First Impressions Matter: Make the First Day Count

First impressions matter. Whether this is your first course or your 100th, your students’ first impression of you matters. Here are some simple strategies for making the first day of your course work for both you and your students:

1. **Arrive early.** Introduce yourself to students as they come in and welcome them to your course. This will help you begin to establish rapport with the students and set a comfortable tone for the course.

2. **Share something about yourself.** Make sure students know a bit about you – your interests, your hobbies, or your family. This helps them see you as a human being and not just a faculty member.

3. **Facilitate introductions between students.** Students will feel more comfortable if they can get to know others in the class. Many faculty accomplish introductions with first day icebreakers. You can find some good suggestions on these sites:
   - Icebreakers for College Students
   - Great Icebreakers for the College Classroom
   - First Day of Class Rituals

4. **Learn about them.** Ask students to complete a survey of their interests or to share something unique about themselves with the class. You can find sample items for an interest inventory here.

5. **Set expectations.** Go over the learning outcomes for the course and your expectations for attendance, participation, behavior and assignment quality.

6. **Talk about your texts.** The first day is a good time to introduce your textbook or readings and give some guidance about bringing them to class, when and how to read them, and how you will use them.

7. **Start covering course material.** Don’t just go over the syllabus and dismiss class on the first day. Students will realize you take your content seriously if you start quickly with some subject matter.

8. **Engage in a learning activity.** Get students thinking and moving from day one. It sets an energetic tone.

Regardless of the activities you choose for the first day, you will want your students to feel welcome and comfortable from the very beginning. You won’t get a second chance to make that first impression.

**Need more suggestions for the first day?**

Visit [teaching.utsa.edu](http://teaching.utsa.edu) to schedule a consultation!