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SW08. Talking with Professors

Student Name: _____ Student ID Number: _____

Instructor: _____ Level: _____ Date: _____

For media links in this activity, visit [the LLC ESL Tutoring website for Upper Level SDLAs](#). Find your SDLA number to see all the resources to finish your SDLA.

Section 1: Introduction



Of all the teachers you've had in your life, which one do you remember most fondly? Hopefully, you can recall a teacher who encouraged and inspired you and perhaps played a role in shaping the person you are today. College professors are also interested in positively affecting students' lives by exposing them to new ideas and perspectives, by challenging their assumptions, and by getting to know them in and out of class.

In this SDLA, you will look at ways in which you can cultivate rich and rewarding relationships with your instructors because solid student-faculty relationships can be foundational to a successful college experience.

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION: You will discuss these questions with your tutor. Prepare a short answer for each.

1. What have your interactions with your instructors been like so far?
2. How does it make you feel to think about visiting your professor's office? What do you envision?
3. How can you find out where your instructor's office is?
4. How should you go about setting up an appointment?
5. What would be some reasons to go to your instructor's office?
6. What are the benefits of forming relationships with your instructors?





Section 2: Ways to Approach your Professor

Imagine that you have a question about a class you're taking. You've decided that you should talk to your instructor to get some help. What should you do next?

- a. Approach your professor immediately after class.
- b. Visit your professor during office hours.
- c. Send an email to your professor.

Answer Key: All options are great!

However, if you chose option (a), remember:

Talking to a professor immediately after class is a good idea for a quick question or clarification. Just remember that the professor may have another class to go to and may not be able to spend much time with you in this setting. Now imagine that you have a question that will take a little more time - say you're struggling with a concept in class, or want to talk to your professor about the possibility of getting an extension on a due date. In this case, which probably requires a little more help, visiting during office hours or sending a meeting by email might be a better idea.

Now let's look at (b) as a choice. This is a sample of a part of a syllabus you might receive from a professor:

Office Hours:

Tuesdays 1:30-3:00pm (Bldg. 66 Rm. 237) and Zoom by appointment

Any time you have questions about an assignment or a quiz, please reach out to ask. Attending office hours is the best way to address your questions regarding assignments. I will not extensively discuss assignments over email, but I am very happy to discuss assignments with you and provide feedback during office hours.

For on-campus office hours, you may come without an appointment. If you want to make an appointment, please follow the instructions for virtual office hours below.

Virtual office hours (Zoom) are by appointment only. To make an appointment, please send me a message through Canvas Inbox. Provide 2-3 days/times that you would like to schedule your appointment. I will reply within 24 hours to confirm the time. I will always do what I can to accommodate your reasonable requests.

1. What are the two ways you can meet with the professor for office hours?
2. How should you contact the professor to request an appointment?
3. What do you need to include when you ask for an appointment?





Section 3: Learn about Communication Styles

The WAY you communicate with your professor is also a very important part of success in college and your class. Various forms of communication are considered appropriate when speaking with your professor. It is important that you learn the correct style to communicate. This might be different from the style you communicate with professors in your country.

[Watch the Section 3 Video](#) below to find out about appropriate communication styles with your professor. Then complete the activity.



Section 4: Practice with Communication Styles

If you communicate in an aggressive way with your professors (even if you don't mean to), they may think you are rude and not want to help you with your problems. If you use a passive communication style (often by avoiding talking to the professor directly), your professor may not know that you have a problem at all, and so they won't be able to help you. Therefore, it's important to practice assertive and polite communication when speaking to professors.

Complete the activities on the next page to practice communicating with professors.





Directions: Below are examples of each style of communication. After reading the example, decide which statement matches the communication style for Scenario #1. After that, you will create responses for Scenarios #2 and #3.

Example Scenario: You have a question about an assignment. Ask your teacher to explain the assignment.

- Passive The passive student would probably not ask a lengthy question, but they most likely would ask a very short question such as, “How is this sentence on my paper?” This question does not answer what the student really wants to know.
- Aggressive “Professor (interrupting the middle of class), I need you to explain the assignment again. You didn’t do a good job the first time”.
- Assertive “Excuse me professor, could I speak with you during your office hours this week regarding our assignment? I’m having a difficult time understanding some of the details.”

Scenario #1: You have a midterm test next week, but your sister is getting married and you will need to travel out of town. You want to ask your professor if you can take a make-up exam on a different date.

- _____ 1. Passive a. “I won’t come to class on the test day. I am going to be busy. You need to give me the test the week after.”
- _____ 2. Aggressive b. “Excuse me, professor. My sister is getting married next week on the same day as the test and I will need to travel out of town for the wedding. Would it be possible for me to take the exam a couple of days early?”
- _____ 3. Assertive c. You don’t say anything. Instead, you either skip the wedding or skip the test.

Scenario #2: You need turn in a homework assignment late. You want to ask your professor for more time to complete the assignment.

Passive:

Aggressive:

Assertive:

Scenario #3: You got a low grade on your writing assignment, and you don’t think it is fair. You want to ask your professor why the grade was low.

Passive:

Aggressive:





Assertive:





Section 5: What Did I Learn

Complete this table BEFORE meeting with a tutor.

Communication Skill	I can't do this YET. 	I can do this WITH help. 	I can do this WITHOUT help. 	I can TEACH this to a classmate. 
I can interpret a syllabus statement about a professor's office hours.				
I can identify different communication styles (passive, aggressive, and assertive).				
I can form assertive questions to ask professors about common problems.				

Here are some words/phrases I need to practice.

Good Job!

Now make an appointment

with a tutor on the LLC ESL Tutoring Website

www.mtsac.edu/llc/passportrewards/llctutoring








Section 6: Practice with a Tutor!

After completing the self-assessment, meet with a tutor and give this completed SDLA to the tutor. The tutor will give you feedback.

Grading Rubric

Possible Points	Need Practice  (0-1 Point)	Good Job  (2-3 Points)	Excellent Work  (4-5 Points)
Content	Not enough information provided in responses and often does not use correct vocabulary.	Provides most important information in responses and some of the time uses correct vocabulary.	Provides all necessary information in responses and most of the time uses correct vocabulary.
Skill: Speaking	More than 6 mistakes saying words; needs guessing more than 3 times.	Not more than 5 mistakes saying words; needs guessing on 1-2 words or sentences.	Not more than 2 mistakes saying words; needs no guess about meaning.
Oral Fluency	Speaks mostly in phrases, individual words; many pauses.	Sometimes speaks in complete sentences; several pauses.	Speaks in complete sentences; a couple pauses okay.

*Students must receive at least 10 points to move on

Possible Points: _____ / 15

Tutor Comments:

Congratulations! Keep going.

You have successfully completed this SDLA and are ready to continue to the next.

Work on this more.

You have not yet mastered this SDLA. It is recommended that you complete it again.

Tutor Signature: _____

Date: _____

