



# ORGANIZING OFFICE HOURS



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Office hours provide multiple functions, allowing for students to ask questions or engage in discussions about course content, and explore points of confusion or interest that cannot be fully addressed in class. According to Guerrero and Rod (2013), there is a positive correlation between students' academic performance and the frequency with which they attend office hours. That's why, it is important for instructors to encourage their students to come to office hours and to use that time effectively.

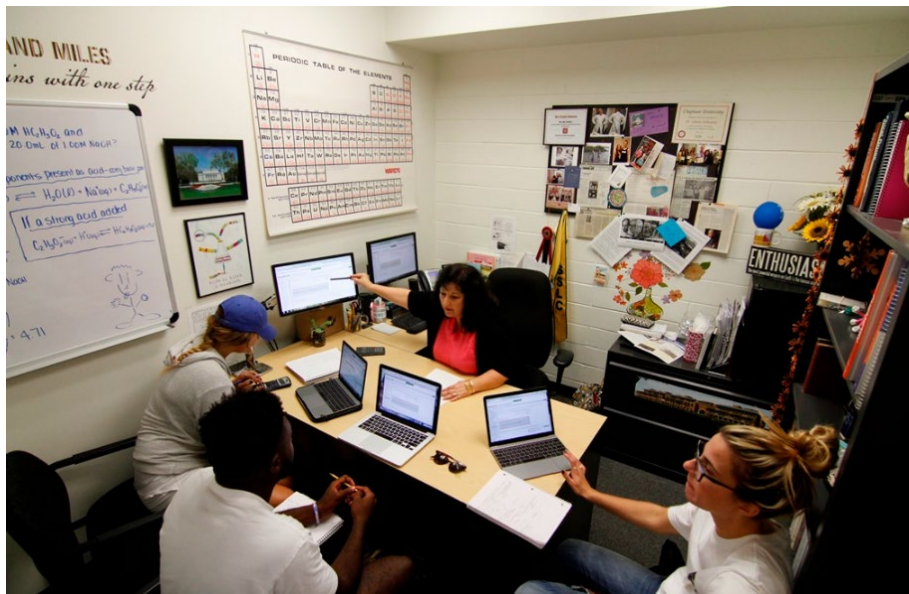


Photo by Lia Hanson (2018)

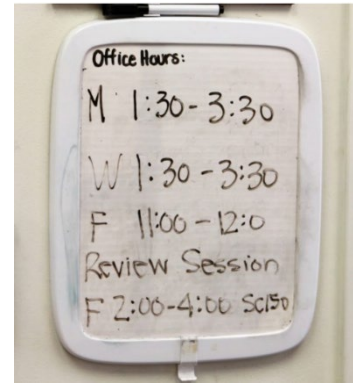
The following guide provides suggestions for how you can increase student attendance at office hours.

- **Introduce office hours on the first day of class.** Being explicit at the beginning can help overcome student misconceptions (Guerrero & Rod, 2013). You should include office hours' day, time, and location in your syllabus. Make it clear that students can make appointments with you if office hours are not convenient.





- **Make an attempt to schedule office hours in differing blocks of time.** Some instructors may prefer to schedule consecutive office hours in one single block of time but providing differing blocks of time can help instructors reach the students who may not otherwise be able to attend (Griffin, et al., 2014).



- **Invite specific students to come see you in office hours.** Some of the students are either unaware that they are struggling or afraid to come to see the instructor out of fear of judgment. You can invite these students after class, via e-mail, or write a note of invitation on a returned assignment.

- **Give consistent and frequent reminders.** Reminding students weekly or bi-weekly of the time of your office hours can keep these times at the forefront of their minds (Guerrero & Rod, 2013). Also, you can put your office hour information on reminder slides at the start and end of class.



- **Change the name of office hours.** The term "office hours" may have a negative perception. Some instructors may change name of "office hours" as "student hours, open door hours, assistance hours, or tutoring", which can help redefine what the time can be used for, for both students and instructors (Joyce, 2017).
- **Provide both face to face and online office hour options.** Providing students with the flexibility to attend office hours either face to face or online may increase the number of students who attend (Li & Pitts, 2009, Lowenthal et al., 2017).



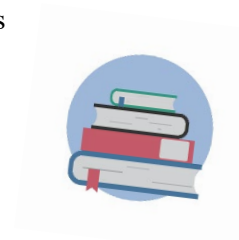
*It is usually more effective in office hours to help students learn by leading them to conclusions through careful questioning rather than simply giving them an explanation. Ask questions, try to be a good listener and avoid giving a mini-lecture.*

### **Ways to Interact with Students During Office Hours**

**Mentorship.** Students can ask questions about their majors, careers, graduate school, and internships. Sharing your own educational and work experiences can be very insightful. You can also direct students to library resources, and websites that will help them make their own decisions.

**Briefly review key topics closer to exam.** Some instructors may choose to hold open large-format office hours specifically for exam preparation. Depending on the size of the course, this can enable many students to meet at once to receive guidance from the instructor, and ask each other questions.

**Listen well.** Use all the active listening strategies you've ever learned to make this meeting memorable. You can take notes, names, phrases and details of the conversation so that you can refer to these topics next time you talk with the students.



**Offer books.** You may have some duplicate copies of key texts or can know where you can buy used copies of the classics in your field. Lend them out or give them away.

**Give feedback.** In courses where assessment relies heavily on group projects, group student meetings may be of more benefit. This allows the instructor to gain a better understanding of where the entire group is in their project development, give feedback and speak with all group members at the same time.



## References

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- Designing Student Hours for Success, Center for Teaching and Assessment of Learning. University of Delaware. <https://ctal.udel.edu/resources-2/student-hours/>
- Office Hours, Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Washington. <https://teaching.washington.edu/topics/engaging-students-in-learning/face-to-face-office-hours/>
- 2,700 Minutes: How to Make the Most of Your Office Hours, Margaret Walsh <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/office-hours/>

## Furher Reading and Resources

- [Holding Office Hours. Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo.](#)
- [Connecting with Students in Online Courses: Options for Virtual Office Hours, Remote Teaching Support, Univeristy of Northern Illinois.](#)
- [Small Teaching Tip #18: Increasing Students' Use of Office Hours by Jessica Smith, Teaching and Learning Team.](#)