Communication Strategies with Instructors

1. Know what your goal is in concrete, specific terms. Examples; a grade change, requesting help on paper, etc.

2. Be as specific as possible and have examples in mind. Example; In your last lecture, I had trouble following the main idea when you talked about nuclear physics.

3. Bring relevant materials along (book, notes, test) to show you’ve done your homework.

4. Foresee--and prepare for--the probable response. Put yourself in the instructor's shoes.

5. Use "I" messages rather than labeling or making accusations. Example; "I'm having trouble following the lectures. Do you have any suggestions?" Rather than "You talk too fast." This connotes a productive, problem-solving approach.

6. Demonstrate an attitude of wanting to learn.

Role-Play Scenarios - Student Scripts

1. You are taking an introductory counseling skills course and have received excellent feedback from the instructor. You are considering a psychology major and possibly going on to graduate school. You would like more information about career options in psychology, graduate programs available at the University, and whether the instructor would write you a letter of recommendation.

2. You would like to know what you did wrong on the last chemistry quiz, on which you got a "D". You have been to see the T.A. during office hours but s/he wasn’t there. You went to an IT tutor in Lind Hall and there was such a long line you never got in. You are now at the professor's office hour and would like to go over your test. You would also like to give him/her feedback about the difficulty of getting help.

3. You are taking Intro to Contemporary American Literature and the first test is next week. You have no idea what you should be underlining or taking notes on from the novels you are reading. The professor has given you no information about the format of the test or what to study. Lectures appear to digress infinitely with no main point or organization. You have made an appointment to discuss these concerns. You have taken the prerequisite, Intro to Literature course.

4. You are a political science major who really likes your Current Issues professor. You would like to talk with him/her about issues such as the Reagan administration and budget deficit. In addition, you would like to get to know and be known by a faculty member in the department. You are also curious about what Political Science majors do after they graduate.
Role-Play Scenarios - Instructor Scripts

1. You are a professor of an introductory counseling skills course and a member of the graduate faculty in the Psychology department. A student who has done excellent work in your course and who you deem to have true potential approaches you requesting information about jobs and schools, and a letter of recommendation. You are directing a research project in which you need extra help and would like to talk the student into volunteering. You would also like to talk them into applying to your graduate program.

2. You are a chemistry professor with several students waiting to see you during the remaining 15 minutes of your office hour. You understand this student's concern about his/her test but do not feel it is fair to the other students to spend all of that 15 minutes going over this student's test. You feel that adequate tutorial help is available from other sources for this type of in-depth help. In addition, you have had this student in a chemistry class before and it is your perception that s/he does not spend adequate time preparing for tests and is overly dependent on others.

3. You are teaching Intro to Contemporary American Literature, a 5xxx level course which assumes one introductory literature course as a prerequisite. You are stressing comparisons between different authors in their writing style and content. In lectures, you are demonstrating how these differences evolved from various historical literary traditions. You are extremely intelligent, place a lot of value on your work with graduate students, and have been told you don't communicate well with non-literature majors.

4. You are a popular new faculty member teaching the Current Issues class in the political science department. You enjoy getting to know your students and take a personal interest in them. You are concerned that they understand options available with a political science major, including graduate programs such as the Humphrey Institute.