

Before the First Day of Class: Tips for Success

If you have full course responsibility:

1. As soon as you receive your assignment, ask for information and advice about the course from instructors or GTAs who have taught the course before.
2. Ask which faculty member will be your course director. Meet with him or her to discuss your plans for the course.
3. Develop your course and syllabus. Submit your syllabus to your teaching supervisor for review.
4. Order text books or coursepacks, and set up reserve readings.
5. Confirm any guest speakers or arrangements for out of class events that occur early in the semester.
6. Get access to your electronic class roll. (<http://help.unc.edu/1750>) Familiarize yourself with student names, noting majors and years.
7. Find out about add/drop policies and dates. Decide on a strategy for handling add requests on the first day of classes.
8. Photocopy your syllabus to distribute in class or upload it to your course's Blackboard site or other website.
9. Create a lesson plan for the first day. Refer to "For Your Consideration: The First Day of Class" and "On the First Day of Class: a Checklist" for suggestions.
10. Go to your classroom and check for:
 - A podium, if you need one
 - Location of electrical outlets, if you plan to use a laptop or audio-visual equipment
 - Window shades, if you plan to use a video projector
 - Board markers/chalk and eraser
 - A working clock
 - The proper number of desks and chairs and appropriate arrangement
 - Experiment with any technology you will use on the first day (i.e., student response systems, PowerPoint).
11. Get index cards for students to fill out on the first day if you are going to collect information from students.
12. Determine what you wish to accomplish on the first day of class.

If you are assisting a faculty member:

1. Meet with the supervising faculty member to discuss critical components of the course: syllabus, policies, scheduling of staff meetings. The department should provide you with a contract detailing your responsibilities.

2. Get desk copies of all textbooks and coursepacks — the professor should provide these or tell you where you can get them. If your copy of the textbook has not yet been received (or ordered) from the publisher, talk to the textbook department at Student Stores about their special refund policy for instructor copies, or borrow a textbook from someone who had assisted with the class before.
3. Ask for information and advice from TAs who have assisted with the course before.
 - Who takes the course and why?
 - What is the range of the students' abilities
 - What are typical problems with the course?
 - What seems to work particularly well in the course?
4. Familiarize yourself with the contents of the textbook and coursepack. Read the textbook introduction and the first chapter to be assigned.
5. You may wish to prepare a written set of ground rules for your lab or discussion section. Talk to the professor or other TAs about what to include.
6. Create a lesson plan for your first day of teaching. Refer to FYC 1 (“The First Day of Class... Your Chance to Make a Good First Impression” and “The First Day of Class: Tips for Success” for suggestions.
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8. Get index cards for students to fill out on the first day if you are going to collect information from students.
9. Determine what you wish to accomplish on the first day of class.