

TA TIP SHEETS

TEACHING ASSISTANT'S Guide to The First Class

The information below has been adapted from the UVic TA Manual (the full version can be found at <http://www.ltc.uvic.ca/servicesprograms/taprod/documents/UVicTAManual.pdf>). Not all suggestions below may be applicable in all departments on campus. Please use the information as a guide only.

First Impressions

- The first meeting of a class, therefore, is an important vehicle to establish your role as a TA beyond merely transmitting information.
- It is also critical for calling attention to the structure and content of the course.

Pre-class Jitters

- Remember that you know more about your subject than do your students so do not doubt your abilities!
- Nervousness may result in accelerated speech and disorganization so make a conscious effort to speak at a moderate pace and maintain your focus.

Your Grand Entrance!

- Introduce yourself and the course you are teaching.
- You may want to mention that your job is to assist them and that you are available for consultation if they are having problems.
- Your students may not have met a TA before so you may want to explain your role and what parts of the course and for which grades you are responsible.
- You may want to mention why you are teaching the course and/or why you are interested in that particular field of study to break the ice and convey your enthusiasm for the subject.

Confirming the Register

- Check the names on your class list at the commencement of your first class.
- Add new names and delete those who are transferring out of your section and make sure that new students have registered properly with the administration.

Creating a Learning Atmosphere

- There is a strong correlation between positive evaluation of the TA and student perceptions that the TA cares about them as individuals.
- Therefore, show students from the very beginning that you view them as individuals and care about them as people.

- The first and one of the easiest ways to accomplish this is to learn their names as quickly as possible.
- Include an icebreaker so that everyone can get to know each other better.

Other (first) Class Activities

- Pass out the syllabus and go over the highlights with the students. Have more copies of the syllabus than you have students, as you may get transfers or have students who forget their syllabus the following class.
- Explain what your goals and expectations are and what you expect from your students.
- Detail the course requirements and how the grades will be calculated.
- This may be an appropriate time to state any guidelines you have regarding racist and sexist language, latecomers, late assignments, etc.
- Use this class to state the department policy towards cheating and plagiarism. This is required to be discussed as well as be clearly written on the syllabus and/or course website. Ensure that all students fully understand what constitutes cheating and plagiarism.
- Emphasize that your job is to assist them and that you are available for consultation if they are having problems.

Give Them a Taste of the Course

- Provide an overview of the course - it can help students decide quickly if they are in the right place for their interests.
- Plus, it lets students know that you take the course seriously and that your lab/tutorial will be about learning the course material.

After Class

- Finish on time so students will not be late for their next class.
- Be available for questions; however, do not linger in the classroom as another class may be waiting.

Re-evaluate Today's Class:

- Did you get your points across?
- Do you need to find out anything before next class?
- It would be helpful to consult your fellow TAs or your TAC (Teaching Assistant Consultant) to discuss your first class and observations.
- What can you do to improve this presentation next time you give it?