

Speaking with Professors and the Importance of Communication

Why should you reach out to your professors?

Whether it's an email, a quick conversation before or after class, or attending office hours, communication with your professors shows you are invested in your learning and care about your scholastic standing. Not only does this demonstrate your educational interest, but it can also help build a positive relationship where you feel more comfortable asking for assistance instead of trying to face academic challenges on your own.

Reasons to contact your professor

When you:

- Don't understand an assignment
- Are having trouble grasping a concept or understanding class material
- Want to go over test results or discuss how to improve for the next exam
- Need clarification on due dates, submission processes, or grading criteria
- Would like feedback on a paper, project, or presentation
- Need to discuss absences, illness, or accommodations
- Want to talk about research opportunities, internships, or recommendation letters (these are typically discussed once you know your professor better)

Tips for communicating professionally through emails

Do:

- Use your professor's correct title: Dr., Professor, or if unsure of their title, use Mr. or Ms.
- Use your TAMU email and include the course and section in the message
- Proofread prior to sending the email: check spelling, grammar, tone, and check for attachments if applicable
- Be specific: clearly state the purpose of your message
- Be respectful and concise

Don't:

- Begin an email or conversation informally, as you might with friends or family
- Use text or slang
- Ask about information that is easily found in the syllabus
- Demand a grade change (Instead, schedule an appointment during office hours to discuss how you can improve your performance in the class.)
- Expect an immediate response (24-48 hours is standard, but it could be longer if it's the weekend, a holiday, or university break)

Other Tips

- Introduce yourself to your professors. A simple, "Howdy, my name is...it's nice to meet you" will suffice
- Arrive early to your classes and sit in (or close to) the front of the room
- When attending office hours, arrive early, be prepared with your materials, and write down specific questions ahead of time so you don't forget to ask in the moment
- If you want to attend office hours but they conflict with your schedule, reach out to your professor to see if he or she would be able to schedule a different time to meet with you
- Check your resources, such as Howdy, Canvas, or the class syllabus, to see if you can find the answers there first. Professors appreciate this because it shows you've taken the time to go through the material and sources prior to your visit.
- Remember: your professors are human

Final thoughts

By utilizing a variety of options and opportunities to effectively communicate with your professors, you can increase your understanding of course material, learn effective study strategies for daily assignments, homework and exam preparation, and get clarification on more challenging concepts. Your professors are there to help you be as successful as possible in their class and beyond.