

HOW TO APPROACH OFFICE HOURS

What are office hours and how do they work?

Instructors set aside time each semester to meet with students for a variety of reasons. Office hours are a great opportunity to:

- **Clarify information** and answer questions from class.
- Discuss or **get feedback** about assignments and tests.
- Talk about extracurricular opportunities, i.e. internships, volunteer, research, etc.
- Get to know your professor and/or GSI to **form connections/relationships**.

If the professor's office hours conflict with your schedule, you may need to ask to make an appointment.

Reasons students DON'T attend office hours

- *"I don't know what to ask" or "I don't have any questions"*
 - Are there concepts/topics that you need clarity on?
 - Do you understand all of the material including readings?
 - Do you know how to study for the class? Do you know how to prepare for the exam?
 - Do you need feedback on an assignment, paper, or exam?
 - It helps to listen to other students' questions!
- *"My professor is intimidating"*
 - Your instructors want you to succeed!
 - Instructors are scholars in their field and invested in what they teach. They want to be able to help you understand better!
- *"Will other students think I'm dumb for asking questions?"*
 - Chances are that other students have the same questions you do!
 - What comes easy to one student might not to another student and vice versa.
- *"I don't like talking in front of my classmates"*
 - Start out by listening to your peers questions and then ask your own.
 - Can you schedule an individual appointment with your instructor to go over questions, concerns, etc.?

Reasons TO attend office hours

- *Clarify and ask questions about course content.*
 - If you are confused about class material, ask your professor to explain it differently or walk through it slowly with you. Ask questions that you have about the text or what has been covered in class.
- *Get study ideas.*
 - There are many strategies that can be used for any class, but some subjects have specific strategies that work particularly well for that class. Your professor may have tips about ways to tailor your studying towards that particular class.
- *Ask questions about the syllabus, upcoming assignments, and due dates.*
 - After carefully reading the syllabus and any assignment prompts, confirm important dates and information with your professor if you are still not certain about them.
- *Review an exam or a paper you wrote.*
 - Many students do not do as well as they expected on papers and exams at least once in college. Office hours is an appropriate setting to talk about what you did wrong, what went well, and how to improve on your next paper or exam.
- *Talk about grades.*
 - If you are unhappy with your grade or have questions about why your grade is what it is, office hours are the appropriate place to talk about it.
- *Work through practice problems.*
 - Ask your professor to go step by step through practice problems with you and verify the correct answers. If you are having trouble solving them correctly, use this time to ask your professor to show you where you are making errors.
- *Discuss with your instructor any special needs or challenges you face, whether that is academic or personal.*
 - If possible, talk to your instructor before the semester starts or at the beginning of the semester.
- *Get to know your instructor(s)!*
 - Instructors want you to come meet with them, even if you don't necessarily have academic-related questions. This is a great way to build connections/relationships.

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Preparing for Office Hours

- Prepare yourself by going over the issues you wish to discuss.
 - *Ask yourself why you are going to see your professor.*
 - *Have a clear purpose that you can convey to your professor so that your time is meaningful and used well.*
- If necessary or helpful, make notes and gather supporting materials (e.g., articles, previous test).
- Look up the office location and familiarize yourself with how to get there, i.e. what is the Zoom link?

During the appointment

- **Be respectful.** Arrive on time and introduce yourself if you have never met the professor personally. Address the professor by his or her last name with the appropriate title (Professor, Dr.)
- **Your instructor will ask about the purpose of the meeting.** This is the time for you to present the issues that you came to discuss in a clear, concise manner.
- **Listen to your instructor's response and take notes if appropriate.** Record suggestions, information, and strategies that your professor shares with you so that you can refer back to them later.
- **Ask questions for clarification.** If you are confused or not following your professor's explanation, don't be afraid to ask him or her to repeat the information or restate it differently.
- **Remember that your instructor's intention is to help you improve your work!**

Receiving Feedback

- If you meet with your instructor to get feedback about a grade, try to remain non-defensive and respectful.
 - Make sure you understand the expectations, where you missed points, and why you missed those points.
- If you are contesting a grade, understand that you and your instructor may not come to an agreement to your satisfaction.
 - Use this time to explore how you might improve results for the next paper or test.
- Try to walk away with something concrete to use for the next assignment or test.