Making the Most of Office Hours

Know that these hours are set aside for YOU

- Having questions or admitting you are struggling can be intimidating but office hours are designed for you to get your questions answered and deepen your understanding of course expectations, assignments, and course content.
- This is the perfect one-on-one opportunity to take advantage of with your instructor. Instructors (typically wait in their offices during these hours for students to come in with their questions.
- Contact your instructor if you are unavailable to meet at these times. Taking this step shows initiative and your commitment to doing well in your course.

Come early

- Come at the first sign of any issue, before real trouble has arisen in the course. Do not wait until the last minute before an exam or assignment.
- Try to arrive early to office hours so that you get your chance to talk to the instructor especially during busy times of the term (e.g., right before a paper is due, right after a paper has been returned, and in the weeks before an exam).
- If you do find yourself waiting outside the office, make sure you signal to the instructor that you have arrived and are interested in speaking with them.

Come prepared

- Visit your instructor with a short list of specific questions. Explain what you do understand about the assignment and show what you have already done. Providing background can help your instructor understand what you are finding challenging or perhaps not understanding about the assignment, and offer helpful clarifications. Once again, showing the work that you have already done to understand and try to begin your assignment shows your initiative and dedication to doing well in the course.
- Visit your professor before an exam to review the material that will be covered. Take note of what your instructor emphasizes during your meeting. Let your instructor know how you have approached studying for the exam so far and where you have focused your studying efforts.
- Ask the instructor if you’re on the right track in your areas of focus. Taking this step can help you cut out material that may not be important, saving you valuable study time and brain space.
- Coming to office hours prepared demonstrates that you are taking responsibility for your learning and that you value your instructor’s time.

Take the opportunity to review graded material

- Meet with your instructor if you are disappointed with the result you received on an assignment or exam. Before you meet, look at where you lost marks and read any feedback you were provided. When you visit your instructor in their office hours, focus on seeking clarification on any parts of the feedback that you do not understand and ensuring that you fully understand how you were assessed so you can improve.
- Students who take the time to learn from their mistakes perform better in subsequent assignments and increase their confidence as learners.

Build a relationship over the course term

- Use this one-on-one time with your instructor to learn more about them (e.g., their research, awards and committee involvement. Your instructor will have many valuable insights to share about scholarly pursuits and career development. Contribute to the conversation by sharing your interest in the course material and your ideas about the career path you hope to take. If you come across an article that might interest them, share it.
- Building a professional relationship ensures that you stand out from the crowd, and you will want to stand out when it comes time to ask for a reference letter or recommendation for a job, promotion or grad school.

Benefits to Attending Office Hours

1. Improves your chances of success
2. Helps you understand course expectations
3. Increases your chances for future career opportunities

Adapted from: https://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches/depts/ctl/learning/office-hours