

Teaching Survival Kit

*Graduate Teacher Program
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This list is aimed at reducing the ever-present gap between theory and application. It deals with very down-to-earth ways of handling problems known to graduate instructors.

Communicating in class

1. Wear a name tag until all your students know your name.
2. Use a seating chart and take roll regularly so that you can learn students' names.
3. Have students fill in an information card, listing data important to the class. Ask them to list some individual eccentricity of theirs to help you recognize them.
4. In large classes use railroad (big) chalk regularly on the board. When making diagrams, use colored railroad chalk for clarity.
5. When you use an overhead projector, use colored pens to enhance your layout.
6. Be neat. If you take the time to make your explanations clear and legible, your students will be more inclined to make their notes and other work neat.
7. Use a yardstick in class. It's useful for making neat graphs, illustrating points, and especially for drawing tangent lines.

Time Management

1. Have a good day calendar. Write office hours, your meetings, and appointments down by the hour as well as by the day.
2. Buy a portable clock that is easy for students to read even from the back of the classroom. Take it to class for quizzes and tests. When you are teaching, turn the clock towards you so that you always know what time it is.
3. Keep a copy of the university's "Schedule of Courses"; it lists all important university dates including the final examination schedule. Refer to it when advising students about drop/add deadlines, etc.

Tests/Grading/Assignments

1. Learn to use dittos and the ditto machine in your department; reproducing dittos is much cheaper than photocopying. You can hand out assignments and homework cheaply and efficiently.
2. If your students have to provide blue books, keep some on hand in case they forget.
3. Have scrap paper available for use in class during tests.
4. Use a red erasable pen for grading. Note your grades in an official grade book. Most departments supply these materials.
5. Have a bottle of whiteout on hand to make corrections.
6. Have a stapler available at least when you are handing tests or assignments back. Students rarely remember to staple together their assignments but always expect the teacher not to lose them.
7. Keep an up-to-date grade book with grades and absences marked. If you carry the grade book around, it is a good idea to make a photocopy (especially toward the end of the semester) just in case it gets lost or stolen.
8. Have a dictionary in your office and spell correctly--don't make mistakes when you write on your students' papers.
9. If your department has a test bank on hand, use it sometimes to make up quizzes. It can save a great deal of time.
10. Maintain a file of your old tests and allow students to glance over them.
11. Keep tape or thumb tacks available to post test results and answer keys. Always keep copies of anything you post; papers posted in hallways tend to get ripped off. Remember, it is against university policy to return papers or tests by leaving them in a pile in the hallway. Hand them back in class.

Office Hours

1. Have a box of mints or some other breath freshener handy--you do get close to students.
2. Write on scrap paper while you are explaining and illustrating concepts--students often like to take your explanations with them. Keeping copies of explanations you write out individually during office hours may help you lay out good explanations for the entire class.
3. Have tissues on your desk--students occasionally get upset in your office and the tissues can help them cover their embarrassment.
4. We don't want to push drugs but aspirin, vitamin C, and Cepacol are frequently used in most TA offices.
5. When you are working with students during office hours, get to know them. Figure out where they are coming from. Help them deal with the material so they can go home and figure out where the trouble is.

Overall Suggestions

1. Know something about your own learning style and about the learning styles of your students so that you are better able to work with them during office hours.
2. Do midterm evaluations of your class to get an idea of how things are going.
3. Keep a set of ear plugs handy for working in a busy TA office or even in the library.
4. Don't hesitate to go to your fellow office mates for ideas and support.
5. Purchase a videotape for yourself and use the free services of Academic Media Services to videotape your class.