DAY ONE
“The first day of class sets the tone for the rest of the term.”
Barbara Gross David (1993)

What do students want to know about the course?
- Learning goals
- Teaching and learning strategies
- Overview of content and readings
- Assessment and grading policies
- Important dates and deadlines

You can provide this information through
- A detailed syllabus
- A brief activity illustrating the kind of teaching and learning that will take place
- A typical quiz, exam, or paper assignment, and your criteria for grading

What do you want to know about the students?
- Name, interests, year, major
- Reasons for taking the course
- Relevant previous courses or prior knowledge
- What they hope to learn in the course
- What their anxieties about the course may be

You can get this information by having students
- Write on 3x5 cards
- Interview and introduce a fellow student
- Complete an ungraded assignment or quiz to show what they already know
- Write at the end of class an anonymous two-minute response to a question like “What’s the most important thing you learned today?” or “What questions do you have about this course?”

What do students want to know about you?
- What to call you (Professor? Doctor? Mr./Ms.? First name?)
- How you teach and how you expect students to learn
- Why the subject fascinates you

You can provide this information through
- Personal history of your work in this area
- Comments from students in previous classes
- Examples that illustrate teaching strategies and successful ways of learning in this course
- Examples of how you apply course content in your work or use it to solve problems

Adapted from a list in the Teaching and Learning Bulletin published by the Center for Instructional Development and Research at the University of Washington.
DAY ONE: SIXTEEN USEFUL OPTIONS
Dr. Gail Griffin, English Department 1977-2013

- Tell the students what you prefer to be called.

- Tell the students something relevant about yourself: how you came to this discipline or subject matter; why you love it; why you can identify with students intimidated by the prospect of this course; a weird thing that happened to you on the way to class; your philosophy of teaching . . .

- Discuss the course goals and architecture

- Do something that will make the shyest or most fearful student feel like s/he could come to your office to ask you a question.

- Have the students introduce themselves in an interesting way that will provoke everyone to learn each other's names: Students might introduce themselves by telling something memorable: how they got their names; a funny story about their birth or childhood; their favorite film; the best place they've been recently; etc. Alternately, pairs might talk in groups for ten minutes and introduce each other.

- Give a prize for the first student who can name everyone in the class.

- Begin learning the students' names yourself.

- Get everybody laughing.

- Have a real class. Do some actual work with the course content.

- Model how the course will operate: give a mini-lecture, have a discussion, use small groups, show slides, do some in-class writing.

- Draw attention to important matters on the syllabus: types of assignments, imminent deadlines, field trips, evening meetings, etc.

- Use index cards to get information from students that you want: previous experience with subject matter, fears and hopes about the class, areas for improvement, learning preferences, personal goals, etc.

- Do a learning-style inventory to find out what kind of learners you'll be teaching.

- Do something that gets every person in the room to talk more than once.

- Develop an exercise that will get every student to leave the first class with a core concept, metaphor, or image clearly in mind.

- Make sure everyone understands the assignment for the next class.