



INCLUSIVE ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS

Creating a sense of belonging is critical for student learning and setting the tone for an inclusive classroom begins on, or even before, the first day of class. This handout provides information on getting to know your students and introducing yourself to your students. These are both excellent ways to be inclusive on the first day of class.

Getting to Know Who's in Your Class

Questionnaires can be an effective way to get to know your students and to give students an opportunity to share something about themselves. An alternative might be to ask students to write a letter in which they introduce themselves to the instructor, and the instructor would also share a letter with their students.

Sample Questionnaire Prompt & Questions

Welcome to (*course name*)! I'm excited you have chosen to learn (*specific course content*), and I look forward to having you in class this semester. I would like to get to know you a bit better, so I can make this a meaningful and interesting experience for all students in this course. Please answer the questions below. Feel free to skip any that you prefer not to answer. Feel free to share any additional information that you would like me to know.

Personal Information:

- What name is on record for you at Penn State (i.e., on Canvas, in email)?
- What name will we use for you in our classroom (i.e., what will we call you)?
- What pronouns would you like the class to use for you?
- What pronouns would you like me to use when working with you privately?
 - I understand that sometimes we are more comfortable with certain pronouns in certain contexts.
 - I also understand that pronouns can change—please come to me at any time during the semester if yours do).
- What would you like to share about yourself? What should I know about you to support your learning experience in this course?
- Do you have a career goal in mind at this point?
- What is your greatest strength?
- If you have worked with our Student Disability Resources Center and have accommodations for this course, you may find me (after class, during office hours, through email).
- If you have not worked with our Student Disability Resources Center but feel this center may be helpful to you, I am happy to help you get in touch with them. You may find me (after class, during office hours, through email)

Learning Experience:

- What is your standing? First-year, sophomore, junior, senior, fifth-year, graduate student, community member, other?
- What is your declared or intended major?
- What has been your favorite course? What made it such a good experience for you?
- What study strategies do you anticipate might be useful for this course?



- What is something you would like to learn in this course?
- What should this class be like to give you a meaningful learning experience?
- What challenges do you anticipate in this course?

Subject/Discipline Experience and Knowledge*:

- Have you taken/are you currently taking other (*discipline*) classes?
- Why did you decide to register for this course? Do you have a specific interest?
- When you think of (*specific course content*), what is the first thing that comes to mind?
- How comfortable do you feel with (*specific course content*)?
 - Student Responses: I've heard of it; I can recall some information about it; I can explain it
- Do you have any research experience, e.g., have you worked in a lab, conducted fieldwork, collected data, written a literature review, or published a paper?

Questions Student Have for you:

- What would you like to know about me? What would you like to know about this course?
- What would you like to know about my approach to teaching?
-

*Note: You can also consider assessing students' prior knowledge using tools such as self-assessments, concept-maps, or classroom assessment techniques. Here is a [link to learn more about assessing prior knowledge](#)

Sample Letter Prompt

Welcome to (*course name*)! I'm excited you have chosen to learn (*specific course content*), and I look forward to having you in class this semester. I would like to get to know you a bit better, so I can make this a meaningful and interesting experience for all students in this course. Please take 5 minutes to write me a letter, in which you introduce yourself, your interests, and your prior experience with (*specific course content*). You might want to include your class standing, your major/minors, your background with the course content, and what you expect out of this course. Please sign your letter with the name and pronouns you would like us to use in this course.

Introducing Yourself

To create a sense of belonging, consider sharing some information about yourself. Students might be curious to learn more about your journey to the profession or surprised to hear about your passions. Consider sharing information about the following topics through PowerPoint.** Adding in your own photos can be helpful too.

- About Me (How to pronounce my name, things I enjoy doing, my approach to well-being, etc.)
- My interest in this field (what caught my interest, how my interest deepened/changed over time)
- My own experience as a student (what was hard, engaging, fun)
- My professional journey
- What you can expect from me/how I will support you in this course
- A few words about how we might communicate in this course

**Note: Here is a [link to a PowerPoint template for introducing yourself](#)