

## How to Engage Your Students from the First Day of Class

(Based on the Teaching Professor Online Seminar featuring Dr. Mary Clement)

The first day of class sets the tone for the entire semester, so it is critical to establish a strong framework for student success, beginning on day one.

1. **Arrive early.** Arrive early to set up your room, turn on Smart equipment, find a place for handouts, and greet students. If you cannot get into the classroom right away, visit with students in the hall.
2. **Focus the students.** As students enter the room, display a PowerPoint slide with instructions for students (e.g. pick up syllabus, read a page in the text, etc.). This frees you to begin establishing relationships with students as they arrive. Continue the practice of displaying “focus” information at the start of every class throughout the year. For example, a “focus” slide could include a question about the assigned reading, a quote from an expert in the field or a current event related to the day’s topic.
3. **Establish procedures.** Develop procedures for taking attendance, distributing papers, and collecting and returning assignments. Make sure students know how to address you.
4. **Address the syllabus.** Rather than reading the syllabus aloud to students, present students with a list of questions that can be answered by reading the syllabus. Have students respond to the questions through group discussion. Or have them respond individually in writing, either in class or as an assignment.
5. **Teach course content on the first day.** Consider giving a mini-lecture and then have students immediately work with the information. You may want to give an ungraded quiz, have students write a “minute paper,” or complete a lab activity. Ensure that students learn something on the first day of class.
6. **List the expected learning outcomes for the day on the whiteboard.** Throughout the class, reference the list and ask students to relate the day’s activities to the outcomes.
7. **Build a sense of community.** Include an opportunity for students to interact with each other and learn each other’s names. It builds a sense of community that encourages student to come to class and facilitates civil behavior.
8. **Learn students’ interests and prior knowledge.** Distribute an interest survey and use the students’ responses to relate course content to students’ interests and prior knowledge throughout the semester.
9. **Plan the class to include four parts.** Throughout the semester, plan all classes to include the following parts: 1) focus the students; 2) lecture and/or give examples to introduce new material; 3) have students apply the new material; and 4) review, conclude, and assess.