

# Talking with your Teacher

Teachers generally like talking with students. They appreciate students who ask for help, and they don't consider it a waste of time to answer students' questions, either in class or out of class. In fact, most teachers believe that the better students seek extra help, and they often wonder why more students don't take advantage of the opportunity to talk with them. This handout discusses how and when to talk to your teacher.

## In-class questions

Asking questions in class takes a lot of courage at first. Students may fear that they will be wasting their classmates' time or that they will look stupid if they ask what seems to be a simple question. Most teachers appreciate that courage and will support your efforts to participate in class. If the answer is appropriate for the entire class, the teacher will answer. If it's better to answer you individually, the teacher will say something like, "Let's talk about that after class" or "We can talk about that outside of class." If you're uncomfortable asking questions in class, make an effort to see your teacher after school.

## After school tutoring

Office school, teachers have regular times each week where they can talk or meet with students. This time is perfect for doing that class' homework where you can ask questions as you go along, or spend time reviewing a topic covered in class that day. Just say something like, "Could I come see you during tutoring to talk about...?"

## Making polite requests

At times, you may need a favor or you may need to notify your teacher about your situation. Most teachers are willing to work with students who make reasonable requests, as long as they believe that students are trying their hardest to be respectful.

To make polite requests, explain your situation and then make the request. The verb "would" is particularly useful here.

*"I have three papers due on the same day and I'd really like to do my best. Would you mind letting me have one more day?"*

*"I need to visit the doctor, but the only available appointment is on the day before our test. Would it be alright if I ask my classmate to take notes for me?"*

## Asking for clarification

There will be times when you don't understand the concepts presented in class, the language used in lecture, or the instructions for an assignment. At these times, it's tempting to smile and nod as if you do understand. This is a huge mistake!

You can politely ask for clarification in several ways:

*“I’m sorry. I’m not sure I understood that.”*

*“I’m sorry. Would you mind explaining that last point one more time?”*

*“Let me make sure I understand you correctly. You’re saying that...”*

## Asking for feedback

Teachers appreciate it when students ask for feedback on their work. They will not suggest every single change that should be made for you to get the highest grade possible. They will suggest the two or three most important things you can do. You’ll get much better feedback if you make specific requests.

*“Could you read this and give me some suggestions?”* (Too vague)

*“Could you give me feedback on my logic and organization?”* (Much better!)

## Works Consulted:

“Tips & Tools.” Learning Center, [learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/](http://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/).