How to Develop a Good Relationship with Your Professors

Don’t just be another face in the crowd!

Through building positive, professional relationships, I not only had a more meaningful college experience, but I received great recommendation letters and even a much needed job offer. Building a relationship with a professor isn’t as difficult as you might think—just follow these tips!

Attend All Your Classes
If your professors claim they don’t care if you attend classes, don’t believe them! Professors notice who shows up and who doesn’t, so attend your classes rain or shine. You get bonus points for sitting in front every day and looking alert.

Participate
Don’t learn passively! Professors appreciate students who actively take notes, ask questions, contribute to class discussions, and turn assignments in on time.

It can be intimidating to speak up in class, but remember, your opinions and questions matter. You get bonus points if you volunteer first for participation activities, such as being the first to present a class project.

Greet Them
You’d surprised at how easy it is to make a good impression by just saying “hello”—and you’d be doubly surprised at how few students do. When your professor walks in the room at the beginning of class, say hello. If you see your professor walking across campus, greet her or him by name.

Take Advantage of Office Hours
All professors have a period of time called “office hours” in which they are available to answer your questions. Professors typically list their office hours on the syllabi, but you can also look up their availability in the campus directory.

This is a good opportunity to ask any questions you have in between classes. Can’t think of anything to ask? Here are a few questions to get you started:

- From your experience teaching, what qualities do successful students in your course possess?
- How did you become interested in teaching this subject?
- What are your top three expectations for students at the beginning of the semester?
- What additional resources do you recommend if I want more information about what you are teaching?
Be Proactive
Most professors will go above and beyond to support you through the course. If you wait until the last moment, however, there may be little they can do to help. If you encounter an issue talk to your professor early!

If there is an event that prevents you from attending class, for example, let your professor know ahead of time and check in regularly. This way if you end up missing something important, such as a test, your professor will be aware of your situation and more likely to allow you to make up the work.

Write Thoughtful Emails
It is always better to communicate with your professor in person, but if you have a burning question that you need to ask through email, be sure to be respectful. Include greeting and closing lines, write in complete sentences, and always proofread your message before you send. There are good examples of emails to professors online.

Participate in Campus Events
If you find out that your professor is giving a presentation or workshop on campus, attend! You'll learn something new while building a better relationship.

Continue the Conversation
Did you hear about a topic related to your class in the news? Bring it up to your professor at the beginning of class or swing by his or her office to chat about it. This shows how interested and invested you are in the subject.

Disagree Respectfully
If you disagree with a professor's policy or decision, do so with respect. Never approach a professor when you are angry, especially during class. Instead, wait until you have calmed down and gathered your thoughts, then visit your professor during his or her office hours privately.

Remember, Your Professors Were Once Students Too!
Believe it or not, all your professors were once undergraduate students just like you. Don't be intimidated! They might relate to you better than you think.