

10 THINGS TO NEVER SAY OR DO TO A PROFESSOR

1. Ignore the syllabus

- ✓ *The syllabus is your guide to the class. It contains all of your expectations, assignments, and due dates. The syllabus is the “contract” between professor and student, and many will take it very seriously.*
- ✓ *Think of college as a training ground of professionalism for your future. Professionals strive to follow the direction their managers give them rather than needing direct supervision every time they’re expected to do something. One can develop and fine-tune those skills in college, and it will pay off. Try referring back to the syllabus instead of asking when the mid-term is.*

2. “I didn’t start this until 8 p.m. last night and I finished it 30 minutes before class. Impressive, right?”

- ✓ *Wrong. Professors want to hear that you have put time and effort into a paper because they will be spending time and effort grading it. If you did get a late start, don’t brag about it in class.*
- ✓ *Visit your professor’s office hours to talk about a paper ahead of time. He or she may be able to give you valuable resources that you might not find. Plus, it lets your professor know you are working on the paper ahead of time.*

3. “Is this going to be on the test?”

- ✓ *Assume everything your professor says is important and test-worthy unless told otherwise.*
- ✓ *Professors also want you to be interested in the content of the course and in learning in general, rather than only wanting to know what you have to, to do well on a test.*

4. Use poor e-mail etiquette

- ✓ *E-mails with your professors should be professional correspondence. Don’t forget a proper salutation line before you begin writing, which does not include “Hey yo,” and “Oh crap, I’m sorry I didn’t respond.” Use proper grammar. Capitalize words. Include punctuation. Also, save the smiley faces for your personal texts.*

5. “I hate this stuff. Why is it even important?”

- ✓ *Professors don’t expect you to love every class you’ll take at UMW, but bear in mind that you are speaking to somebody who has dedicated his or her whole life to a field. A statement like this can be offensive. Even if you don’t enjoy a particular subject, try to be respectful and make the best of it.*

6. “Can we get out early?”

- ✓ *Don’t start packing up your stuff until the professor is done talking.*

7. “I wasn’t in class last time. Did I miss anything important?”

- ✓ *“No, as soon as we realized you weren’t there we decided to meditate.” Again, assume everything a professor says during class regarding the material is important.*

- ✓ *For whatever reason you missed a class, it is your responsibility to get the missed information from a classmate. If you review it and the reading material and still have questions, then approach your professor during office hours with specific concerns.*

8. Stare at your laptop (or your phone) the entire class.

- ✓ *You'd be surprised just how obvious it is when a student is glued to Facebook rather than paying attention to the course content. Texting on your phone while "reaching in your bag for something" is no longer sneaky. Even if you're not actually paying attention, consistent eye contact is pivotal for giving the impression that you are.*

9. Ignore your professor's e-mails.

- ✓ *This isn't a pointless forward or—in most cases—something your professor is doing because there is nothing else to do. It is most likely something urgently related to class requirements and learning content.*
- ✓ *Again, think of your professor as your future manager in the "real world"—even if it's not gripping material, it's your job to pay attention and take out of it whatever you need.*

10. Refer to a professor incorrectly.

- ✓ *If an instructor has asked students to call him or her by a specific name, do so. Some professors are less formal and prefer first names, others use their professional title, and still others may not care at all.*
- ✓ *For female professors, refer to them as Dr. or professor...not Ma'am or Miss. For male professors, refer to them as Dr. or professor, as well, rather than Mr.*
- ✓ *If you know an instructor has a doctorate, call him or her Dr. _____. If you aren't sure, a simple "professor" is your safest bet.*

Adapted from:

<http://www.cnu.edu/studentsuccess/pdf/10thingstoneversayordotoaprofessor.pdf>