Study Skills Tip of the Week

Learn How to Decode Your Professor

Relationships with Professors:

As a student, you will have a special relationship with your professors. This does not necessarily mean that it will be personal or wonderful. Rather, it means that it will be one that requires good working dynamics of the same nature as those in best friend interactions.

Professors are people too and if you learn the skills that are conducive to good friendships, you will have a distinct advantage when you interact with your professors.

Here are some important principles to put at the top of your list.

1. Attend Class Regularly

If you are registered for a class, the professor expects you to attend. Be there! Attend class regularly and, if possible, arrive early. Use this time to interact with the professor or your classmates. If you don’t care to interact, review your notes or just relax. Your attendance punctuality will help demonstrate a commitment.

2. Be Attentive

Most professors practice good eye contact with their students, so it is important that you are attentive in class. Sleeping, daydreaming, or activities, such as writing letters are inappropriate behaviors. Even more inappropriate is conversing with your neighbor while the professor is speaking. This is viewed as an insult to the instructor and it also disturbs the other students.

3. Participate in Class Discussions and Activities
Teaching and learning is a two-way street. You will have a better chance of learning if you participate actively in class discussions and activities. Often, students do not ask questions or volunteer to answer those that are asked. This gives the impression that you do not know or that you aren’t willing to participate—both leave negative impressions. Participating in class gives the impression that you are prepared and interested in advancing your own knowledge.

4. Cultivate a Positive Attitude Toward Class

Your attitude can make or break your performance in a class. A bad teacher for one student may be the best teacher for another. We all learn differently and have personality preferences. Decide for yourself. Evaluate your attitude toward the class and the professor. Your performance can be affected by your attitude. What you learn and what you contribute in class is a reflection of your attitude.

5. Make an Effort to Help the Professor Know You by Name

There will not be much opportunity for the professor to know who you are unless you take initiative. Make opportunities to interact with your professor in a formal and informal manner. The interaction doesn’t have to be long, so don’t be intimidated by lack of confidence in knowing what to do or say. Keep it simple but genuine.

6. Arrange for Conferences Before It’s Too Late

A conference with your professor may be necessary. Don’t wait until the end of the semester or you’re in deep trouble. Seek help early.

7. Learn from Your Professors

Professors are an integral part of your education. They have much to teach you. Learn from them. Respect their knowledge, even if you don’t like them or their teaching methods. Learning from the negative can be just as valuable as learning from the positive. Professors will come and go in your life, but your education will be with you forever.
When Professors Talk Too Fast

Rates of speaking vary. Whatever the rate, one hopes that our listening pace is about the same as the professor’s speaking pace. If you are taking notes, this means that you will need to listen carefully and write as fast as the professor is speaking. If you can’t keep up, here are some suggestions.

1. Ask permission to record the lecture.

2. Be willing to ask the professor to repeat the information.

3. Exchange copies of notes with other class members.

4. Read assigned chapter material before class. You will be familiar with the subject matter and will be in a better position to pick out the key points.

5. Don’t try to write everything down. Focus only on the key points.

6. Leave large spaces in your notes if you think you are missing information. You can go back later and fill in the information.

7. Use abbreviations.

8. Be sure to sit in a seat that will be conducive to good listening.

9. If you missed information, either ask another student or ask the professor to help fill in the missing information.

10. Be willing to discuss your needs with the professor. Professors are more than willing to help when asked.

_Coping With College_ by Alice L. Hamacheck

For more information see:
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