

Interacting with Profs

Chapman Learning Commons



Introduction

Do you feel nervous about attending office hours? Meeting your instructor outside of class may seem daunting or time-consuming but it doesn't have to be! In this video, we'll be sharing the benefits of office hours and address some common student concerns about interacting with profs.

What are the benefits of office hours?

You might be wondering what benefits office hours might offer you. As many students know, office hours are a great opportunity to seek help for real or perceived underperformance in classes.

However, office hours can actually offer you much more! Studies have found that students that engage with faculty out of the classroom achieve:

- Higher retention
- Greater academic and cognitive development
- Higher educational aspirations
- Greater levels of academic integration into the university, and
- Increased feelings of affirmation, confidence, and self-worth.

It can also be useful to nurture connections with faculty to discuss your plans for the future, as they can often give you feedback or guidance.

In addition to all of these benefits for students, office hours also benefit faculty and help them connect with their students. Dr. Jackie Stewart of the Chemistry Department says office hours help instructors "get to know individual students a lot better", especially in situations where classes are very large. History Professor Anne Gorsuch and English Lecturer Dr. Mary Ann Saunders both emphasize how instructors entered academia to have contact and conversations with students, and how they are eager and excited to have students drop in and say hi during office hours.

How should I approach Office hours?

You may still be wondering, how should I approach office hours? Dr. Saunders has this advice:

"Early in the term you can come along and make a social call. Drop in and say how much you're looking forward to the course or, within the first couple of weeks, if there's been some kind of reading or class discussion that you found really intriguing or exciting you can come in and talk about it."

If you still feel nervous, it may be helpful to reach out ahead of time to your instructor to mention: **what you want to discuss and how long you expect your visit to take**. This can set expectations for you and your instructor, which can help guide the conversation and keep everyone on track, as well give you an idea of how the office hour will go. Finally, if you have a professor that you feel more comfortable with, it can also be helpful to practice with them before reaching out to an instructor that you're less familiar with.

Why don't students go to office hours?

Now, you might be wondering, *if office hours are so beneficial why don't more students attend them?* Actually, according to student surveys, most students do reach out to their instructors! The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement found that many students engage with their instructors for a wide range of reasons.

These range from discussing course topics to talking about future career plans. And the UBC Undergraduate Experience Survey reports that roughly half of students are very concerned or concerned about losing contact with their instructors, meaning they recognize that this is an integral part of university learning.

However, some common reasons that students don't attend office hours are because students:

- Perform well enough to feel they don't need to attend or feel that they have performed so poorly that they feel embarrassed about attending
- Have scheduling conflicts or lack the time
- Have found faster alternate ways of getting information such as study groups
- Find professors intimidating or scary, worry they will face rejection or embarrassment, or
- Don't want to impose upon the instructor's time.

To students with these reasons, Dr. Stewart has some advice. "The purpose of the office hour isn't for you to show us how much you know, but to help you learn. So, it's okay if you have questions that you think are silly, or detailed, or you're not sure if they're good questions, because we can help you sort that out." Professor Gorsuch also says "It's helpful to know that professors are human. We like talking to people, many of us have children, all of us are children. Going in and talking in person to somebody who otherwise you just see at the front of the lecture hall, it's a good reminder of that."

Conclusion

If you're still unsure about how to approach office hours, you're in luck! We've put together some recommendations for how to approach office hours. You can find them at the link below! If you'd like to hear more about office hours from the professor's perspective, keep watching this playlist. We had professors share their input about what advice they would give to students that feel nervous about coming to office hours.

Thanks for watching and be sure to check out our website at learningcommons.ubc.ca for more resources.

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