

Helpful Hints for Talking to Faculty

Life happens. Bad things happen to good people and sometimes life gets away from us. At the Office of the Dean of Students we understand that reality. We want to help you to make the very best of a bad situation. Sometimes we get sick, sometimes someone we love passes away. None of this is your fault, and none of it can be changed. However, when life's circumstances *do* arise, we have compiled some tips for working with our office and with your faculty to explain the situation and to get the support you need to get back on track after life deals you a curve ball.

Give a Heads Up

- In an ideal world, you should let your instructors know as far in advance as possible when you know you will need to miss class.
- We understand that sometimes students get sick and family emergencies happen. Reach out to your instructor as soon as possible to let them know about your absence.
- Email is a great first step, but you may also want to follow up during office hours or by scheduling a meeting with your instructor.

Tell the truth

- Clearly and concisely explain your absence to your instructors including the general nature of the situation, the dates you were or will be absent, and when you expect to return to class.
- Understand that your instructors may request proof of the reason for your absence.
- You don't need to provide extremely personal information or the explicit details of your medical condition, but your instructors will need enough information to make a decision about how to handle your absence.
- Don't feel like you need to create an elaborate story or have the most original excuse for missing class—professors are people too and most understand that life happens. Honesty is always the best policy.

Be Prepared to Do the Work

- Review the syllabus to see what you missed. Be familiar with your instructor's absence policy.
- Try to work ahead if you know you will be absent or complete missed assignments as soon as possible.
- When you talk with your instructor, provide them with a proposal about how you will get caught up including specific dates that you will turn in missed assignments or days/times you have available to take a missed exam.
- Consider taking advantage of resources at the Academic Success Center including tutoring or Supplemental Instruction sessions to go over any concepts you missed or are unclear about.

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Talk to Classmates

- Always try to have the phone number, email, or Snapchat of at least one person in each of your classes. Try exchanging contact info with the people sitting around you on the first day—it may come in handy later and you might just make a new friend!
- If you know more than one person in your class, ask all of them for their notes. Everyone has a different note taking style and what seemed important to one person during the lecture may not be captured by someone else.

Be Realistic

- Allow your instructor a reasonable amount of time to respond to your email. We know your best friend always responds to your 3 am texts but give your instructor at least a few days to get back to you. If you don't hear anything, try following up with a phone call or going to office hours.
- In some cases, such as science labs or courses with extensive in-class participation requirements, it can be very difficult to make up missed work. Understand that your instructor may want to work with you but there may be no reasonable way for you to earn credit for things you missed.
- There is an expectation that students master the material covered in a course and complete required assignments in order to earn a passing grade. If you miss too much class or are too far behind it may not be possible for you to successfully complete the class.
- Instructors need to be fair to all students which may mean they are unable to excuse your absence or allow you to make up missed work.

Other Considerations

- If your absence is related to a disability, even a temporary disability such as an injury or chronic illness, you may want to connect with [Disability Resources](#) to find out what support they may be able to provide.
- In certain situations, it may be appropriate to talk with your instructor about a grade of [incomplete](#) for the course. If you have questions, feel free to give our office a call.
- If you have tried to work with your professor but have not been able to get ahold of them or feel they have treated you unfairly, your next step is to follow up with the Chair of the department or the Dean of the college in which the course is located.
- If you disagree with the final grade you received for a class, you can follow the [Grade Appeal Policy](#).