

Conference Guidelines:

A personal conference is an excellent way for your instructor to offer you individual responses to your writing. If instructors try to address every writing style in front of the class, they will waste time because only two or three people might share a particular problem. The others become bored listening to advice that does not apply to everyone. In a personal conference, everything the instructor says applies directly to *you* and *your* writing process. The conference is not just a place to discuss your writing problems, however. You will also find what your writing strengths are, and your instructor can offer suggestions on ways to build on those strengths. You can get more direct help with your writing in a few minutes of conference than you are able to in several general class sessions.

There are several things you can do to make the most of time spent in conference. First of all, you must treat the appointment as you would a professional appointment. When instructors schedule conferences, they make a large time commitment outside of their regular teaching duties. When they say they will be in their office to meet with you, they must be there, barring serious emergency. When students fail to keep their appointments, instructors get frustrated because the teacher could make better use of that time.

Most people fall into a daily routine, and a short appointment that breaks that routine can be difficult to remember. You can prepare for that difficulty with a little thought, however. First, write down the time of your appointment on this conference checklist. If you keep a daily or weekly calendar, write it down there too, but if you do not regularly consult that calendar, do not count on it as surefire reminder. If you regularly check the class syllabus for assignments each day, that would be a good place to write down the appointment. Think about your routine, and make a note about the conference in the places you are most likely to see it the day of your appointment. For instance, if you have a biology reading that morning, perhaps leave a stick-it note on the cover of your biology book. Both you and your instructor will benefit from your reliability in this matter.

Anyone can have unexpected events that make it impossible to keep to regular schedules. Cars do break down. Family crises do occur. Dependent children do become ill. When such events happen, responsible people notify others so that a personal event does not unduly inconvenience those around them. If something prevents you from keeping your appointment, notify your instructor as soon as possible. Most instructors have voice-mail capability on their office telephones, so even an emergency trip out of town will not prevent you from warning your instructor of an inability to meet at the appointed time. A late night call to an office telephone will disturb no one, and your recorded message will be waiting for your instructor early the next morning, as will an e-mail message. An instructor who receives such a message will be sure to think positively about the student who considerately took the time to leave it. It frequently happens that other students have to change appointment times, and the time of your missed absence will be available for someone else. An after-the-fact excuse will never be as welcome or persuasive as an advance warning. In some cases, penalties will apply to excuses given later that would not apply to advance notification. Keep your instructor's phone number and other relevant material on the conference checklist. Use it if for any reason you cannot make the appointment. Especially clever students might xerox this checklist and use it as a guideline for all their conferences with instructors.

Instructor's Name: _____

Time of Conference: _____

Date of Conference: _____

Instructor's Office Location: _____

Instructor's Phone Number: _____

Pertinent Class Materials. Do you need to bring any

- ✓ Handouts?
- ✓ Textbooks?
- ✓ Grammar Guides?
- ✓ Research Materials?
- ✓ Scratch paper for taking notes?
- ✓ Any other pertinent or useful items?

Write down questions you wish to ask the instructor during the conference:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Notes: