

How to Talk to Teachers 101

The first rule for talking to teachers is to be realistic with expectations. Not all teachers can provide the support you hope to receive. After you have identified a teacher to approach, use these guidelines to get the most out of your communications.

- Set a goal for the conversation
 - Having a goal helps reduce wasted time. Teachers don't have much free time, so try to get to the point.
 - Examples of a goal might be to gather information or to make an agreement.
 - When talking to teachers, get right to the point.
 - "We wanted to talk about so and so.."
 - Continue to refer back to the goal as needed
 - "So does this confirm that..."
- Conversation Etiquette
 - Be as direct as possible and avoid "beating around the bush."
 - Maintain eye contact throughout the conversation—it shows confidence and builds trust.
 - Be respectful and remember to say "please" and "thank you."
 - Actively listen and take mental notes of what the teacher is saying and how they respond to your questions/statements. This will help guide your next steps
 - If you only have time for a quick conversation, use this format:
 - Greeting—>Introducing the Topic—>Explaining the topic—>Explaining the Goal
 - "Good afternoon, Ms./Mr. _____! I wanted to talk to you about _____(topic)_____. This is regarding... (explain the topic). Can you help us... (explain the goal).
- After the Conversation
 - Write down any mental notes or key takeaways from the conversation
 - Reflect on how the teacher engaged in the conversation:
 - Perhaps they didn't have any answers to your questions but seemed supportive of your goal.
 - This would be a good sign to keep in contact with this teacher and keep building a relationship. It may be helpful in the future.
 - Maybe their body language seemed to indicate they were busy or didn't care very much
 - Never rule out a teacher or contact after one meeting. Try out another conversation with them, but if they continue to seem reluctant, weigh their role in your overall plan. If they are

replaceable, look for another teacher. If they are not “replaceable,” here are some tips:

- Bring a friend (preferably another student of the teacher) to join you for the next conversation. This shows that other people are passionate about the issue.
 - Be empathetic with the teacher and try to see the situation from their point of view. A good example is to ask them why they may not support your plans or agree with you.
 - Propose a solution that benefits both parties. Gather input from the teacher and craft a solution **together**.
- Professional Meetings
 - If you are having an important meeting (e.g administrator, principal, board member), consider these extra tips.
 - Talking with powerful decision-makers requires professionalism and attention to detail.
 - Be thoroughly prepared for the meeting. This will help reduce any anxiety and will allow the conversation to flow as smoothly as possible.
 - Have a written/typed plan or script of what you plan to say in the meeting. This will help you keep track of topics and stay organized
 - Ask follow-up questions throughout the conversation and don't be afraid to switch the ordering of topics if that's where the conversation is going
 - This will keep the meeting more conversational, allowing the administrator to open up and become more comfortable speaking with you. This helps build a relationship and trust between you
 - Pro-tip: Start the conversation with a question/comment unrelated to your topics. This will help break the ice and relax nerves. It can be:
 - Asking how their week has been
 - Briefly discuss a current news topic
 - Talk about how your classes have been

Even with all these talking tips and pointers, it is important to understand that every conversation is different and may require its own special guide. Never be afraid to be creative with how you approach a teacher or lead a conversation. The most important rule is to be calm while you are speaking and be attentive while you are listening. Good luck!