

Survival Tips for the University Classroom

The expectations for successful university performance are different than those you experienced in high school. University faculty members expect students to behave as adults, learn at a higher level and greater rate than in high school and to take responsibility for their learning. The following tips will serve you well in the university classroom and beyond.



- 1 GET TO CLASS EARLY.** You'll need time to select a seat and get your book, paper and pens ready to take notes. *Arriving late is disruptive to the class and annoys classmates and professors.* Once you're ready, review your notes from the last lecture or your reading assignment until the professor begins.
- 2 SLIPPING INTO CLASS LATE.** Life happens. Lattes spill. If you must arrive late to class, slip into the back of the room and take your seat as quickly and quietly as possible. *Your goal is to avoid disrupting the class or, worse yet, have your professor stop the lecture until you are seated.*
- 3** Life happens to professors, too. **IF YOUR PROFESSOR IS LATE**, courtesy demands you wait at least fifteen minutes for him/her to arrive. *You may be tempted to "cut and run", but professors notice and remember those students who waited.*
- 4** Hopefully you won't **MISS CLASS**, but if you do, what should happen? First, email your professor before class if possible and let him/her know you will be missing class. If you visit the health center, ask the physician or nurse to notify our instructor of your visit. *This will give you an excused absence which, in many cases, equals an opportunity for make-up.*

Then contact a classmate and find out what you missed. *In order to do this you will need to have made an acquaintance in the class with whom you can exchange email addresses for just this reason.* It's never a good idea to show up at class the next time and ask your professor "Did I miss anything?" *From your professor's point of view, if it was important enough for him/her to prepare for and conduct a class it was important for you to be there. And, of course, you missed something – the whole lecture!*

- 5** Where should you sit? Think "**T-ZONE**". *The closer you sit to the front and middle of the classroom the better you will listen and stay tuned into what is going on in class.*
- 6** How should you sit? **BE READY TO LEARN.** Sitting in college desks or chairs is tiresome, but you are paying a lot of money for the opportunity to do so. *Think of those baseball players in the outfield waiting for the pitch and swing. They are tuned in, focused, ready to catch whatever comes their way. Take that attitude into the classroom and you're off to a great start.*

7 What about behavior in the class?

↪ **NIX THE ELECTRONICS.** Put your cell phone on vibrate and do not text in class. *How can you listen to the professor, take good notes, and text at the same time?* If you absolutely must take a call during class, leave as quickly and quietly as possible. It's not necessary to interrupt the lecture to ask for permission. It is, however, a good idea to stay after class and apologize for the interruption. *This follow-up will let your professor know you understand the behavior is unacceptable and won't happen again!*

↪ **LAPTOPS.** Check with your professor. *Some are fine with students using laptops to take notes; others are not.*

↪ **EAR PHONES, IPODS, MP³ PLAYERS.** Go on take both ear buds out before the class begins. *Keeping even one in is considered rude and sends the message you are not interested and only half listening.*

↪ Remember where you are – *on a university campus in a room with adults.* **APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE** changes from one situation to another. Classmates are not always buddies. Professional courtesy in communication and behavior is not only appropriate but also expected. Respect for one another is always required. *Upon graduation, you will enter the realm of working professionals, now is the time to refine those skills.*

↪ **EATING AND DRINKING.** Policies vary from building to building and professor to professor, so check the policy to avoid embarrassment. Some rooms are clearly labeled, "No Food or Drink", but you will see other students with food or something to drink in those rooms. *It's your choice: When in Rome do as the Romans do (i.e. follow the rules), or run the risk of being embarrassed. Funny how so much in life is about choices.*

If you do bring a drink or snack to class, remember the following:

- ✓ Don't disrupt the class with crinkly, noisy packaging or aromatic foods (*Reuben or tuna fish sandwiches are probably a bad idea, no offense to the tuna*).
- ✓ It's harder to spill a drink with a screw top or lid.
- ✓ If you spill or make a mess, you should clean-up the desk and floor for the next student. But, do so without disrupting the class any more than you have to. Wait until class is over if possible, but most professors will understand if you need to pop out and grab some paper towels from the nearest restroom – don't interrupt the lecture to ask permission.

8 **OFFICE HOURS** are a great time to speak with your professors. Be respectful of our professor's time.

↪ If you have questions about the class, be sure to check your syllabus and notes first. *It's embarrassing to ask a question and have your professor point out that the question has already been answered.*

↪ Don't monopolize your professor's office hours. While professors are glad to help you, most don't want to see you every Tuesday afternoon. It's a fine line between dropping by during office hours and saying "Hi, I enjoyed the class this Monday" so the professor gets to know your face and recognizes your genuine interest in the class and being a nuisance. *Tread carefully and be attuned to body language. When someone starts checking a watch, reading a computer screen, shuffling papers, it's time to go.*

↪ If you make an appointment with a professor, keep it.

↪ Again, polite professional communication will be a great asset to you in college and your career. *Use your manners.*

9 Professional courtesy in communication applies to **EMAILS AND PHONE MESSAGES** too.

↪ In emails, you should always include a greeting (“Dear Professor Dumbledore” or Hi Dr. Jekyll”), a signature (first & last name) to identify who you are (*professors are a fairly intelligent group but few have memorized the uark email address of all their students*), and don’t forget the magic words: “please” and “thank-you”.

↪ If you call a professor, you may get voicemail and will want to leave a message. Be sure to speak slowly and clearly and, most importantly, leave your full name and phone number. It’s hard to return phone calls with no phone number.

10 Always address professors by their **PROPER TITLES** (i.e. “Professor Black” or “Dr. Smith”). Most professors will let you know how they want to be addressed. However, if you are unsure, err on the side of formality.