

HOW to COMMUNICATE and PROBLEM SOLVE with your INSTRUCTOR



1. Identify the Issue

Prepare. Think it through. Write it out. Remove the emotion and focus on the specifics. See things from your instructor's point of view. Tell yourself this is not about personalities. Your instructor wants you to do well and cares about your progress. If you assume otherwise, it is unlikely you will find a solution. Effective communication examples include: "I am not sure why I received the grade I did." "Can you explain again what you mean by...?"

2. Make an Appointment

Faculty have office hours--use them. Catching your instructor in the hall or after class does not provide him/her with enough time to listen to your concern or offer a solution.

3. Be Assertive, NOT Aggressive

There is a difference. Focus the conversation on your issue, not your anger. It will be easier to focus on the situation rather than the emotion if you write the issue down. Be patient. Choose your words carefully. You will find most people stay calmer and more able to focus on your issue if you set that tone. If you find yourself getting angry, try saying, "Excuse me, I don't mean to sound angry, but this issue is important to me and I want to do well."

4. Adopt a Problem Solving and Cooperative Attitude

Let your instructor know you want to work with them to do better. Ask what help may be available or where you could find out more information. Tell your instructor what he/she already does that you find helpful.

5. Listen

Really listen. Don't interrupt. If your instructor is able to offer a solution or suggestion, repeat it back to make sure you understand.

6. Accept Responsibility

Let your instructor know you understand that as a student you are responsible for your own learning. Assure him/her you are willing to do the work and accept the consequences of your action.

7. Offer Realistic Solutions

Prepare to offer a solution. When writing out your issue, also write your suggestions for improvement. Make sure you are open to new solutions if they emerge.

8. Clarify Outcomes

Make sure you understand what is expected before you leave. Write it out. Read it back to your instructor. Set up time lines if appropriate.

Always THANK your instructor for His/Her Time!!