

Using Class Time Effectively on Day One

Develop a plan for engaging your students in learning, starting on the first day of class. Taking the time to design a clear plan for the first day will help you calm your nerves and will give students a clear impression of the course content and objectives, what they can expect to do in the course, and why it will be interesting and challenging.

Set the Stage

- Arrive early and make sure that the room is ready. Set up any necessary equipment. Write (or display) the course title and your name and contact information on the chalkboard or screen.
- Chat with students before you begin class. Interacting with students in this way will make them more likely to participate and ask questions during class.
- When class starts, tell the students a little about who you are and why you are interested in the course and the discipline.
- Begin learning your students' names. Ask students to introduce themselves by their preferred names. The class roster on WebFAC provides photos of all your students and can help you put names to faces, even before the class begins, but it may not have your students' preferred names on it. Follow guidelines listed on [Washington University's Preferred Name Policy](#).
- When talking with students during the first class, communicate clearly about what you expect to happen in the classroom, including the ways in which you would like your students to interact, ask questions, and participate. See more information at [Strategies for Inclusive Teaching](#).

Begin Teaching on the First Day

- Start class on time.
- Use at least one of the teaching methods you will use during the semester.
 - If you plan to use small-group discussions or other active learning methods in the course, it is especially important that you do so on the first day. This strategy will help you establish high expectations for student participation and engagement.
- Communicate your sense of why the course material is interesting and why it should be studied.

Review Course Organization and Policies

- Distribute an informative, detailed syllabus and describe the workload of the course, e.g., number of exams, number and length of papers, number of books to read, and amount of daily or weekly homework.
- Resist the urge to read the syllabus to students. Instead, provide the highlights related to critical course policies like attendance, academic integrity, grades, and requests for extensions or rescheduling of quizzes and exams. If you are an assistant in instruction who leads a recitation or lab section, reinforce course policies and explain how they pertain to the part of class (e.g., weekly discussion sections) that you teach.
- Review your office hours and give students instructions on when and how to communicate with you.
- Explain your expectations for class participation, why participating is important, and the goal of creating an inclusive classroom environment.

Answer Questions

- Give students an opportunity to ask questions about these policies. In addition, try to answer unspoken questions, such as “What do I need do to be successful in this course?” “What will be the most interesting part of this course?” and “What will be the most challenging part?”
- Consider asking students to submit questions about the course—in class, via email, or in an online discussion board, such as on Blackboard or Canvas. Plan to answer these questions during the next class session