



The Tell-All Guide to Talking with Your Professor

1. Know what your professor wants to be called: if he/she doesn't specify on the syllabus or in class, ask!
2. Some ideas for conversation-starters
 - Professor X, I need your help with _____.
 - Professor X, if you were a student in your class, what would YOU do to get an "A"?
 - Professor X, I'm not getting the kind of grades I know I can in your class; if you don't mind being candid with me, what do you think I'm doing wrong?
 - Professor X, would you mind if I came by during your office hours to get some additional help?
 - Professor X, what do you think the key is to mastering (whatever the subject is)?
3. How to approach...
 - a. *Questions about course content.* Be specific when you meet with your instructor. An example of an appropriate question is: "I used my notes to outline my ideas but they still seem disorganized and unclear. What suggestions do you have that can help me make a better study guide?" (Show the instructor your notes.)
 - b. *Needing additional help.* Professors are the best source of advice for how to succeed in their classes. If you are investing sufficient study time and still not doing well, schedule an appointment. Let your professor know what you are already doing (how many hours you spend reading, reviewing notes, studying with other students, etc.) If you know the reason for your performance is lack of preparation and you know what to do, just do it.
 - c. *Appealing a poor grade.* If you are appealing a poor grade, come prepared with ideas of extra work you are prepared to do: "I am really concerned about my grade in this course. Would you be willing to give me extra credit if I did a 5-10 page research paper on the health crisis in the U.S.?" Offer to retake an exam. If they say it won't change your grade, ask to go over the test or paper and talk about exactly what you did wrong and exactly what the professor expects from you. Brainstorm studying tactics and ask if you can bring assignments in to go over them before they are due.
 - d. *Concerns about tests.* Remember, talk in ways that are not defensive or hostile toward the instructor: "I am really upset about my performance on the last test. The week before the test I studied 2 hours every night and reviewed all the readings and notes with a study partner. None of the material I studied seemed to be relevant to the questions on the test. I want to do better on your tests. Can you give me some suggestions to study more effectively?"
 - e. *Asking for an incomplete grade or other special exceptions.* Don't waste your professor's time with fake or repetitive excuses but if you have valid reasons for why you didn't finish a paper or do well on an exam, talk to them to see if you can have any extra time to complete work or extra credit opportunities. Make sure you are clear and honest.
4. **Remember:** It's easier to fail an ID number than a person. Building a relationship with your professor will not only clarify what he or she wants from you in that class, but it will also establish a connection between a name on a piece of paper and your face.

#

<http://www.wou.edu/provost/aalc/learning/documents/HowToTalkToYourProfessor.pdf>

#

#



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
Illinois State University

We help students succeed.

www.ucollege.ilstu.edu

#