



# Talking to Professors

# Roles of Professors and Instructors





# Faculty member roles

## Professors

A professor is also a post-secondary teacher who teaches undergrad and post-grads in any higher institution. However, a professor teaches students within their field of academia, which they have been studying for many years.

## Lecturers

Unlike professors, they do not need a Master's or Ph.D. to teach. What they bring to the table, however, is their working experience in the field which gives them the qualifications to teach a certain course.

## Teaching Assistant (TA)

TA refers to an individual who assists a professor in developing, delivering and often grading course material. TAs are typically master's or PhD students and generally administer smaller, supplemental classes to review the content that was covered in lecture.

# 1. What are you here for?


Understanding how to begin a  
conversation with a professor



# Building a working relationship with your instructor

- Think in terms of doing extra work, not asking for favors.
- Think in terms of getting to know the field or area of study better
- Tell the story of who you are, where you're from, what your passions are and where you think you want to go next.





# Asking yourself what you want. Finding out.. then asking for it

## **What are your interests?**

Identifying what you like in a specific field or course is the best way to start understanding how you can establish a relationship with a instructor

## **How can this professor help you further your ""?**

In what ways do you want your professor to be a resource or guide? Think about the role they will play.

## **How would you like to learn more?**

Are you looking for more assignments to do? Be part of a research group? Get an internship?

**2.**

# Approaching a Professor

Understanding how to begin a  
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# Raise your hand

Starting out simple by raising your hand in a lecture or discussion will allow your instructor to notice your engagement in the material.







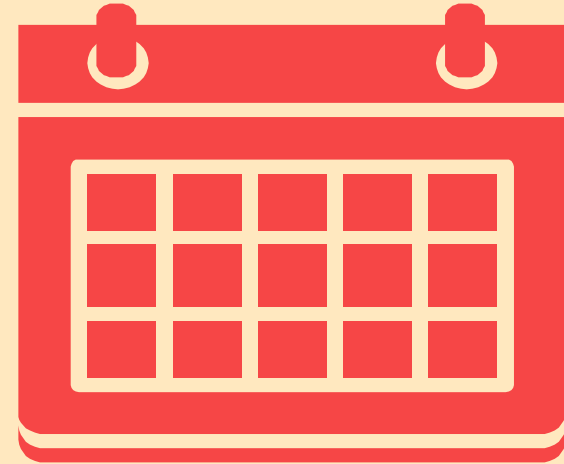
**Begin an active discussion within the lecture/discussion section.**

**While this also shows your engagement to the course, it serves to put you as an individual on the radar of your instructor.**

## Connecting outside of class

### **Know your instructor's office hours**

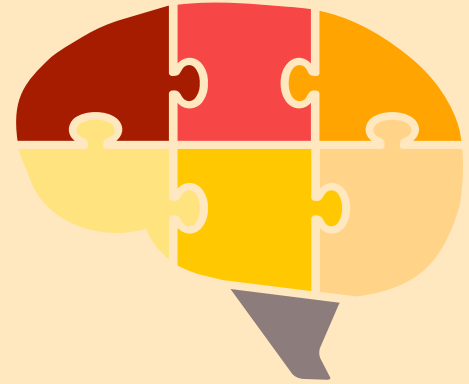
Office hours is a preferred method of communication or meeting students for instructors. You can find their office hours on the syllabus or sometimes on their website. If it is an instructor you've never met before, you can ask other students or reach out via email to know when they hold their office hours



## Be Authentic and Intentional

When meeting with instructors, remember that you are showing an interest in them, but also think of why they should have an interest in you.

Let them know why you are reaching out. Expressing your thoughts as clearly as possible is so much more important than trying to “sound smart.” Here’s the secret: a clear, honest thought will always “sound smart,” even if you think the idea behind it is not totally earth-shattering.





## Ways to approach a professor

- ▶ Go to their office hours
- ▶ Send them an email
- ▶ Talk to them after class
- ▶ Be active within the discussion

Most professors will let their students know what the best way to reach them is. Be aware that some professors are more willing than others to meet with students.



## When asking for a letter of recommendation

### Tips from the Career Center:

- Ask for a reference letter from people who know you and your capabilities, such as professors, community college instructors, advisors or counselors, job/internship/volunteer work supervisors
- Give your letter writer a copy of your resume so they know what you have done.
- Be sure to give the people you ask enough time to write the reference letter; a minimum of at least one month would be appreciated.
- Tell the people who agree to write letters for you about what type of internship(s) or job(s) you are interested in so they understand what they could write that would help you to achieve those goals.
- Once you receive your reference letter, send the writer a thank you note. You should also let the writer know about your subsequent success and how much their letter helped you to attain your goal.



## Additional Tips

- **Be on time for your appointment** - Professors are busy and no one likes to feel like their time is disrespected. Know ahead of time where your appointment will be and arrive 5 minutes early.
- **Smile and introduce yourself** - Helps set the tone for your appointment and creates a more inviting and welcoming environment.
- **Be mindful of the time** - Your time is important. So is your professor's. If you have a meeting with an ending time, you should expect to adhere to that limit and make sure you do everything you want to get accomplished in that time.
- **Be prepared with any documents that may be necessary**

# Diagram of main points

