



How to Talk to Your Instructor

Visit during posted office hours or a scheduled appointment.

This may seem obvious, but if you try to talk to your instructors at other times, they might not be able to concentrate on you and your concerns. It's probably not the case that your instructors don't want to be bothered; rather, they have many other responsibilities in addition to teaching class. Instructors set aside office hours and appointments specifically to meet with students, so take advantage of those opportunities.

Visit when you have legitimate issues to discuss.

"What constitutes a legitimate issue?" you might ask. See your instructor if any of the following scenarios apply:

- You *honestly* cannot understand why you performed poorly on a test, paper, or other assignment,
- You are considering pursuing a major in your instructor's area of expertise and would like more information,
- You aren't planning to major in your instructor's area of expertise, but you are very interested in the course material and would like to know about other opportunities to learn more,
- You are considering going to graduate school in your instructor's area of expertise and would like more information, you would like information about good courses in the instructor's area of expertise to take as a follow-up to your current course.

Prepare before going to see your instructor.

Plan your questions ahead of time—even write them down so you can make sure you address all your concerns. If you're going to see your instructor about grades, take all your graded material with you, along with your lecture notes and other study aids. Looking over these materials can help your instructor pinpoint what you could do differently or what you may be missing.

Visit with an open, friendly attitude.

This is a fairly easy step if you're interested and excited about the course, but it can be more difficult if you're not performing as well as you hope to. Keep in mind that your instructor is teaching because s/he loves the subject, and would like nothing more than to interest you in the material. Try to look at the subject matter from the perspective of someone who is fascinated by it, and respect your instructor's expertise, if nothing else. Being defensive is the quickest way to turn off your instructor's desire to help, so be open to suggestions.