



Center for Teaching and Learning
Stanford University, Stanford CA



Great Beginnings: Things to do early on in your class

First Impressions

- Arrive early and put information on the board
- Start class on time
- Hand out an informative and user-friendly syllabus (if it's your own class)
- Let your students see the enthusiasm you have for your subject

Building Community

- Greet students at the door and chat with students as they arrive
- Introduce yourself and your interest in the class
- Tell about your current research interests and your own beginnings in the discipline
- Take attendance to learn names
- Use an icebreaker to help students learn each others' names
- Make collaborative assignments for several students to work on together

Course Logistics

- Tell students what will be expected of them with regard to attendance, grading, participation, assignments, and late work policies
- Tell students what they can expect of you with regard to office hours, reading drafts, calling on students, accessibility at home
- Explain the difference between legitimate collaboration and academic dishonesty
- Organize your class and provide structure by posting the day's "menu" on the board or overhead

Challenging Students

- Have students write out their expectations for the course and their own goals for learning
- Hit the ground running on the first class with substantial content
- Relate course material to students' interests and experience
- Give students two passages of material containing alternative views to compare and contrast
- Have students apply subject matter to solve real problems
- Ask students to fill in an index card telling you something about their backgrounds

Encouraging Active Learning

- Have students write their questions on index cards to be collected and answered the next class
- Encourage group work and active discussion to accomplish specific objectives
- Put students into pairs or "learning cells" to quiz each other over material for the day
- Move around your classroom
- Give students a take-home problem relating to the day's material

Remember the Golden Rules of Teaching:

- Be prepared
- Be honest
- Be creative