

FIRST DAY OF CLASS: STARTING OFF RIGHT

McKeachie (1994) argues that both students and instructor experience levels of anxiety on the first day of the class as they are the strangers meeting each other for the first time. Therefore, **the first day of the class sets the tone for the whole course experience** for the students.

There are **four areas that are important to consider when considering the first day of class:**

- 1 Preparation
- 2 Syllabus Development and Presentation
- 3 Icebreaking
- 4 Teaching



PREPARING FOR THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS

- In pre-first day announcements, make clear what will take place on the first day, and give students what they need to be prepared to engage.
- Arrive to the class several minutes before it starts to set up the room, check all technology and materials, and engage with and greet students as they enter.

ICEBREAKING

To help reduce student's anxiety and fears, here are some actions that you might take:

1 PROFESSOR INTRODUCTION

Talk about your background, your research interest, and your experience with this specific course. Also share some of your general interests and what you like to do in your free time and why.

2 STUDENT SHARING

For a small class, ask each students to share about themselves to class. If time permits, allow students to converse with one another about their interests. If your class is large, use an activity (ex. flower activity) that allows for smaller groups of students to get to know each other better.

3 CONCERNS & QUESTIONS

Ask students to post any concerns or questions they have about the course and try to address as many as you can.

SYLLABUS

To insure that students understand what is included in the syllabus and how to interact with it, here are some ways in which you and your students might engage the syllabus on the first day:



- Ask them to have a copy of the syllabus with them so that you can review the items together.
- Include a learning environment statement, read it aloud, and make sure it's clear for them. In other words, help them to understand the culture of the course. Be committed to the culture for the whole course.
- Dedicate time for their questions and make sure everyone is clear on the syllabus.

TEACH FROM THE START

To set the tone regarding the type of learning environment that you seek to foster in class, start teaching the first day. Here are some suggestions on how you might engage students in course material on the first day:

- Present a current topic in the media or relevant case study and ask students to think and discuss based on the syllabus how it might be explored throughout the course and their thoughts of how it could be done in an engaging way.
- Have students engage in an activity that reveals possible misconceptions regarding the first topic of the course. This will help you determine ways to help them overcome those misconceptions.
- Have students get into groups and create a concept map of their current understanding of the subject of the course.

REFERENCES

McKeachie, W. J. (1994). *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*, 9th ed., DC Heath, Lexington, MA, 56.



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