

Resource Guide

How to Get To Know Your Students

Psychologist and humanist Carl Rogers believed that in order to create a positive learning environment, instructors must build student relationships by exhibiting genuineness, warmth, and positive regard. (Rogers, 2010) Simply getting to know your students can help shape classroom interactions, exhibit warmth and care, model supportive learning (and professional) behaviors, and can help instructors demonstrate instructional competence. (Matson, 2018; Frisby & Martin, 2010)

Below are a few suggestions on ways you can get to know your students in your course. These strategies can be used in a variety of classroom settings:

Draft a “getting to know you” questionnaire: Before the start of the semester, request students complete a confidential questionnaire in order to learn more about them and their previous experience with your course content. Consider including any of the following questions:

- What name would you like me to call you? What are your pronouns?
- What is your previous experience with this course/topic?
- Have you taken any other class in this discipline before?
- What are you hoping to learn from this course?
- What is a fun fact about you?
- Is there anything else you would like me to know about you?

Create an annotated class roster: When meeting students for the first time, draft a chart of your classroom that includes a few distinguishable features about each student that will help you remember their name. Or consider using mnemonics to help associate something meaningful and concrete with students' names.

Have students create name tents: Ask students to write their names on a folded index card. Have students keep their name tents on their desks during the first few weeks of class.

Arrive to class early, stay late: Arrive a bit early and stay a little later to chat with students. This will allow students who may not feel comfortable raising questions during class to approach you in a low-pressure way.

Resources

Frisby, B. N., & Martin, M. M. (2010). Instructor-Student and Student-Student Rapport in the Classroom. *Communication Education*, 59(2), 146-64.

Matson, T., Clark, J. (2018). Strada-Gallup Alumni Survey Mentoring College Students to Success.

Rogers, C., Lyon, H., & Tausch, R. (2014). *On Becoming an Effective Teacher: person-centered teaching, psychology, philosophy, and dialogues with Carl R. Rogers.* (1st ed., pp. 67-76). New York: Routledge.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center by [email](#).