

Building a Relationship with Professors and Instructors

Students usually talk to their professors when they have questions or need assistance with an assignment. Although talking to your college professors can sometimes be intimidating, it is important to remember that they are here to contribute to your college education. In order to learn as much as you can, you need to ask questions when you do not understand something. Additionally, it is beneficial to have a positive rapport with your professors/instructors when you need to request academic references.

When interacting with your professor, keep the following things in mind:

1. Sit in the front of the classroom or lecture hall. In addition to enhancing your learning by being more attentive, this will enable you to ask questions more easily in class. By being more engaged in class you will have more to talk about with your professor inside and outside of class.
2. Know a little about your professor. Does he/she have a specific passion for this topic of study, or is this an introductory course that he/she is teaching as a department requirement? Is he/she known for research, teaching, or service to the University community? Much of this information may be found on each department's website.
3. Professors are happy to meet with motivated students and are impressed by students who ask questions and strive to excel in that class. In fact, if you express a strong personal interest in studying this subject, you may even be considered for departmental research opportunities, scholarships, mentoring, and teaching assistant positions.
4. Do not let peers interfere with your personal and academic goals. You may have chosen to sit near friends or in the back of the classroom in high school, but in college it is important to prioritize very carefully. The reality is that many students realize too late how important it can be to have built a rapport with professors. At Stony Brook you are likely to take one or more classes taught by a preeminent scholar in their field. It's up to you to take advantage of that excellent educational opportunity.

In the Communication Chapter, specific practices and etiquette rules for communicating with University faculty are addressed. This chapter includes important tips for how to interact in a respectful and appropriate manner in this formal setting.