms)
 - If your course is an elective, plan on admitting a few more students than you can comfortably accommodate; a small number will end up dropping your course.

Build a sense of community in the classroom.

- ✓ Plan an activity that provides opportunities for students to speak to one another or solve problems on the first day (team building activity, ice breaker).
- ✓ Make an effort to get to know your students and express your interest in working with them during the semester (personal information form).

Address students' concerns.

Note: Use the first day to help your students understand how the class will serve their needs, and demonstrate your commitment to help them learn. Ensure that you are competent by providing a brief summary of your background and

Make the time worthwhile.

- ✓ Once administrative tasks are completed, such as:
 - Complete the personal information form
 - Review the *course syllabus* and provide a form so the students can sign an affidavit that they agree and understand it.
 - Reviewed *lab safety and equipment guidelines* and provide a form so the students can sign an affidavit that they agree and understand it.

...plunge into substantive material.

This detail demonstrates that each class period is important and signals to students that you are serious about making their time worthwhile and that you expect progress to be made toward meeting the class competencies at each class session.

Expect some awkwardness.

All teachers, especially beginning instructors, feel a twinge of apprehension before the first class.

- ✓ Arriving early on the first day of class and talking informally to students may help you relax.
- ✓ Do your best to assume a confident attitude.
- ✓ Keep in mind that to your students your nervousness is likely to be perceived as energy and enthusiasm.

Review any prerequisites for the course.

- ✓ Let students know what skills or knowledge they are expected to have and whether alternate experience or course work will be accepted.
- ✓ Is help available for those who do not have all the prerequisite skills?
- ✓ If computer work is part of the course, will training be provided?

Define your expectations for student participation.

- ✓ Besides turning in all written assignments and taking exams, what do you expect of students during class?

Tell students about campus policies on academic honesty.

- ✓ State your expectations, and let students know what you regard as cheating and impermissible collaboration.

Hand out and discuss the course syllabus.

- ✓ Project the Course Syllabus on the screen and provide a checklist for the students to review and sign to signify that they are aware of the requirements and procedures of the class.
- ✓ Make sure you inform the students as to how to contact you to answer questions or ask for assistance. (E-mail, office, college phone number)

Explain the availability of Accommodations for Special Needs Students.

- ✓ Invite the student(s) to visit with you to inquire if they may need academic accommodations for a physical or learning disability so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
- ✓ Usually you will receive a form the first week if the student needs any special accommodations.

Review safety precautions.

- ✓ If your course requires lab work or fieldwork, review safe practices for using equipment and supplies and discuss emergency procedures.
- ✓ Show students how to use equipment safely and appropriately.

Review emergency procedures.

- ✓ Let students know what to do in case of fire, tornado, earthquake, evacuation, or other emergency.

Bring copies of the required texts to the first class meeting.

- ✓ Know which stores besides the campus bookstore stock the texts. Are used copies available? Is the textbook on reserve in the library?

Create a Positive Classroom Environment

- ✓ **Introductions**
 - Credentials
 - Background
 - Importance of Course to you
 - Convey enthusiasm
 - Ask students to fill out a Personal Information Form
 - Reason for taking the class
 - Professional goals
 - Study Habits
 - Interest in course
- ✓ Learn Student Names
- ✓ Ice Breaker
 - Provide fun activities for students to get to know each other
 - Create a peer to peer contact number in case students will need to miss a class, need homework clarification, and to form study groups
 - Use 3 x 5 index cards

Setting Course Expectations and Standards

- ✓ **Discuss the objectives of the course.**
 - Inform the students of schedule, exam dates, deadlines, consequences of late work, absence, participation, etc.
 - Ask students what they are interested in learning
- ✓ **Ask students to list the goals they hope to achieve by taking the course.**
 - List 3-5 goals in the form of statements about knowledge, skills, appreciations, interests, attitudes
- ✓ **Describe how you propose to spend class time.**
 - How will sessions be structured?
 - How will discussions be organized?
 - Will a specific tie be set aside for questions, or may students ask questions as they arise?
 - Should questions that are lengthy be saved for office hours?
- ✓ **Give your students ideas about how to study and prepare for class.**
 - Study strategies
 - Inform the students of how much time is needed to study for the course
 - Inform them of the academic support on campus
- ✓ **If appropriate, give a brief diagnostic pretest.**
 - Just a brief assessment of their level of understanding of the course and areas that might need brushing up to be successful
- ✓ **Ask students to do a group exercise.**
 - Ask students to develop a list of characteristics of a quality teacher
 - List expectations of the instructor to assist in success for all students
 - Put some of their thoughts on white board for class discussion
- ✓ **Work through a problem or piece of material that illustrates the course content.**
 - Begin to teach the students how to participate in the class
 - Stress importance of acceptance and respect
- ✓ **Give an assignment for the next class session.**
 - Move immediately to the first topic to indicate that their time is worthwhile and that you are well organized
 - Make sure the assignment is ungraded
- ✓ **Ask students to write their reactions to the first day.**
 - Ask questions that might not have been addressed the first day
 - List any concerns or clarification that need to be made to ensure that they are successful

Notes: