

Making the Right Impressions on the First Day of Class

The power of knowing, in the first two seconds, is our ability to make quick judgments. Think back to when you were in school and how long did it take you to size up a professor? Did you know the first day how good a teacher was, or did it take several classes or the entire semester? Research has found that students watching a silent two-second video clip of a teacher they have never met reach very similar conclusions about that teacher's effectiveness when compared to students who have sat in the teacher's class for a semester.

What can be done then to make a positive first impression in the classroom? In a study (Hayward, 2001) where students were given a survey after the first class meeting, factors contributing to positive perceptions of teaching effectiveness were identified. Students have been found to quickly size up a professor on these four factors:

- **Concern for Students** - Does the instructor show interest and enthusiasm and seem friendly?
- **Communicative Competence** - Is the instructor well-prepared and excited about the subject? This factor, which focuses on an instructor's organizational skills, command of subject, ability to create interest, ability to speak clearly, and the ability to explain ideas clearly, has the strongest influence on the teaching effectiveness variable.
- **Expectations** - Do the students understand what is expected and judge that the workload is going to be reasonable?
- **Benefits** - Do the students think the course will increase general knowledge and help develop career skills? This factor, which focuses on a student's belief that the course will increase their knowledge and career skills, has the strongest influence on the course effectiveness variable.

When planning for the first day of class, consider how you can positively impact students' perceptions to believe that you:

- will teach at an appropriate level for the class,
- have a good command of the subject matter,
- make ideas clear,
- get students interested in the subject,
- are clear about course expectations.

Good teaching does not just happen. The more you think about it and refine it, the better for you and your students.

Hayward, P. (2001). *Students' Initial Impressions of Teaching Effectiveness: An Analysis of Structured Response Items*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association, Atlanta, GA, ED 465 979.

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