

# EXPERIENCE OFFICE HOURS

Office hours are YOUR time to meet with your instructors to ask questions, get & share feedback, learn about opportunities, make connections & more. We know office hours can feel challenging, so we designed this packet to help you prepare & to provide sample questions & language. There's space to plan & quotes from faculty faculty, too! To get started, first consider

## WHY TO USE OFFICE HOURS:

### CLARIFICATION

*If you're unsure about directions for an assignment, or about something that was said in class, or about anything else for your course, use office hours to talk with your instructor.*

### QUESTIONS

*Sometimes you might have a question, or several, that don't get answered in class. Or maybe questions will come up while you're reading or completing homework. Use office hours to ask!*

### INTEREST

*Perhaps your instructor is doing exactly what you want to do someday. You can use office hours to learn about what they did to get where they are.*

### MENTORSHIP

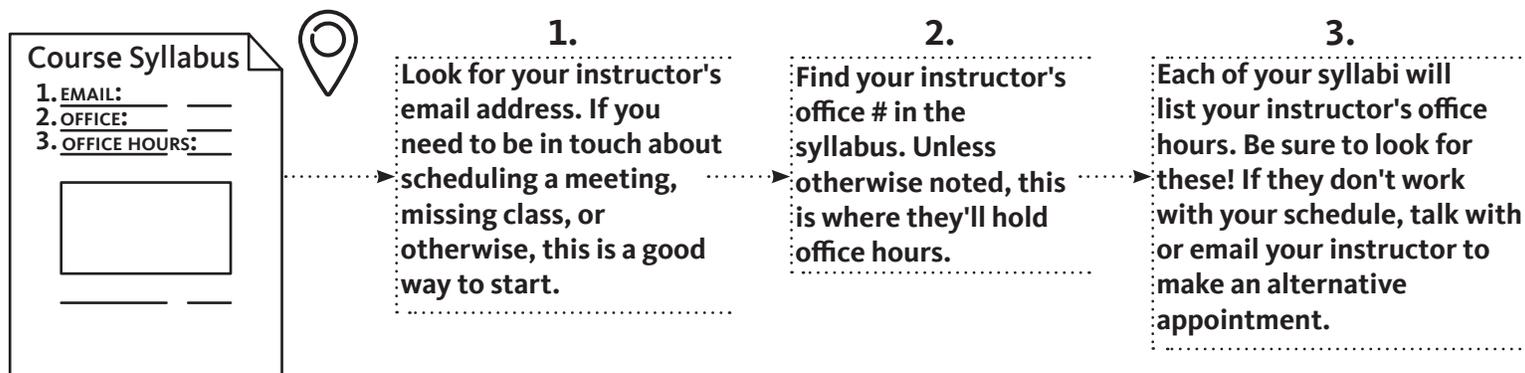
*Take office hour time to develop relationships with the people you might later ask to write a letter of recommendation. When you visit office hours, you get to practice professionalism, relationship building, and communication!*

### OPPORTUNITY

*Eager to get involved? Connect with your instructors during office hours to learn about opportunities for research, employment, conferences, and more.*

## WHEN TO USE OFFICE HOURS:

**Begin early in the term & go often.** If you don't have questions right away, you can share something from the course that interests you or just say hello. These interactions connect you with your instructor, and help you practice this kind of exchange. At any point in the term, you can visit to get feedback on exams or papers! **Check your syllabus for key information:**



*\*In an online course? Find your office hours on CANVAS in your syllabus, or in a "Start Here" page, or right-click on your instructor's profile. Still not finding them? Send an email and ask!*

## WHAT ABOUT OFFICE HOURS IN ONLINE COURSES?

If you are in a class that holds office hours online, much (if not all) of the tips and strategies in this packet are applicable to online scenarios.

Online office hours are still time for you to seek clarity and ask questions. And, you can still develop relationships and rapport with your instructors. It's just going to look a little bit different.

You might need to learn a new online platform or technology to be able to "meet." Or you might have multiple options for how to engage (i.e. via web-conferencing, through instant messaging, on the phone, etc.).

Whatever the case, know that this is great practice for your communication skills. At some point in your career you may take part in an online forum or webinar, or perhaps you'll be interviewed via Skype. This is practice. Take advantage of it!

**Prepare before you go.** Show up ready to talk. Write your questions down beforehand, and bring them with so you can take notes while you're there. If you want to talk about a test or a paper, or if you have a question about reading, bring these with so you and your instructor can reference them.

**Be active in the conversation.** First, say *Hello, I'm (your name)*. Second, if your instructor teaches several sections of the same course, or several different courses, be sure to say *I'm in your (course name) in section (#)*. Third, find your questions or the work you're wanting feedback on and begin the conversation. You might say: *I'd like to ask you about ...* or: *I'm having trouble with ..., would you mind working through it together?*

**If you don't understand, ask more questions!** If you don't understand what your instructor tells you, or if you have new questions, you might say *I'm still not sure I understand*, and then share your confusion. Seeking clarification demonstrates that you want to learn. Don't be afraid to say *I have another question about ...* and be sure you have answers before you leave.

**Take a friend!** It can feel less intimidating to go with someone, or several people, from your class. Plan to meet together beforehand and decide what questions you'll ask your instructor. Maybe everyone will ask one or two of their own, or maybe you'll draft a list together and take turns.

**Make an exit plan.** Before you visit office hours, decide how you'll know when you're ready to leave. What answers do you need to have? If there's a certain time you need to leave by, consider telling your instructor when you start: *I'm glad to be able to meet with you. I need to be sure to leave by ...* Knowing your exit cues ahead of time can help you to transition smoothly into saying *Thank you for meeting with me* or *It was really helpful to talk this through, I'll see you next class*.

**Make visits a habit.** We know it can feel hard to go to office hours, and awkward too. Just remember this is YOUR time, and visiting office hours shows your investment in learning. Your instructors are incredible resources and can help with your classes and your OSU experience. And they want to help! So schedule office hours into your weeks and go often and regularly.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT OFFICE HOURS:

**Q:** Should I let my instructor know that I'm coming?

**A:** *During listed hours, it's just fine to swing by. If you can't make the listed times, make an appointment with your instructor. If you're in the area during hours outside of listed hours and want to see if they're around, be sure to knock if the door's closed. If it's open and someone else is working with your instructor, just wave and wait to be invited in.*

**Q:** Should I go even if I don't have any questions about the course?

**A:** *Yes! If you haven't introduced yourself yet, then go and do that. Ask your instructor what strategies they believe will help students succeed in the course. Share how you're preparing for the course and how you're studying the material, and ask for additional suggestions. Meet with your instructor as soon as you can, so that talking with them and asking questions becomes a habit.*

**Q:** Won't my instructor think I'm dumb for asking questions?

**A:** *No! When you have questions and visit your instructor, you show that you're invested in learning. It's easy to say you'll figure it out on your own. It's much harder to reach out and ask for help, because it can be intimidating. But remember: your instructors also experienced this process of being a student and visiting their instructors during office hours. They understand, and they're there to meet with you!*

**Q:** I still don't know what to ask!

**A:** *Try to think about what you need. What's feeling challenging for you, or not challenging enough? Or, what's going on for you that's impacting your work in the course? If you're still not sure what to say, talk with your advisor or visit the ASC in Waldo 125 to brainstorm questions and develop a game plan.*

## WHAT STUDENTS SAY ABOUT OFFICE HOURS:

*"You can learn a lot about your instructor & who they are. You can use office hours to get help on a difficult assignment & get to know your professor, too."*

*"For me personally, because I am a more timid person, going to office hours was always out of my comfort zone when I started college. Now I see it as one more resource to help me be successful."*

*"Being nervous would be natural but it's not permanent; in other words it will go away, & it won't be that bad. You could learn so much from another's feedback so it's a shame to hold it back from happening."*

## PREPARE FOR OFFICE HOURS:

Consider your lecture, readings & homework, online discussions, recitations & labs, papers with comments... What are you unclear about? What do you want to know more about?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What do you need to leave office hours knowing?



## MORE OFFICE HOUR TOPICS:

Are your office hours going great? Fantastic! If all is well, then consider taking the time to ask about **research** your instructor is doing, or to engage in an **informational interview** to learn more about your instructor's career and the path they took to get there. Maybe use the time to **brainstorm next steps for your learning** with your instructor and get their feedback. You could also ask about any conferences, workshops, scholarships or other **opportunities** that you're interested in.

*If you want to talk more about office hours, or to think through additional office hours strategies and language, visit with an INTO Success Advisor (INTO only), come by Waldo Hall 125 to speak with an ASC Strategist, or make an appointment to meet with an ASC Academic Coach.*

## OFFICE HOURS CHECKLIST:

BEFORE

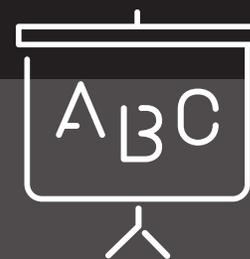
- Confirm the time & location of your instructor's office hours
- If unable to attend office hours, email or talk to your instructor to arrange an alternative meeting time
- Prepare questions for the meeting (on a notecard or piece of paper)
- Bring tests or study materials you would like to review

DURING

- Introduce yourself
- Explain what you would like to accomplish
- Take notes & write down relevant information
- Ask clarifying questions, if needed
- Make sure all your questions have been answered
- Thank your professor for meeting with you

AFTER

- Email with any follow-up questions or attend again if needed



## WHAT STUDENTS SAY ABOUT OFFICE HOURS:

"This was my first time going to any of my professors' office hours & the most important thing I learned is that it wasn't as scary as I thought it would be."

"Some advice I can give someone who is going, or wanting to go, to office hours, is be very specific on why you are going & don't be intimidated by your professor."

"Go to as many of your teacher's office hours as you can because the more they get to know you & the better your relationship is, the easier it is to put a name with your face."

# WHAT INSTRUCTORS SAY ABOUT OFFICE HOURS:

Who better to celebrate and talk about office hours than the people you meet with during those hours: instructors! Read on for our mini-interview with real-life OSU faculty who (happily, excitedly, regularly) hold office hours:

**Q: Why do you want students to use office hours?**

**A:** "It is the best extra time for learning, and can increase student learning and interaction in the classroom."

**A:** "Having been an international student, I would especially recommend office hours for additional clarification."

**Q: What do you want students to know about office hours?**

**A:** "Office hours are time for you to connect: ask questions, build confidence with the course and its material, get to know instructors as human beings, and help them get to know you. You don't need to have a question or a concern to visit. You can stop by to say hello or to talk about the course or a cool idea you had."

**A:** "For me, plan to stay for about 10-15 minutes. If you need more time than that, you should make a separate appointment outside of office hours to make sure you have enough time to get the help you need."

"I want students to know that office hours are there for them."

**Q: What do you love about office hours?**

**A:** "Hearing about students' experiences in the course. Having time to ask students questions and to answer questions they have. Office hours help me get to know students better and find ways to support them as individuals. It's a great time to work 1:1 with students or with small groups to learn about their strengths and help them figure out how to be successful in the course."

**A:** "I love it when students come to office hours because I can get to know them better and work with them on their individual needs. In class, I have to think about the group's needs, so it is hard to meet everyone's specific needs or answer every question. If students come to office hours, I can work at their pace on their specific questions. I also learn more about them as a person, so when it comes time to write recommendation letters, I have a lot more to say about them than just their final grade in the class."

"When students ask questions during office hours, it shows me that they care about their learning and success. I especially enjoy learning about their interests outside the classroom."

**Q: What's challenging still about office hours?**

**A:** "I'm always excited to meet with students, but I know that visiting office hours can be intimidating. That makes it hard for students to take that first step to either visit or email to set up a time to meet. I hope they will though! If something is unclear, it's really helpful to me if a student will say "could you give another example..." or "I'm not sure I understand yet." We're working with complex stuff! Sometimes one example or answer isn't enough. That's normal, and I want us to work together until students understand the answer to their question and feel confident moving forward."

**A:** "I think a shared challenge for both students and faculty is figuring out how to communicate in a way that's effective. In class, communication is often one-directional and not overly personal. In office hours, you might be wondering "what will my professor think of me? Will I make sense?" I have those same exact insecurities when I am talking to you."

**Q: What would you say to further invite students to office hours?**

"I want to get to know you and I want you to be successful in the course. I appreciate the time it takes to visit office hours and I know how hard it can be to talk to an instructor you don't know well—especially if you're concerned about your grade or having a hard time in the class. Let's work together to be sure you can accomplish your goals for the class!"

**Q: What do you hear from students about office hours?**

"That students prefer office hours with TA's because they are cool and feel easier to communicate with, since they are also students and understand the student struggle."

"That office hours were amazing. The instructor made them think about the question and connected their previous knowledge within the class content. That they really helped."



**SOURCES**

Much reading & research & consideration went into the development and design of this packet. For information on our sources, visit <https://success.oregonstate.edu/office-hours-resources>, and learn more!

Want to talk more about office hours & how they can work even better? Connect with an INTO Success Advisor (for INTO students only), or swing by **Waldo 125** & talk with one of our **ASC Strategists!** You can also make an **Academic Coaching** appointment for yourself to think aloud with the coach & return to your learning with fresh ideas. They're 50 minutes long & free.