

Approaching your Professor: It's not that Scary

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One of the biggest concerns new university students have is how they are supposed to approach their professors when they have questions or concerns. This should not be a scary experience. If you did know already, professors are people too. They like talking to their students. In fact, professors actually set-up specific methods and times to encourage their students to talk to them; a few of these are listed below.

Email: An email shows that you have an interest in the class. Sending your professor a short email about a question you have, an assignment or an essay topic is an excellent way to start a dialogue. This is one of the best ways to start talking to your professor if you are a little nervous.

There are a few things to remember about email etiquette when you email a professor. First, be sure the subject line of your email adequately indicates the class the email pertains to; your professor teaches more than one class so be clear about which one you are a part of. Second, start your letter, "Dear Professor Smith". This is the same etiquette you used when addressing your high school teachers – title, Professor, and last name. Finally, end your email with "Thanks, Jane Doe". ALWAYS thank your professor and provide your first and last names. There may be 50 Janes in your class so you have to use your last name to highlight which one you are.

First Class Introduction: In your very first class, the full scheduled time is usually not used. Typically, the professor will give you an overview of the class and then dismiss the class early. This extra time is a perfect opportunity for you to go and introduce yourself to the professor. A simple "Hi Professor Smith, I just wanted to come and introduce myself. My name is Jane Doe and I'm really looking forward to taking this class" is all you need to say. Taking the time to introduce yourself at the first class shows that you are comfortable with being at university, that you have an interest in the class and gives the professor a face to a name. Guaranteed if you do this your professor will remember you.

Office Hours: Professors have scheduled office hours that hardly anyone ever uses. These hours are specific times the professor schedules during the week to guarantee that they will be in their offices. Office hours are meant to give students the opportunity to ask the professor questions or just talk about the class and university in general; so, use them! Again, a simple "Hi!" or asking a question is all you need to do.