

# BARRIERS, WISDOM, TIPS: How to Talk with Your Instructor

Speak with your instructor or TA to:

- Get to know each other.
- Review the syllabus and discuss any questions.
- Clarify expectations for the course.
- Share your questions, concerns, learning needs, and updates.
- Learn about study sessions, tutoring, future similar courses, and research opportunities.
- Prepare for tests, quizzes, projects, presentations, research, and papers.
- Acquire early feedback before you submit final assignments.
- Review your developing course grade and ways to improve.

**It takes time to be comfortable with instructors. Identifying Barriers, Wisdom, and Tips can help.**

WHAT STUDENTS HAVE SAID ABOUT... THEMSELVES		
BARRIER	WISDOM	TIPS
 The instructor will think I'm not trying.	Asking questions shows you seek solutions.	✓ Point to specifics in assignments, notes, or other information you want to cover. It's helpful to show where you attempted material.
 It is weak to ask for assistance.	Asking helps you make the most of college.	✓ Think of a time when someone asked for assistance, and as a result, got closer to their goals.
 I should not show I don't understand.	No one grasps all material all the time.	✓ Remember: No one understands everything.
 There is something wrong with me if I have questions.	We all have questions. It means we are thinking.	✓ Consider that others have questions, but don't ask. When you ask, you help others who remain silent.
 Everyone else understands.	It is a false assumption that you are the only one with questions.	✓ By asking, you take a leadership role.

WHAT STUDENTS HAVE SAID ABOUT... THE SITUATION		
BARRIER	WISDOM	TIPS
 I have other non-negotiable obligations during office hours.	There is alternate mutually-available time to meet.	✓ It's okay to ask if your instructor can meet at a mutually-available time.
 There are too many other students.	Sometimes office-hours are busy and populated.	✓ Alternatively, you can email questions to your instructor.
 It is just not possible to connect with my instructor.	Your advisor wants to help if you've been unable to contact your instructor.	✓ Tell your advisor, who will help you connect with your instructor.
 My issue is health-related and I don't know how to share.	Many of us need support normalizing mental and physical challenges.	✓ Talk to your academic advisor or access any of these resources if you would like support informing your instructor: <a href="#">Looking for Help Chart</a> .
 I need help for my final, but I never talked with my instructor.	You benefit by speaking with instructors early and often.	✓ Check in with your instructor as soon as difficulties arise or questions come to mind.

## BELIEFS, FACTS, TIPS: How to Talk with Your Instructor

WHAT STUDENTS HAVE SAID ABOUT... THEIR INSTRUCTOR		
BARRIER	WISDOM	TIPS
<p>☹️ My instructor can't meet.</p> <p>☹️ Office hours are too intimidating.</p> <p>☹️ My instructor will not understand my circumstance.</p> <p>☹️ Faculty are the experts. I don't want to question them.</p>	<p>Office hours are part of an instructor's job.</p> <p>You may be uncomfortable on your first try, but instructors welcome good questions. They understand students ask about material.</p> <p>We all encounter difficulties. Your instructor can share options with you.</p> <p>College is about an exchange of ideas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Believing an instructor cannot meet is not factual: Part of an instructor's job is office hours.</li> <li>✓ Consider that your instructor was once a student too and also needed to ask questions or get help.</li> <li>✓ Consider bringing a friend to office hours with you.</li> <li>✓ Consider going to office hours with no questions, just to say hello and check things out.</li> <li>✓ Before visiting, consider meeting your advisor for practice, support, information, and a follow-up plan.</li> <li>✓ Faculty welcome opportunities to improve teaching and learning.</li> </ul>

WHAT STUDENTS HAVE SAID ABOUT... THEIR ABILITY		
BARRIER	WISDOM	TIPS
<p>☹️ I don't know how to visit office hours.</p>	<p>Like forming any skill, visiting takes practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ List questions in advance, so you are prepared to ask about what you need, or don't understand.</li> <li>✓ Consider running your questions by a friend, mentor, your advisor, or other ally before visiting.</li> <li>✓ Ask your instructor in advance for common goals, what to expect, and how to prepare for office hours.</li> </ul>

### What Instructors Say...

- "I know students are really busy, trying to juggle other classes, labs, work, athletics, and personal matters."
- "They can email the TA and me, and I'll happily find a mutually convenient time to meet, in person or by Zoom."
- "I get to know students at office hours, to talk about an assignment or just chat about news that's relevant to the class."
- "Getting to know students better makes it much easier to write a recommendation for an award, grad school, or a job."
- "My favorite part of my job is getting to know students, and one of the best ways is by visiting my office hours."
- "I'm happy to answer questions, but we can also just talk about your interests outside of class."
- "I am still in touch with students who I got to know in office hours in my Intro classes who have graduated."
- "Your professors really enjoy talking to you one on one."

**Was your instructor meeting successful? Do you want additional guidance? Let your academic advisor know!**