

# Communicating with Professors

Communicating with your professors can be intimidating, but doing so can help you get the most out of your classes. From ensuring you understand the material to alert them that you may miss class, open communication is one of the simplest ways to help you succeed. Plus, it's excellent practice for talking with a boss or supervisor in the workplace.

## Tips for talking with your professor

- **Be professional.** Address your professor by their proper name and title and proofread your emails several times before sending them. Other ways to be professional include dressing appropriately and arriving at classes and meetings on time.
- **Be honest.** If you struggle with the class material or have personal concerns, being honest is the first step to finding a solution. Don't be afraid to bring up issues and ask questions.
- **Be direct.** Professors want to help you and answer questions. Don't hesitate to contact them if you are confused about a topic. Remember to be precise about what you want to discuss. This will help you communicate clearly while being mindful of their time.
- **Establish a relationship.** Asking questions in class and interacting with your professors early in the semester will help you stand out. If you have concerns later on, they will know your work ethic and be more inclined to support you.
- **Be mindful of their time.** Much like you, professors have a lot on their plates. Check the class syllabus to see when they have devoted time to office hours. Be mindful of their time by asking if they are available or suggesting a meeting time that works for them. This will garner respect and allow them to dedicate time to you.

## Talking about mental health with your professor

You can decide whether discussing your mental health with your professor is right for you. However, if your health impacts your schoolwork, it may be best to let them know about your concerns. Dealing with anxiety, depression, trauma, grief, medication changes and more can all make school more difficult. Schedule a meeting before discussing concerns with your professor to ensure privacy.

- **Be open.** Share what you feel comfortable sharing. Your professor does not need to know your entire health history. Stick to relevant conditions that may impact the workload of the class.
- **Be accountable.** If you miss an assignment or a class, explain why. Mental health concerns can make schoolwork even more challenging. Don't hesitate to ask for flexibility and support.
- **Don't wait.** Talking about mental health can be difficult, but do not wait to reach out to your professor only after missed assignments, poor test scores or incomplete work. Having a conversation when you first experience issues will allow you to develop a relationship with your professor. Practice honesty and work with your teacher on a game plan for ways you may be able to address your challenges.
- **Check-in.** Provide your instructor with an update later in the term to let them know how you are doing. This is especially important because workloads tend to increase as mid-terms or finals approach.
- **Consult with a school counselor.** Many colleges and universities offer student counseling programs. Speaking with a school counselor can help you get official paperwork or accommodations regarding your mental health.

School brings various challenges. If you feel you need support, exploring your school's counseling options is a great place to start.

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