



Asking Questions

A Guide for Students

Students often feel they do not have a good question to ask. Questions can help to introduce you to faculty, to show your pro-active nature, and help provide insight into the course. Having a few “starter questions” can help you to find an authentic way to ask a question early in a semester. Hearing your own voice early in a semester increases the chances you will speak up again later in the semester.

- “I read the syllabus and had a question about X. Could you clarify for me when we will be choosing the topic for that project? Is that something I should be starting right now?”
- “I’m in your [name of class] course, and I just wanted to stop in to say hello, so you could easily put a name and face together.”
- “I was wondering about the project coming up, and how you might advise our group to select a topic or focus.”
- “I noticed on your web site that you do research in [disciplinary area, location, or topic] – can you tell me more about that?”
- “I tried the first problem set/the first response paper. I’m wondering if I could talk with you about how I’m approaching it to see if you have some suggestions that might help me be more effective next time?”
- “After the reading, I was left thinking about X and specifically this passage on page Z. At what stage would it be appropriate for me to run an outline by you?”
- “Last night’s homework assignment took three hours to complete. I get the feeling I might be doing things differently than I should. Can we discuss whether I’m using the time appropriately?”

(adapted from WEPAN’s “talk to me” toolkit)