

# Connecting With Your Professors

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College students are required to make numerous choices regarding class selection. These choices include the time and day of the week and which professor to select. The decision about which professor to choose is often critical to your success, but many new college students, and seasoned ones as well, often exercise questionable judgement in choosing professors.

Students frequently ask who the “easy” professors are or which professors are likely to award A’s to greater numbers of students. This common attempt to find the easy teachers often backfires on students because of the unreliability of the information being exchanged. One student’s perception of an “easy” professor may be the exact

opposite of another’s experience. In any case, students need to be judicious in relying upon hearsay when selecting class professors.

An effective approach is for the student to seek out specific information about how a professor conducts classes. Some questions to focus on should relate to the teaching style utilized by the professor in an attempt to match it with the student’s preferred learning style. The student who learns best by listening and taking notes may find a class frustrating if the professor uses overhead transparencies or group assignments extensively. Students who learn better when the professor has tightly structured course requirements may fail in a class where expectations are more vaguely stated. Finally, the student who learns more readily through frequent quizzes and examinations may develop a high level of anxiety in a class where only a midterm and final exam determine the course grade.

Other objective questions can easily be generated in order to help students in their quest for the “perfect” professor.

Regardless of which professor is chosen, it is important for students to remember that each one is educated in her or his academic area. They do have idiosyncrasies, which make them special. They are not high school teachers. They are in the college or university classroom because they want to be. They want to work with students. In most cases, they teach for much less money than they could command in government, business, or industry. In class, students assume many responsibilities relative to the professor/student relationship, including the need to listen, to follow directions, and to complete assignments. Students need to be open-minded, respectful, and accepting of professors as they are. College professors are not on campus to become the student’s best friend. They are there to help students learn.

**There are many things college students can do once they are in class to make the learning experience meaningful and to understand a professor more easily. Following this list of “Do’s and Don’ts” may prove helpful:**

## DO:

- Listen, observe, and follow instructions.
- Complete assignments as specified.
- Learn to recognize and tolerate an instructor’s idiosyncrasies.
- Be open-minded.
- Be patient.
- Understand you cannot change the instructor’s attitude or approach.
- Ask questions in class concerning topics that you do not fully understand.
- Remember, you may have a choice of instructors next semester.

## DO NOT:

- Make excuses.
- Rest or recline on your desk during class.
- Be tardy to class or skip class.
- Ask if you “missed anything important” after being absent from class.
- Put instructors on a pedestal.
- Expect instructors to be your close friend.
- Rationalize your shortcomings by saying, “Everybody is failing the class.”
- Expect college professors to be like high school teachers.