



How to Contact Your Instructor Suggestions and Tips

It's safe to assume that you will need to communicate with your instructor at some point during your college career. You might have a question that only they can answer. Or, you may have some important information to share with them. Whatever the case, we've found that many students are intimidated by their instructor and avoid communicating with them for as long as they can. This can result in you suffering in silence and/or missing out on getting the help you may need. Your STAR coaches are more than happy to help you reach out to your instructor. Here are a few tips that may give you the confidence you need to contact them:

Some good reasons to contact your instructor

- You've looked for the answer to your question elsewhere, i.e. the syllabus, but you are still confused.
- You need to inform your instructor of personal events that will impact your class attendance/performance.
- You need further clarification about their expectations for an assignment.
- You received a low grade on a test or assignment and you would like to review it with them. **Side note: if you are upset about a grade you received on a test or assignment, wait for 24 hours to pass before contacting your instructor. This will allow you to cool off and avoid saying something you may regret later.**

Before you contact your instructor

- **Be Proactive!** Try to find the answer to your question on your own first, either in the syllabus, your textbook, previous emails sent by the instructor, etc.
- **Be mindful of their communication preferences.** Often, an instructor will detail how they prefer for students to reach out to them, whether that be via email or a face-to-face visit during their office hours. **This information is most likely in the syllabus.**
- **Remember that your instructor is human!** They usually encourage students to talk to them and enjoy helping students solve problems. That's probably why they became an instructor!

Use proper etiquette when addressing them

- **Check your syllabus to find out how your instructor prefers to be addressed.** Many times your instructor will tell you what they prefer on the first day of class.
- When in doubt, **address them as Professor xxx or Instructor xxx (xxx = last name).** If your instructor prefers to be called something else, they will tell you.



Proper email etiquette

- **Never begin your email with “hey” or “hi.”** To be on the safe side, start with “Hello” or “Dear.” As mentioned above, if your instructor prefers more informal greetings, they will let you know. Always follow their lead.
- **Always put the reason for your email in the subject line!** Instructors often teach several classes. So, **add the course and section number to your email too.**
- **Don’t use “text speak.”** Use appropriate spellings and grammar in your emails. Don’t use language such as “c u l8r” or “thx”.
- **Keep your email short and to the point** – what can they help you with? Also, **be specific.** Avoid asking questions such as, “Did I miss anything important” if you were absent from class.
- **Don’t provide too much personal detail that isn’t necessary or appropriate.**
- **Thank your instructor at the end of your email!**
- **Proofread your email** before you send it.

Scheduling meetings

- If you would like to meet with them, **politely request to meet with them during their office hours.** Don’t demand to see them. Email your instructor and inform them that you would like to speak with them, so they can confirm whether or not they’ll be in their office.
- **Determine their office hours.** Again, this information can usually be found on the syllabus. Some instructors have sign-up sheets. Use those if they have them.
- **Give options for your availability.** Don’t request a specific time. For example, instead of requesting to come to their office at 2pm, inform them that you have availability between 1pm and 3pm. **After you’ve given options, let your instructor determine what time works best for them.**
- **Confirm your meeting!** After your instructor informs you of a good time to meet with you, reply with a confirmation of the exact time that you’ll be there. **If for any reason you need to cancel or reschedule your meeting, let them know in advance and apologize for the inconvenience.**

If you have additional questions about contacting your instructor, feel free to call to speak with a STAR coach at 704-330-6754 or email star.success@cpcc.edu. Check out the rest of our tip sheets on our website <http://www.cpcc.edu/star>.