



Creating a Climate for Learning



How to Have a Great First Day



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Center for Teaching Excellence

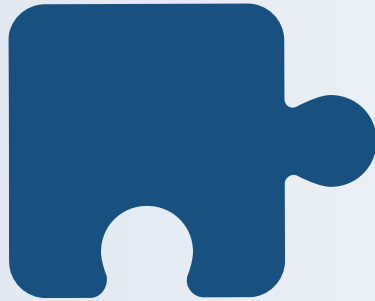
While the first day of class may focus on logistics, it sets the tone for the rest of the semester. Students form first impressions from this initial interaction that are hard to change no matter what occurs later on. The way a course is initiated directly influences student engagement, curiosity, and learning. Creating a climate for learning goes beyond course learning outcomes and syllabus requirements.

Important Pieces to Put Together...

Curiosity:

Pique student interest by communicating with them before the start date

- 1.) Early communication welcomes students to the course
- 2.) Understanding expectations makes students feel more at ease
- 3.) Establishes the value of course communication
- 4.) Builds momentum before first class day

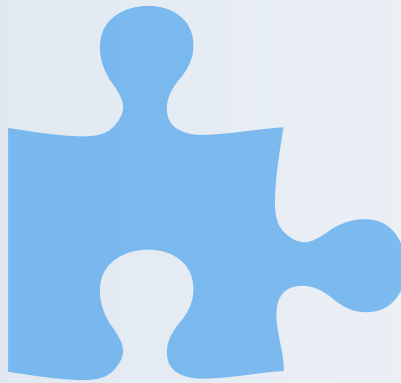


Learning:

Learning starts as soon as the student enters the class. Ask them to try a cognitive task before they are ready by facing a challenging problem they will have learned by the end of the course. Support a student focus on learning by facilitating a conversation about how to be successful in the course.

Community:

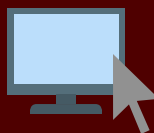
Learning is very much a social process. Create a sense of community through connecting individually with students, greeting them, and getting peers to interact. For ideas on activities [click here](#).



Expectations:

Students want to know what is to come. To ease some anxiety, present the most important items in the syllabus by highlighting them and then open up time for questions at the end of the first meeting.

Supporting Online Classes:



- Create a welcome video to familiarize students with who you are.
- Have students make a video as well introducing themselves to you and each other.
- Practice building community through interactions like [Think/Pair/Share](#).
- Use a problem or question to spark curiosity and have students discuss their reactions in groups or an online forum.

Preparing for Day 1:



- Know your environment, before the first day go to your classroom location and get a feel for the layout and technology set up.
- Look over your roster and plan for how you will get to know your students and build connections with them.
- When reviewing your syllabus, consider what impression you want to communicate to students about the course.