



TEN TIPS FOR TALKING TO TEACHERS

Submitted by Kenwood Academy - Guidance Department

Are you having a problem with a class or an assignment? Can you see room for improvement in how a subject is being taught? Do you have a better idea for a special project or term paper? Don't just tell your friends. Talk to the teacher!

The following suggestions are meant to make it easier for students to do this.

1. **Make an appointment to meet and talk.** This shows the teacher that you're serious and that you understand his or her busy schedule. Be flexible and don't be late!
2. **If you know other students who feel the way you do, consider going to the teacher together.** There is strength in numbers. If a teacher hears the same thing from four or five people, he or she is more likely to do something about it.
3. **Think through what you want to say BEFORE you go into your meeting with the teacher.** Write down your questions or concerns. Make a list of the items you want to discuss. You may want to copy your list for the teacher so both of you can look at it.
4. **Choose your words carefully.** For example, instead of saying, "I hate doing reports; they are a waste of time," try, "Is there some other way I can satisfy this requirement? May I do a video instead?" Strike the word "boring" from your vocabulary.
5. **Don't expect the teacher to do all of the work or come up with all of the answers.** Be prepared to make suggestions, offer solutions and recommend resources. The teacher will appreciate that you took the initiative.
6. **Be diplomatic, tactful and respectful.** Teachers have feelings, too. They're more likely to be responsive if you remember that the purpose of your meeting is conversation, not confrontation.
7. **Focus on what you need, not on what you think the teacher is doing wrong.** The more the teacher learns about you, the more he or she will be able to help. The more defensive the teacher feels, the less he or she will want to help.
8. **Don't forget to listen.** This may seem obvious, but many students need practice in this important skill. The purpose of your meeting is not to hear yourself talk.
9. Bring your sense of humor, not necessarily the "joke telling" sense of humor; but the one that lets you **laugh at yourself and your own misunderstandings and mistakes.**
10. Finally, **if your meeting isn't the success you hoped it would be, get help from another adult.** This could be a counselor, staff member, or another teacher you know and trust and who is likely to support you and be an advocate. Then try again.