



Communicating

If you are in any institute of higher education, either in-person or online, you will have to communicate with your professor. Your academic success depends on the partnership that you develop between you and your instructor. Here are a few tips and guidelines for communicating effectively and professionally.

Tip #1: Prepare yourself.

Before asking any question, exhaust your resources. This requires you to read the entire **syllabus** for the course (more than once), ask classmates, and do online research.

Tip #2: Decide on the most appropriate method of communication.

After you've exhausted all your resources, determine how to communicate. Do you need to set up an appointment or visit them during their office hours? Is this a question better answered through email? Should you give them a phone call?

Tip #3: In-Person Communication

If you need to meet with your professor in person, be sure of a few things. One, know what you want to ask your professor. If necessary, write it down. Two, attend office hours or make an appointment with your professor. If they have designated office hours, send an email beforehand to let them know you plan on attending their office hours. This ensures they are prepared for your arrival and shows you are proactive and respectful.

Tip #4: Email Etiquette

Whether you are asking a simple question about a due date or inquiring for clarification on course content, email etiquette with your professor is crucial to your success as a student.

1. Be sure to include a relevant subject in the email address. If necessary, specify the class, section, and date of class you're asking about.
2. Address your professor respectfully. For example, "Dr. Smith," is an appropriate way to communicate.
3. Refrain from text-message-style language in the body of your email. Be sure that you have asked a very specific question that your professor can answer via email if necessary.
4. Conclude your email with a salutation, such as "Best," "Sincerely," or "Thanks."

View the email below for an example of proper and professional communication with a professor.

To: jane.smith@university.edu
From: james.doe@university.edu
Subject: ENGL 1300 Final Paper Grading Clarification

Dr. Smith,

My name is James Doe and I'm in your English 1300 course on MWF from 1:00-1:50 pm. I reviewed the syllabus for the grade distribution for our final paper and couldn't find any information about it.

I was wondering how many points the final paper is worth. If this is a topic that needs to be discussed in office hours, please let me know and I'll schedule an appointment with you.

Thank you,

James Doe

If you follow these simple guidelines, communication with your professor will be professional, concise, and respectful, as well as set you up for success as a professional communicator in the workplace.

For more information on communicating with your professor, or any other strategies:

The Learning Center
Support Operations for Academic Retention (S.O.A.R.)

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