

The First Day of Class

BEST PRACTICES

IDEAS FOR A GREAT START

It is important to start off the semester on the right foot. Use these great tips and strategies to help you catch your students attention right from the beginning.

BEFORE FIRST DAY

- Visit the classroom; make sure you are familiar with the technology, lights, and classroom setup.
- Decide how you want your students to relate to you. Wearing casual clothing will give your students a feeling of accessibility. Formal clothing gives a sense of professionalism.
- Project a PowerPoint or write a message on the whiteboard that lets the students know what class is being taught. Students are sometimes apprehensive the first day that they may be in the wrong classroom.

BREAK THE ICE

- Arrive early and greet the students as they enter the classroom.
- Get to know their names. Students will feel they are more than a number.
- Gather information about your students. Hand out index cards with questions on them i.e. hometown, class expectations, interesting

facts, etc. Review these cards later to help you get to know the students.

- Have students write on index cards two interesting truths and one lie about themselves. Read their answers out loud and ask the students to guess the correct facts about their classmate.
- In small classes, it may be appropriate to have each student introduce themselves to the rest of the group.
- Encourage your students to become acquainted and form study groups.
- Introduce yourself. Tell them about your professional background and interests. Let your students ask you questions. This will help them to relate to you as a person.
- Let your students know what you want them to call you.
- Ask your students to share their thoughts and feelings about “the first day of class.” Then ask them “How do you think a teacher feels on the first day of class?” This could help them relate to you as a person with thoughts and concerns. (Mckeachie)

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

- Start on time. Set precedence for the rest of the semester.
- Distribute a detailed course syllabus and calendar. Students will know that you care about the course, are organized, and have planned carefully for the semester.
- Take attendance. This is a good time to ask the students what name they would like to go by.
- Read aloud any information regarding access for students with disabilities. Let them know you are available to discuss learning difficulties.
- Give your students multiple methods for contacting you i.e. office hours, virtual office (chat), email, or office phone.

CONTENT

- Include content the first day of class – don't just hand out the syllabus.
- Let students know the scope and requirements of the course on the first day. Some students may be deciding whether they have the time to commit to the required course work.
- Be excited about the course topic and give your students a reason to be interested in the course. Show examples of projects they may have the opportunity to work on or show how the information will help them in their future careers.
- Instead of telling your students what material the course will cover, tell them what they'll be able to **do** with the course content.
- Introduce the course textbook. Explain why you chose it and what role the text will play in the course.
- Evaluate your student's previous knowledge. Ask what related courses they have taken or give a noncredit test.
- Don't apologize for lack of experience or expertise. Your students will feel insecure. Students want to know that you're confident and in charge.

REFERENCES

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