

Group activity worksheet based on Shelby's Video--Professor Communication

In her video, Shelby shared how her professors became her biggest support. Communication with professors is a great first step to succeeding in college. Like any relationship, it takes effort and respect. We are going to practice communicating with professors and how to address them. **In college, the prime communication will be email.**

1) Email subject line

When writing an email, as you may know, you always need to put a subject line. Professors receive many emails in a day.

A. First, start off by putting the class code, name, and section.

For example: if you are taking a biology class there will be a number after it, like 011 and your section B (professors sometimes teach two or three of the same class so the section is important.)

Your class code might be BIO 011 B. (This will be obvious when you enroll in the class and will be on every syllabus you receive so don't worry about having to find that.)

B. Next, you put your last name followed by a comma and then your first name.

Example: Subject: Bio 011 B_ Copans, Shelby

2) Greeting (This is my personal trick that will get you major brownie points.)

Here is the secret—**look your professors up online before you email them to see if they have a doctorate.** If they do, address them as “Dr. Last Name”; if not, “Professor Last Name”.

It is hard work to get a doctorate and it is a sign of respect to address them with that title. If you can, refer to them as “Dr. Last Name” while addressing them in class as well. You will stick out in their mind. ***I know this seems small, but it is actually huge.***

Example: Good morning Dr Last Name,

3) Body of email

- Introduce yourself if you are not on a first name basis yet.
- If you are asking for help with something, make sure to be polite and don't make it sound too urgent (even if it is).
- If you need help outside of their office hours, give three other times that can work for you.
- Express that you know they are busy. This is a simple trick that will make them WANT to help you. People like to be seen as important...use this.
- Make sure to thank them for their time and any help they can give.
- Lastly, make sure to thank them for being so flexible. Again, this will make them WANT to be flexible.
- **Be honest with your professor.** If you need to meet with them to go over notes from class because you overslept, be honest. Professors can see through excuses.

Example email:

Subject: Bio 011 B__ Copans, Shelby

Good morning Dr. Last Name,

My name is Shelby Copans and I am in your Bio 011 B class. I have to confess that I overslept this morning and missed class. I know you are busy, and it was my responsibility to get to class, and it was very irresponsible of me to oversleep. That being said, I was wondering if you might have a half an hour to squeeze me in to go over the class that I missed. I can meet Monday the 12th from 10-11:30, Monday the 12th from 2:15-4:00 or Tuesday any time after 11:30 am. If these don't work for you, I can send you more times. I appreciate your time as I know you teach many other classes.

Thank you for any flexibility and understanding,

Shelby Copans

4) Follow up

When they reply to you they may be more casual, however, **that does not mean that you should be casual.**

Example of Dr. Last Name's reply:

Hey Shelby,

No worries about oversleeping, it happens. I appreciate you being on top of your work. Monday at 10:15 works for me. I'll be in my office. Thanks. -Joe

5) Replying

Your reply should be just as formal as your first email.

Example reply:

Good afternoon Dr. Last Name,

I appreciate you being able to meet with me outside of office hours; I will bring my questions. I will see you Monday at 10:15.

Thank you for your time and understanding,

Shelby Copans

6) Showing up

Make sure you are on time to your appointment and that you actually show up. If you need to cancel, make sure to email and apologize. Do not just not show up as this can be a major pet peeve for professors as well as can be disrespectful.

Let's practice: scenarios work in small groups or independently- come back together and share.

1. You overslept and missed a test.
2. You received a failing grade on your last paper/test.
3. It is the beginning of the semester and you want to introduce yourself to your professor.
4. You need an extension on a paper (you have been sick or you procrastinated and need more time).