

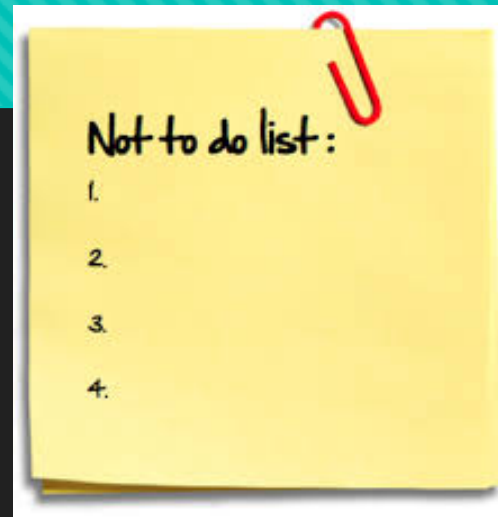


Do's and Don'ts of the First Day of Class

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What Not To Do!

Share something that you have done
on the first day of class
(or early in the semester)
that didn't work with those around you.



What should the first class meeting do?

- To clarify all reasonable questions students might have about the course (course objectives, assignments, etc.)
- To convince students of your competence to teach the course, predict the nature of your instruction, and know what is required of them (your expectations about performance in class).
- To give YOU an understanding of who is taking your course and what their expectations are.

Create Positive First Impression

- Your Attire
 - Easier to relax a more formal impression into a more relaxed one
- Physical Environment
 - Consider having a thought provoking question displayed before they arrive, a cartoon, playing music, or having an activity to complete beforehand
- Use the few minutes before class!
 - Greeting students as they enter communicates approachability
 - Arriving right on time (or late!) communicates disorganization



Introduce Yourself Effectively



- What characteristics do you want to convey about yourself?
- What do you think students are trying to figure out about you?
- Is there anything you should be careful not to say?

Clarify Learning Expectations

- Prerequisites
- Highlight main aspects of the syllabus
- Consider a quiz on the syllabus
- Expectations for student behavior (punctuality, seeking help when needed, offering feedback)
- Communicate your commitment to students' learning experience



Help Students Learn About Each Other

- Icebreakers raise energy levels and get students comfortable
 - Appropriate for the course
 - Work best when they allow students to get to know each other in the context of the course material



Set the Tone of the Course

- Whatever you plan to do during the semester, do it on the first day
- Consider a “Homework” Office Hours requirement
- Establish a culture of feedback



Collect Baseline Data on Students' Knowledge and Motivation

- Collect data about baseline knowledge
 - Ungraded pre-test
 - Self-reports on how confident they feel about the course
- Get a sense of students' motivation in the course
 - Why are students taking the course?
 - What they expect to get out of it?
 - What challenges they anticipate?
- Decide what to do about different/inadequate prior knowledge
 - Tell them they cannot take the course?
 - Provide recommendations on how to bridge the gap on their own?
 - Decide to devote one or two classes to review important material?



Get Students Excited about the Course

How do you do this?



In conclusion...

Remember that the first day of class sets the tone for the entire course. Time upfront will pay off in the long run!

