

# Ten Tips for Talking to Teachers

1. **Make an appointment to meet and talk.** By setting a specific time to meet with a teacher, it shows that you are serious about advocating for yourself; it also shows that you have respect for your teacher's busy schedule. Make sure to be on time to your set appointment.
2. **If you know other students who feel the way you do, consider approaching the teacher as a team.** Don't think of this step as "ganging-up" on the teacher, because you will handle your issue with maturity. A teacher is more likely to change her classroom habits if more than one student is affected.
3. **Plan what you would like to say before you go to your meeting.** Write down all of your questions and concerns. You may even want to pull out the list of your concerns during the meeting, and you and your teacher can consult the list during your meeting – or you could even give the list to your teacher before the meeting so you both know what will be discussed.
4. **Choose your words.** Try not to be offensive when discussing your concerns. Instead of saying "The assignments are boring and take too much time," think about saying, "Is there another way I could satisfy this homework requirement?" Avoid saying class and work are "boring" or a "waste of time." Don't offend a teacher if you want them to work with you.
5. **Don't expect the teacher to do all of the work or propose all of the solutions.** Be prepared ahead of time to make suggestions or recommend what you think could be done to solve the issue. Your teacher will appreciate your willingness to help with the resolution.
6. **Be tactful and respectful.** Teachers also have feelings. The purpose of your meeting is not confrontation. Consider your meeting more like a cordial conversation. Try not to approach the meeting feeling angry because that will only block any progress to be made between you and your teacher.
7. **Focus on your needs, not what the teacher is doing wrong.** The more the teacher knows about you and what you think you need, the more willing she will be to help. The more defensive and attacked a teacher feels, the less willing she will be to help you. Instead of saying, "Your lectures are confusing and boring," you might say, "I am a visual learner. Are there ways that your lectures could be accompanied by images that may help me understand what you are saying?"
8. **Don't forget to listen.** Teachers may also have some suggestions and insight about what you could do to improve your understanding in the class. You must be willing to meet the teacher half way.
9. **Bring your sense of humor.** Oftentimes there are misunderstandings in the classroom. If you and your teacher can communicate openly, you may find that part of the issue was just miscommunication.
10. **If your meeting isn't satisfactory, get help from another adult.** It's important to discuss your needs with your teacher **BEFORE** you go to a counselor or principal. When you are willing to advocate for yourself, it shows your teacher that you are an adult that takes your education seriously. If you have discussed your needs with your teacher and you still find yourself struggling, then it may be time to get support from another resource.