

Using Office Hours Effectively

Office hours are specific hours that instructors set aside for students to come to their office; ask questions; and get clarification on assignments, exams, or other course-related topics. As instructors are in the best position to answer your questions, office hours are a great resource for you to stay on track in the course. You can also attend office hours to introduce yourself to your instructor and become familiar with them. Developing relationships with instructors can be beneficial, as you have the opportunity to learn from your instructor and create a connection that could assist you later in your OSU career. Here are some suggestions for making the most of office hours:

Know who has office hours

Typically, those involved in the instruction of the course will hold office hours. The people who hold office hours are generally listed on your syllabus, and they vary depending on the course.

Common people who hold office hours include

- Professors
- Instructors
- Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

Know office hour times

Office hours are usually listed on your course syllabus. If office hours are not listed, be sure to ask your instructor if they have office hours or if they are available by appointment if you email in advance. If their original office hours conflict with your schedule, most instructors are open to meeting outside of office hours by appointment. When emailing to request an appointment outside of office hours, be sure to offer a range of times you would be available to meet. Instructors may have busy schedules, and a range of times makes it easier to ensure that you can meet at a time that is convenient for both of your schedules.

Go to office hours prepared

It is a good idea to come prepared for office hours. Here are a few suggestions for preparation:

- Decide why you want to attend office hours. Do you want to introduce yourself to the instructor and get to know them? Are you struggling with the course in general? Are you having a specific problem or need clarification on an assignment? Do you want to ask about a recent or upcoming exam?
- Based on your reasons for going to office hours, come up with clear and specific questions/comments that you would like to discuss with your instructor. Write these questions or comments down prior to attending office hours.
- Don't assume the instructor understands the issue you are having without giving them enough information. Provide context so that the instructor can understand what feedback or assistance you need.
- Be sure that you bring any appropriate course materials with you to office hours. The instructor may not always have this material right in front of them, and it can be difficult to remember an exact problem, exam question, or paragraph in the text.

Develop a positive relationship

Developing professional and positive relationships with instructors is part of your education. Be aware of how you are communicating to establish these relationships. Keep these tips in mind to have a successful conversation:

- Work to develop goodwill and rapport with the instructor. Recognize that they have expectations for the course as well as many students enrolled in the course.
- Be polite when considering your word choice and your requests. Let the instructor know what you have enjoyed in the course and what has impacted you in a positive way in addition to anything you struggle with.
- Always ask instead of tell your instructor information. If you would like to discuss an exam, for instance, saying "I am not sure I fully understood this section of the exam. Could you help me understand what you meant in this question?" will be more effective than saying "Your exam was confusing," or "I don't like my grade."

Office hours are a great way to take advantage of the resources available to you as a student. Attending office hours can provide you with information you need to succeed in the course as well as information the instructor needs to improve the course for future students.