

## **More than just showing up: How to participate productively in class**

Most professors assign a grade for “Attendance and Participation” but it’s not just to torture you (or to give you an easy 10 points!). Your professor knows that active participation will improve your learning – and make classes more interesting too! Some students love participating in class, but for many, it can be challenging. Here are some tips to get you started:

- ✓ What are your professor’s expectations? Will they call on you, or should you raise your hand before speaking? Do they expect you to jump into group discussions? Check your syllabus or ask your professor.
- ✓ **PREPARE FOR CLASS!** Participation is a lot easier (and more valuable) if you’ve done your reading and assignments before class. Before each class you should:
  - Do all the readings
  - Complete all the assignments
  - Review your notes from the previous class to remind yourself of what was discussed
  - Look at the syllabus to anticipate what you’ll be talking about today
  - Meet with a friend from class to review and discuss concepts
- ✓ As you prepare, formulate discussion questions or points of clarification to ask – write them in your notebook or on post-its so that you are ready to contribute!
- ✓ Arrive awake and on time! Showing up isn’t everything, but you can’t participate if you’re not there.
- ✓ Be prepared: bring your readings, the textbook, your notes and whatever else the professor requires.
- ✓ Pick your seat wisely: some people focus best sitting in the front, while others may do better at the side or in the back where they can see the whole group. Experiment and find what works best for you.
- ✓ Put away phones and close your computer: even if they don’t say anything, professors know when you’re on social media. Really.
- ✓ Remove any other distractions – don’t try to sneak in homework or reading for your next class!
- ✓ It shouldn’t need saying, but Do Not Fall Asleep In Class.
- ✓ **LISTEN UP!** Active listening and note-taking will help you focus on the class and material at hand. Don’t just focus on the professor; listen to your colleagues’ questions as well.
- ✓ **LOOK** like you’re listening: make eye contact, nod, reassure your professor that they’re not speaking into a void.
- ✓ Ask questions or answer them when the professor raises them. Don’t wait for someone else to do it!
- ✓ In a group discussion, address the whole class, not just the professor. Likewise, listen to your classmates as well as the professor.

***“But – I’m horribly shy and can’t bear the thought of speaking up in class!”  
See the next page for some more advice...***

Speaking up in public can be agonizing if you're shy or suffer from social anxiety. First of all, remember that your classroom is a supportive environment; everyone is learning! And many people feel awkward speaking up in class, so you're not alone!

- ✓ Planning ahead and formulating questions before class is even more important if you're shy. And don't forget to reward yourself with a little pat on the back every time you speak up!
- ✓ Start small: set yourself a goal of contributing to one class each day. Then work up to each class each day, a whole week of contributions... it *will* get easier the more you do it!
- ✓ Even if speaking up in class is agonizing, let the professor know that you are engaged by putting away electronics, taking notes, and making eye contact.
- ✓ Talking to your professor during office hours can help, too. Let them know that you're engaged and interested in the course, but that speaking up is hard!

For more support study skills, visit the Study Mentors. See the CTL website for more information [www.hws.edu/academics/ctl/](http://www.hws.edu/academics/ctl/), call us at 3351 or stop in to visit us on the second floor of the library.