

How Should I Interact with My Professors?

: “College is the ideal place for you to practice excellent communication. Professors are among the first people in your life you’ll interact with as an adult.” Ellen Bremen, author of [Say This, NOT That to Your Professor: 36 Talking Tips for College Success](#)

Use proper faculty and staff names.

You will find that each person has a different preference on how they would like to be addressed. Some prefer having the title Dr. and their last name while others prefer a more casual greeting. When in doubt—use Professor and their last name. Also, don’t assume staff should be addressed by their first name.

Some of my favorite pieces of advice in the book Say This, NOT That to Your Professor include:

- Use “I” language to have more productive communication
- Address issues with the professor first before going to his/her superior
- Present your opinions only, not those of your peers
- Dealing with grades and perceptions of fairness
- Expectations of timely, professional communication from professors (aka: they’re not always working and responding immediately).

Work on their timetable.

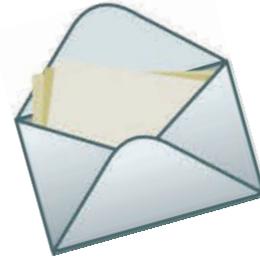
- Faculty members have many commitments. Try to keep meeting times convenient for them. Use scheduled office hours or make appointments with your professors instead of dropping by.
- If you are having difficulty with the subject matter don’t wait until the last minute to ask for their assistance. If you are asking for letters of reference, give them at least 2 weeks to write it. And ask in person, not by email!

Use interactions with faculty as opportunities to get noticed.

Always try to present yourself well. While you are in class, department lectures or visiting during office hours have a good attitude, speak clearly, and use professional manners. You never know which interaction will lead to new opportunities.

Tips for Requesting Letters of Recommendation

- Make a list of at least four people that can write you a strong letter of recommendation.
- Make an appointment with each potential writer.
- Provide the writer with the recommendation requirements and a copy of your resume.
- If the letter must be mailed directly to the institution, supply the writer with a pre-addressed, stamped envelope.
- Inform the writer if you would like him or her to highlight specific items in the letter related to your academic accomplishments and extra-curricular activities.
- Respect a possible “No.” The faculty or staff member may not write you a letter for several reasons (i.e., don’t know you well enough, too busy, etc.)
- Ask the writer to sign his or her name on the seal of the envelope if the letter is confidential.
- Give the writer a deadline that allows enough time to complete a strong letter (i.e., one month before the letter is due)
- Follow-up with the writer a couple days before the letter is due to ensure you meet with the submission deadline.
- Send a thank you note to each person who wrote you a letter



Email Etiquette:

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW IN COLLEGE

Today's students rarely use email unless they have to. They are more likely to use text, Facebook, or even Twitter. Many students never had a lesson on how to write and layout a business letter, and as a result, are creating emails that are unprofessional and hurting them in the eyes of the recipient.

Whether it's an inquiry to a college admissions counselor, a message for a professor, or a query to a potential employer, here are five factors that every student should know about writing an email:

<p>1. Use the Subject Line to Convey Your Point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most busy people, such as college admissions counselors or professors, can get upwards of 100 emails or more per day. If the subject line briefly conveys the purpose of the email and any necessary action, it makes it a lot simpler for the recipient to respond appropriately. <p>EX: If students cannot upload their papers, which are due at 5:00 pm sharp to a course web site due to technical difficulties, the professor will still expect them to meet the deadline. Therefore, it would be important for the student to send an email explaining the situation well before the deadline with a prominent explanation in the subject line:</p> <p><i>Subject: Assignment drop-box on course site not functioning—paper is attached</i></p>	<p>2. Address the Recipient Formally with a Salutation and Title</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• While the most common greeting for today's students is "Hey!," unless the student is writing to a family member or friend, virtually everyone else should be addressed with a title or honorific such as Mr., Ms., Dr., or Professor. The salutation is typically the word, "Dear" as in: <p><i>EX: Dear Professor Kelleher,</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the person has asked that you use his or her first name, then it is fine to do so, although it is always best to address teachers and professors by their formal name in written correspondence. When you are not sure who the recipient should be or if you are not sure of the gender, then address the message: <i>To Whom It May Concern.</i>
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3. Provide Context, a Clear Purpose and Action Step

An admissions counselor from a liberal arts college described how common it is for him to receive an email that looks like this:

To: Sam.Coleman@yourfavoritecollege.com
From: Jack Taylor
Subject: Re
Date: October 5, 2009

hey! do you have frat houses? can you live in them or r they just soshal or in the dorms Jack

Beyond the obvious issues with the salutation, the line spacing and the spelling and grammar, there are several problems with the message itself. A better introduction might be:

Dear Mr. Coleman,
I met you at the college fair at Barnstable High School last Thursday evening. One topic we didn't have a chance to discuss is the Greek System at your campus. I like the idea of living in a fraternity house, and I know that some colleges with fraternities don't offer houses except for social purposes. What is the policy for fraternity housing at your campus?

***NOTE:** Now that you are in college, drop the clever email addresses (jockmeister24@yahoo.com, cutie_pie@hotmail.com) and use the email address CSUF provided that hopefully is a variation of your name!

4. Use Proper Grammar and Spelling

In this era of texting and Facebook abbreviations, it is easy to forget that an email to a person of influence or stature should be treated as serious correspondence. However, it must be written with as much care as your final paper for history. This means using complete sentences, correct spelling, and clear, organized structure. Remember that all capitalized and bold lettering is considered 'shouting'.

NO: IDK, BTW, wat r u doin?

YES: I don't know. By the way, what are you doing.

5. Close with contact information and a full name

A proper closing would be:
Sincerely,

Jack Taylor
Barnstable College (MA), Class of 2011
Home Phone: 555-333-0101

There are times when the formalities of greetings and closings can be dropped, such as when you initially sent a formal message and the recipient replies quickly and you begin a quick back and forth correspondence that simulates instant messaging. However, most email messages should follow the conventions outlined above. Apply these lessons and your administrators, staff and professors will be impressed—or at least more likely to reply!

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