

Communicating with your professor can feel like a challenge, but your professors want to know their students. Here are some tips to help you ease into connecting with your professors:



Remember Their Preferred Channel of Communication. At the beginning of your course, your professor will explain how they prefer to communicate with their students. For example, some like doing it via email, while others may hold open office or Zoom hours or prefer you make an appointment for specific day(s) and time(s). Make note of their preference.



Schedule an Appointment. You might want to try talking to your professor after a lecture –but they might have other obligations. Instead of trying to do this at the most convenient time for you, try being respectful and scheduling an appointment in advance during the hours a certain professor is available. This will ensure that the professor is available for a proper conversation during that time.



Introduce Yourself. Some professors have many students, some have fewer. Some of them memorize students better, some do not. Either way, you shouldn't take it personally if they don't remember you, if you visit them regularly they will get to know who you are. Tell them your name and the class you attend to start.



Be Ready for Small Talk. There is a chance that a professor will want you to get straight to the point. Some of them, however, prefer to chat with you first. Many professors choose to teach because they like students and enjoy talking to them – so try to be nice and enjoy the small talk.



Understand the Purpose of Your Visit. You don't know how much time the professor can afford to spend talking with you, so you should do your best to save them time. To do so, think beforehand what the purpose of your visit is. Describe it clearly to yourself and then deliver it to the professor after a small talk (or right away if there isn't any small talk). It also helps the professor to understand what to expect from you and how long your conversation is going to last. Getting to know the professor better is one thing and asking them for advice about your writing or a math problem is completely another – and you should remember that.



Remember That a Professor Is a Person Too. It's an obvious thing, yet many students seem to forget about that. This stops them from talking to the professors in the first place – and this also stops them from sharing certain personal matters. While some things (stress, workload, your relative's illness, your parents' recent divorce) aren't related to your studies, they can still affect them a lot. Sure, this doesn't mean that you need to tell your professor about them in details – but telling about those things in general is okay. And it's often a must when such things do affect your grades and could lead to you falling behind. So don't worry: your professors are people too and they indeed can understand.



Don't Forget: Even Talking Isn't Always Able to Fix Everything. The sad truth is that some students come to the professors only when it's too late: for example, when the course is coming to an end. There might not be too many things the professor can do to help you fix a problem in such a case.

- While most of the professors do want to help the students, sometimes, it may not be possible. If you missed classes or assignments or ignored their outreach, it may be hard to make up the work. If you put off the important conversation as long as possible, you might want to brace yourself for some disappointment.
- However, don't let that discourage you. In most cases, there's still a great possibility to get help from your professor, to get to know them more, and so on. So do your best, remember these tips, and try scheduling an appointment as soon as possible. Hopefully, it will turn out okay!