



## Graduate Teaching & Laboratory Assistants Orientation

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# Strategies for the First Weeks of Class

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### The First Day

- Check out the room before class so you know what activities will work.
- Plan student-centered activities.
- Think about professional appearance.
- Go to class early to chat with students and put them and you at ease.
- Bring chalk or marker.
- Be organized: Plan to do more than just pass out the syllabus.
- Write your name and the class on board.
- Put a plan for the class on the board.
- Be prepared for lost, late students.
- Do not apologize for being a teaching assistant.
- Share your professional background and enthusiasm for the subject.
- Highlight the importance of the course to your field and students' futures.
- Get student information while taking attendance.
- Begin to learn your students' names.
- Plan an ice breaker.
- Establish group rapport and study groups.
- Learn about your students' expectations for the course.
- Distribute and introduce syllabus and course expectations.
- Give students a sample of good teaching.
- Give an assignment to be collected at the next meeting. In other words, hit the ground running on the first day of class with substantial content.

### The First Weeks

- Arrive early to get to know individual students. Seek out different students each day and get to know something about them.
- Start class on time.
- Start the lecture with a puzzle, question, paradox, picture, or cartoon on a slide or transparency to focus on the day's topic.
- Elicit student questions and concerns at the beginning of class and list these on the chalkboard to be answered during the hour.
- Have the students write down what they think the important issues or key points of the day's lecture will be or have been in a minute paper.
- Use a variety of methods of presentation every class meeting.
- Break up class period about every twenty minutes by telling an anecdote, inviting students to put down pens, referring to a current event, or shifting media.

- Form a student panel to present alternative views of the same concept.
- Give sample test questions and answers.
- Have students anticipate test questions and answer those questions as a study method.
- Hand out study questions or study guides.
- Be redundant. Students should hear, read, and see key material at least three times.
- Tell about your current research interests and how you got there from your own beginnings in the discipline.
- Conduct idea-generating or brainstorming sessions to expand horizons.
- Give students two passages of material containing alternative views to compare and contrast.
- Let your students see the enthusiasm you have for your subject and your love of learning.
- Provide wait time: Invite students to ask questions and wait for a response, or ask a question and wait for an answer.
- Roam around the classroom during class.
- Have students write questions on index cards to be collected and answered the next class period.
- Assign written paraphrases and summaries of difficult reading.
- Gather students feedback in the first three weeks of the quarter to improve teaching and learning.