

Your First Class

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Learning Outcomes: By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Develop strategies for making your first class go well
- Recognize the value in setting the tone / classroom environment in your first class with students
- Understand the role of a TA / instructor in adding value to student learning

Pre-First Class Checklist

- Get advice!!!
 - Talk to the professor you are TA'ing for
 - Talk to fellow TAs
 - Talk to previous course TAs
- Review textbook / course notes / previous year's notes / labs
- Ask for the course syllabus
- Check out your classroom!!! – technology, temperature, layout, supplies, space / chairs
- Send welcome message
- Pack some pens, markers, chalk, etc.

Strategies for Dealing with Pre-First Class Nerves

- Dress comfortably (but professionally)
- Practice
- Talk to students before class
- Write out what you want to say
- Begin with some discussion questions

Your First Class Checklist

Logistics

- Handout:
 - Your name, Office number and hours, Contact info (phone number, email)
- Student Info sheet:
 - Name, Year, Option, Relevant courses taken, Career objectives (what do they want to do post-university), Questions / Concerns
- Arrive early – mingle, talk to students
- Start class on time
- Make Introductions – Introduce: Yourself, Your Expectations, Technology

Activities

- Ask course-specific icebreakers / involve students quickly
- Ask open-ended questions
- Model how you want the class to be for the rest of the quarter
- Learn students' names

Offer Added Value

- Teach!!!! Give students a reason to come back! e.g. facilitated discussion or lecture
- Be organized – plan your class out in 15 minute intervals with goals for each interval
- Be the expert to novice link
- Link the lab / recitation section to the lecture – how does it relate? How is your section going to help students understand the material?
- Give friendly tips and advice about resources

Create an Enjoyable Classroom Environment

- make uncertainty safe
- resist a single right answer
- create a classroom where students feel comfortable asking questions
- incorporate evidence into performance and grading criteria

Employ Motivational Strategies (Adapted from How Learning Works)

- connect material to students' interests
- provide authentic, real-world tasks
- show relevance to their lives and careers
- show passion and excitement and the value you place on this subject / field
- describe effective study strategies
- get personal (“I would approach this course / problem by.... “)

Your First Class Plan

- Task list before your First Class:***

- Plan for First Class in 15 minute increments:***