

Communicating with your professor

You should always feel free to seek any appropriate out-of-class assistance from the instructor in your efforts to master the materials presented in this course. While you should feel free to contact your instructor, please keep the following in mind:

In Person

- Use the posted office hours of the instructor or schedule an appointment if you have many questions to answer or if the explanation is better conducted in person than via email. The instructor reserves the right to request that you come to their office if he cannot adequately respond to questions posed in emails or voicemails.
- Be mannerly. Before asking "What are your office hours?", check your syllabus. If hours aren't listed or won't work, ask your professor when he or she can meet with you. A reasonable professor will understand that office hours cannot accommodate every student's schedule.
- When you arrive at the professor's office, knock on the door, even if it's open, and greet your professor by name.
- Come to the instructor's office with specific questions to address, which will make the interaction more productive.
- Do not make a habit to only visit the instructor's office a few minutes before a homework deadline or exam period.
- If you're coming in to talk because you're having difficulty in a course, there are a few familiar sentences to avoid: "Will this affect my grade?" Whatever "this" is, it will play a part in your grade. How much or how little depends upon the rest of your work. "Can I still get a A/B/C/D/Pass?" This question will usually lead a professor to think that your grade-point average, not learning, is your priority. "I'm an A student." Grade inflation is widespread, and some of those A's may not be the most accurate evaluations of your work. Even if they are, your professor won't grade you on the basis of your reputation.
- If you want to talk to a professor in some other way (about a question that you didn't get to ask in class or an idea that you want to discuss) just do the best you can. Your professor will very likely meet your genuine interest with kindness and encouragement.
- If you are having difficulty in a course, let your professor know that you realize it, and ask what you can do to improve.
- Ending the conversation can be tricky. Some professors will wrap things up for you, while others will be happy to just keep talking. In other words, a signal that you're "dismissed" may not be coming. So don't hesitate to take the initiative in bringing the conversation to an end, especially if you have other obligations.

By Email:

Email musts!

- In emails, choose an appropriate greeting. "Hi/Hello Professor [Blank]" is always appropriate. Substitute "Dear" and you've ended up writing a letter; leave out "Hi" and your tone is too brusque.
- Emails sent to your instructor should have a specified subject in the subject line that starts with CHE XXX (*e.g.*, CHE XXX - Question on yesterday's quiz).
- Sign all emails with your full name (suggestion: create a signature with your full name)

Emails not conforming to this structure will be considered spam mail by the instructor and likely deleted with no response.

- When possible, use your NKU email account to send the email.
- Type in complete sentences. To type random phrases or cryptic thoughts does not lend to clear communication.
- Are you using proper sentence structure? First word capitalized with appropriate punctuation? Multiple instances of !!! or ??? are perceived as rude or condescending.

- Avoid rote email apologies for missing class. Most professors are tired of hearing those standard apologies and acts of contrition.
- Ask politely. "Could you e-mail me the page numbers for the next reading? Thanks!" is a lot better than "I need the assignment."
- Proofread what you've written. You want your e-mail to show you in the best possible light.
- Do not expect an instant reply to your email or voicemail messages! The instructor deals with messages in the order received, and usually can respond within 24 hours (possibly longer on the weekends).
- When you get a reply, say thanks. Just hit Reply and say "Thanks," or a little bit more if that's appropriate. The old subject line (which will now have a "Re:" in front) will make the context clear.
- Emails sent from your instructor will be sent to your designated email account and will include course in the subject line. Make sure you check your email account on a regular basis or have your messages forwarded to the account you regularly use. NKU emails accounts also regularly get full with email, which will cause new messages to "bounce" and not be received. Make sure you keep this account under the size limit!