

Resource Guide

Creating a Welcoming Classroom Environment

Thoughtful rapport and considerate communication with students is a critical foundation to create a welcoming classroom environment/community. Below are a few brief considerations to help you establish a welcoming learning environment in your course.

Introduce Yourself with a welcome video: Before the start of the semester, create a 3-5 minute welcome video and post it on your course site. Keep it informal. Address what you hope students will get out of the course; why the topic is important for you and to their future professional careers; disclose other interesting information about you (family, pets, where you have lived, hobbies).

Get to Know Students Names: One of the most important foundations for creating a welcoming learning environment is learning about your students. Consider creating a “getting to know you” questionnaire; Have students create and display name cards. Create active learning opportunities where students can get to know each other as well. Plan a note-review; think, pair, share exercise; or offer a discussion prompt.

Create and maintain a communication plan for students: In your course syllabus, draft clear guidelines for how students can communicate with you. Create an incentive for students to visit during office hours; and develop clear channels of communication via email, text, phone, or other online media.

Incorporate care and substantive feedback and authentic assessment: Fink (2013) recommends giving high-quality feedback to help sustain student motivation and self-esteem. Consider offering self-assessment opportunities for students. Encourage teacher and peer dialogue through active learning exercises devoted to formative feedback. Create rubrics to illustrate a pathway for student learning.

Establish and maintain a welcoming environment: Consider drafting your course syllabus in a warm and inviting tone to encourage student participation (Harnish, 2011). Use the same language in assignments and course correspondence.

Practice active listening and open-ended questions: Utilize [active listening techniques](#) while meeting in class as well as practiced open-ended questioning to encourage participation and to help students feel heard.

Resources

Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. John Wiley & Sons.

Adams, S., Bali, M., Eder, Z., Fladd, L., Garrett, K., Garth-McCullough, R., Gibson, A. M., Gunder, A., Iuzzini, J., Knott, J. L., Rafferty, J. & Weber, N. L. (2021 June 8). *Caring for Students Playbook*. Every Learner Everywhere. <https://www.everylearnereverywhere.org/resources/>

Harnish, R. J., & Bridges, K. R. (2011). Effect of syllabus tone: Students' perceptions of instructor and course. *Social Psychology of Education, 14*(3), 319-330.