



## Ten Things to Make the First Day (and the rest of the semester) Successful

1. Post your name and the name and section of the class on the screen, so that when students walk in they know that they are in the right place.
2. Write: "welcome" on the screen and have directions that tell students what they need to do immediately. Example: "As you enter, please tell me your name. Then pick up a syllabus, a card, and a folder from the entrance table. Fold the card so that it will stand on your desk, and write your first name on it in BIG letters. Add your last name and major in smaller print. Write your name on the tab of the folder, (last name first, then first name). Read the syllabus until class starts." Note: By asking students to tell you their name as they enter, you can hear how the name is pronounced, and avoid the embarrassment of pronouncing it for the first time yourself.
3. When it's time for class to start - start class! Late arrivals can catch up by reading the screen.
4. For classes of 25 or less, I have students do brief, 10-second introductions. I tell them there will be a verbal quiz after all the introductions and that they can win stars if they know who is who. (Have fun with this, but remember that these are adults and college is not like junior high.)
5. For larger classes, I have students introduce themselves to three or four people around them, and then we might do "stand-ups" - stand up if you are a Spanish major, stand up if you are an education major, and so on. I explain that students need to know each other for our small group work, and in case they have a question.
6. I collect the file folders and put them alphabetically by student name into a big plastic carrying case. When students need to turn in assignments, they find the box on the entrance table and they put their papers in their respective folders. When papers are graded, they can pull their graded tests or assignments from their folders. The beauty of this system is that time is never wasted by passing out papers. For small classes, I put handouts in the folders of absent students.
7. After the introductions and the explanation of the folder and box system, I turn to the "Today we will" list that I've written on the board, posted on a large paper flip-chart, or projected on the screen. I like to actually write this list on the board, so I can return to it even while projecting my notes. A "today we will" list outlines my plan for the day. For example, for the first day, my "today we will list" says:

- See screen for instruction for card and folder.
- Introductions
  - Turn in folders
- Go over syllabus completely
- Mini-lecture on \_\_\_\_\_
- Interest inventory
- Do you know what to read/do before the next class?
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Note: The "today we will" list lets me walk around the room, teach from the projection system, and then look at the list for what I should do next. I tend not to forget things if I have the list. As the semester progresses, the "today we will" list might contain warm-up questions that then appear as test questions. The list helps students who arrive late or leave early see what they have missed.]

8. The mini-lesson/mini-lecture - whether it's a short overview of the first reading assignment, some sample problems, or 10 interesting questions students will be able to answer at the end of the course, I strongly recommend doing some course content on the first day. For classes that last longer than 50 minutes, I include a short student activity. I also think it's important to begin with course material on day one so that students begin to see who you are and how you teach. Since I teach courses in teacher education, I often talk about my teaching career. I include a few stories about how times have changed and about how some things in teaching never change.

9. Interest inventories are great for the first day of class. An interest inventory is just a short list of questions about students' backgrounds and interests. It may assess their prior learning as well. In addition to name and major, students can write about a hobby, interest, or goal. Do not be too personal. You can have them answer several questions about content maybe solve a problem, write a short paragraph or answer specific questions. Finally open-ended questions are useful:

- What are your goals after graduation?
- What has a teacher done in the past that helped you to learn
- Is there anything else that you want me to know about you and your course of study?
- (Add a fun one like,) If your song played when you entered the room, what would it be?

10. Every good class has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. I usually teach the mini-lesson, and then save the last six to eight minutes of class for the interest inventory and individual questions. This way, students don't have to wait on others to finish. I instruct students to turn in their interest inventory as they exit. As they are writing, I alphabetize their folders and put them in the box on the table. Another good closure is to ask if they know what to read/do before the next class, and if they know three people to ask about the assignment if they have a question.

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