

## Surviving the First Day of Class

**Check out the room in advance.** Test projection equipment, voice/sound quality from various parts of the room, sightlines to the front, and the room's suitability for group work. On class days, you are likely to have only a few minutes to set up.

**Set up a question and answer discussion topic** in Desire2Learn to make it easy for students to ask questions and you to share answers with the class.

**Set the tone** by showing enthusiasm for the subject and interest in the students.

### Some suggestions to consider:

**Greet students** as they enter the class, to set an informal tone and let them know you're interested in them.

**When you introduce yourself** to your class, tell how you prefer to be addressed (e.g., first name, or last name prefaced by Dr., Professor, Mr., or Ms.). Give a brief biography with information that will establish your credibility, your interaction style with students, and your desire to help students succeed. For example, tell where you are from, the schools you attended, how you first became interested in the subject, your publications and research, how long you have been at the university, and why you are teaching the course. Show students that you have a high level of interest in the subject. Students sense an instructor's interest and enthusiasm, and it is motivating for many.

**Ask students why they took the course** and what they want to get from the course, in terms of knowledge and skills, not marks. Engage in a genuine back-and-forth dialogue.

**Tell students why your course is important** and explain how it benefits them, referring if appropriate to students answers in the previous discussion.

**Letting students talk helps them feel more at home in the class.** Try one or more of the following:

- Have students give their first name and faculty and their favourite leisure activity. In larger classes, instead of asking names, ask which faculty they are from and as one is suggested, have others from the same faculty raise their hands. Do the same for leisure activities or student clubs they belong to or are interested in joining.
- Try a group exercise like this one: write a word from the course title on the board. Have students do word associations in groups, and report back to class. Use the exercise to give a thematic overview of the course or subject area.

**Learning Student Names:**

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Learning student names can be challenging but it adds a personal touch that makes a meaningful connection with students. If you use Desire2Learn, encourage students to add a photo to their personal profile. If you have them introduce themselves, find them on the class list. As students ask questions or make a discussion contribution, have them say their name first, and use their name as you answer.

Have students write a **letter of introduction** to submit for the next class. If you use Desire2Learn, set up a Discussion topic in which students can post an introduction with items such as those suggested above.

**Tell students what they must do to succeed** in your course, including how much out-of-class time is typically required. Tell them about academic support services available (Student Affairs and Services, Writing and Study Skills Centre, Student Accessibility Centre):

<http://www.unb.ca/fredericton/studentservices/academics/index.html> Invite students to speak to you privately about any special needs they may have.

**Review the syllabus.**

**Explain policies** in terms of treating everyone fairly, and how the policies benefit students.

**Let students know about cost saving textbook measures**, such as electronic purchase and rental.

**Discuss UNB policies** on academic honesty and plagiarism. See Academic Offences:

<http://www.unb.ca/academics/calendar/undergraduate/current/regulations/universitywideacademicregulations/viii-academicoffences/index.html>

**Describe what typically will happen during classes.** Explain your teaching methods and why you use them, in terms of how they benefit students.

**Teach something significant on the first day.**

Give a short but meaningful assignment for next class, to show students that the course is important and to set up work patterns from the start. Examples are a quiz on the syllabus for marks, or having them write a “minute paper” reaction on the first day, and collect them for review (but not marking). This establishes that you care what they think, an important motivator for them.

Give a pre-test to get a good sense of student knowledge level in the subject and to identify any unexpected gaps.

**When is it appropriate to use ice breakers?** They can be awkward and superficial and students often resist doing them. However, if you use a lot of class interaction in your teaching methods, they can be a way for students to meet others in the class with whom they may find a connection that makes them comfortable working with them. The article [Ice-breakers for the College Classroom](#)

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(<http://www.facultyfocus.com/tag/icebreakers-for-the-college-classroom/>) by Faculty Focus has good ideas has good ideas.

## References

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