

# 10 Tips for Talking with Teachers

**ARE YOU HAVING A PROBLEM IN A CLASS, WITH AN ASSIGNMENT, OR WITH A TEACHER? DON'T JUST COMPLAIN TO YOUR FRIENDS — TALK WITH YOUR TEACHER! LEARNING TO VOICE YOUR CONCERNS IN AN APPROPRIATE, RESPECTFUL MANNER IS AN IMPORTANT SKILL TO MASTER.**

Here are some tips to help smooth the conversation:

1. **Make an appointment to meet and talk.** This shows the teacher you're serious and you have an understanding of his or her busy schedule. Be flexible and do NOT be late.
2. **If you know students who feel the way you do, consider having them go with you to talk with the teacher.** There's strength in numbers. If a teacher hears the same thing from four or five people, he or she may be more likely to do something about it.
3. **Think through what you want to say BEFORE you go into your meeting with the teacher.** Write down your questions or concerns. Make a list of items you want to cover.
4. **Choose your words carefully.** For example, instead of saying, "I hate doing reports; they are a waste of time," try, "Is there some other way I could satisfy this requirement? Could I do a video instead?" Never use the word "boring." It is an overused word and adults tend to tune out when teenagers use it.
5. **Don't expect the teacher to do all the work or come up with all the answers.** Be prepared to make suggestions, offer solutions or suggest resources. The teacher will appreciate that you took the initiative.
6. **Be diplomatic, tactful and respectful.** Teachers have feelings, too. And they're more likely to be responsive if you remember that the purpose of your meeting is conversation, not confrontation.
7. **Focus on what you *need*, instead of what you think the teacher is doing wrong.** The more the teacher learns about you, the more he/she will be able to help you. The more defensive the teacher feels, the less he/she will *want* to help.
8. **Don't forget to listen.** This may seem obvious but many students need to practice this important skill. The purpose of the meeting isn't just to voice your concern, but to come to a mutual agreement. This requires equal listening from both parties.
9. **Bring your sense of humor.** Not necessarily the joke-telling sense of humor but the kind that lets you laugh at yourself and your own misunderstandings and mistakes.
10. **If the meeting isn't the success you hoped it would be, get help from another adult,** such as a counselor, another teacher or staff member who is likely to support you and advocate for you. Then try again!