

Best Practices for Getting to Know your Reed Professors: FAQ

[*written by actual Reed Professors*]

Q: Am I really supposed to call you by your first names?

A: Yes. At Reed we believe a truly inclusive community fosters the life of the mind. Calling each other by first names – from the President (his name is John) to faculty to staff to incoming freshman – is a symbol of our commitment to valuing all the voices in our community.

Q: Does this mean that all of my interactions with you are totes casual?

A: No. One of the best things you can do to foster positive relationships with your professors is to treat them with both respect and kindness, as they aim to treat you. This means cultivating effective adult-to-adult communication skills and learning how to communicate in conference, in office hours, and over email. These skills will help you here and in the real world, where not everyone is on a first-name basis. Emailing is a good example --

Here is an example of a less-than-effective email to your conference professor:

[Subject line: "uh"]

[No Greeting] How long is our paper supposed to be? [No closing or signature]

Here is an example of an effective email to your conference professor:

[Subject line: "Question about Ling 330 paper"]

Hi Kara,

I have a quick question about our first paper assignment. I've read over our syllabus, but I don't see a recommended page length listed. Can you let me know what it is?

Thanks,

[Your first name]

Q: Do you really want to get to know me outside of class?

A: Yes! The better we know you, the better we can educate you. Remember we're here because we like you and we like what we do, and we want you to grow and thrive at Reed.

Q: So how do I go about getting to know you?

A: The best way is to stop by during our scheduled office hours. Seriously – this is why we are there, with the door open, making ourselves available to you. Stop by if you were confused by something in class, or just excited by something in class. Stop by to talk about your last problem set and discuss how you might improve. Or just stop by to check in and say hi. You can also feel free to stay after class for a moment to ask a question – we might even walk with you on our way to where we're going.

Q: *Are you sure I won't be a bother if I do all of this?*

A: *No.* The only time you are a bother is if you ask us questions that we've already provided the answers to. Read your syllabus and listen in class and you will save us both time.

Q: *What else can I do to maintain positive relationships with my conference professors?*

A1: *Check your Reed email.* This is mainly how we communicate with you, and we communicate with you often. There is no excuse for not checking your email, and responding to emails, on a regular basis. If you don't have regular Internet access at home, you do on campus. Check your email – we sure do!

A2: *Don't expect us to be at your beck and call.* Yes, we always check our email, and will often respond to your emails on nights and weekends, meet with you outside of office hours, and otherwise make ourselves available to you. Consider these actions above and beyond the call of duty, and never expect us to solve a problem for you and/or be in communication with you 24 hours a day.

A3: *Anticipate, Anticipate, Anticipate.* If you're going to be absent and you know about it in advance, get in touch ASAP. If you tried but you think you might miss a deadline, get in touch ASAP. Remember that you are responsible for your attendance, your work, and your schedule (staying up too late, whether you were working or not, is not an excuse for missing a deadline), but we are more likely to listen and help when we see you've made a good-faith effort to communicate.

Q: *What do you want to know about me?*

A1: *Do you need accommodations?* We need to know on the 1st day of class, or soon thereafter, if you have a documented disability and need accommodations like extra time on an exam or class notes.

A2: *How do you work best, and what are your challenges?* Are you worried because you're fairly quiet during conference? Tell us, and we can talk about other ways for you to participate, and brainstorm ways for you to make contributions during class. Do you struggle with problem sets? Tell us – we might offer you some sample problems to work on in advance. You get the idea – if you communicate your needs to us, we won't tailor the class for you, but we will be positively predisposed to work with you.

A3: *Are you having personal struggles?* We want to know just enough to direct you to the folks on campus who are better equipped than we are to help, like Student Services or the Health and Counseling Center. Once you are working someone, they can tell us what's up while maintaining your privacy.