

tips for talking with
Professors

be the beginning of dumping all your frustrations.

Propose Remedies for Your Problem

For example, if you've done poorly because you can't hear from the back of the room - suggest a change in seating arrangements so you can sit near the front. If you're having continuing problems with the subject at hand, have some work done to show you've tried and ask for tutoring help. If the professor can see your work, it may be possible to determine what had gone wrong. Most teachers are impressed by students who make some effort.

In summary, you have the right to ask questions about subject content as well as classroom procedures. However, your effectiveness in questioning and disagreeing can impact your own educational enjoyment as well as your academic success. Maintain good work habits as well as good attitudes toward learning and you'll go a long way toward creating a successful learning environment for yourself, your classmates - and your professors as well.



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Counseling Center

Dear Counselor,

I thought I was doing well in my introductory math class until the first test papers were returned. Over half the questions were marked wrong even though I had correct answers. I fretted for nearly a week and finally got the courage to stand up during class and assertively confront the professor about my grade. He simply said that since I had not shown the steps in my work, answers were counted partially wrong - that rule was in the syllabus. I left the

Dear Tongue-Tied,

Avoiding “questioning” may seem to be helpful in the short term because you aren’t risking “humiliation” - but in the long term you lose valuable information and professors are deprived of information that might help them teach the class better.

Very often professors report they don’t know how well they’re getting information across to you until exam time - then it can be too late. Consider yourself in a partnership with the teacher - most faculty are pleased to have

highly specific to your own situation, you are better off finding out when the professor has office hours (usually on the syllabus) and going there to deal with it privately.

Don’t Go in Angry

Asking your questions in an attacking fashion usually won’t get you any better results. Think your situation through rationally and then proceed. Know the implication of your question before you ask it. If your motivation

I left the class feeling humiliated . . .

class feeling humiliated and never opened my mouth again. My question is this - how do other students talk to professors about problems with classes? I feel I really “lost the battle” on this one.

feedback that can help them educate you.

So by all means, even if you feel like you “lost the battle” on this one, don’t avoid “discussions” or even “disagreements” with your professors in future classes. Certainly, do read the syllabus first - it’s like an “operating manual” for class and usually defines the teacher’s expectations for your work. If that doesn’t clear up your concern, here are some steps to take as well as some points to consider.

is to learn, don’t say “Why did you mark me off on this?” instead say “How could I make this answer better?” Generally letting the professor know what you like about the course (as well as what you don’t like) is helpful. For example, “I find the example you work on the board to be helpful, however, I still don’t understand your explanations of linear equations. Could you go over that again?”

Consider Time and Place

If your question would benefit the class in general, ask it in class. If not, and/or it is

Be Clear About the Point You Want to Make

Write it on paper if that would help you to clarify what you are asking. It will also keep you specific — don’t let a specific situation



Tongue-Tied