

Effective Office Hours

Making the most of your time

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http://www.usoit.ca/EN/main/12199/12200/campushealthcentre/office_hours.html

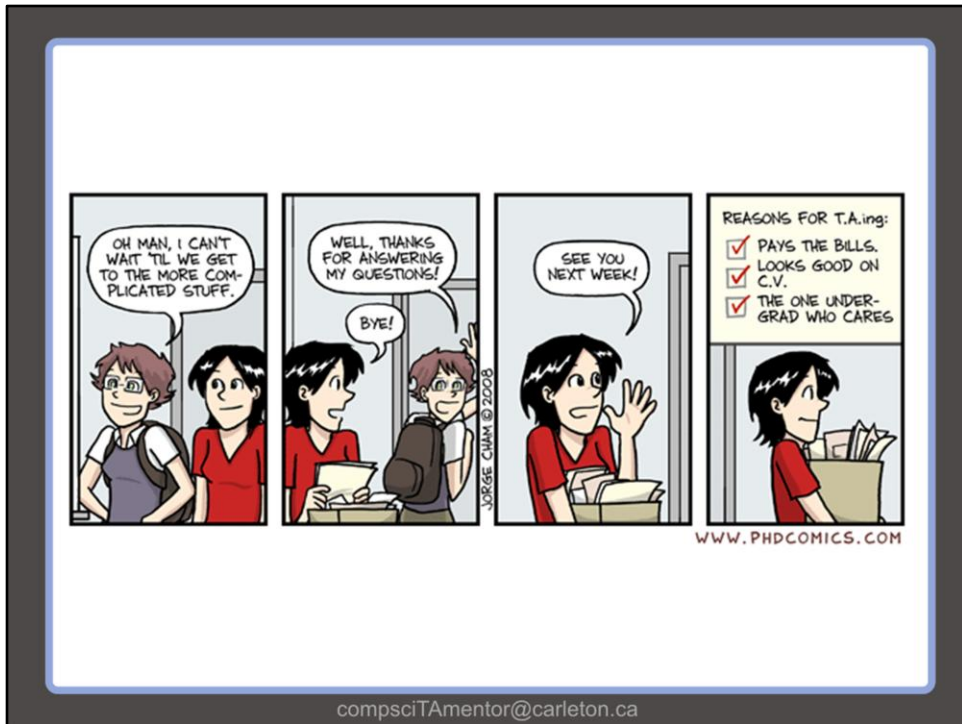
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<http://www.today.ucla.edu/portal/ut/campus-cats-wider-safety-net-9724-40x>

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- Students see you because they need help
- Imagine how you felt when you didn't "get" something
 - Stupid?
 - Frustrated?
 - Helpless?
- Think of the impact a TA can make – good AND bad



-When they get it, it feels great!

Workshop Goals

1. Identify problems with our office hours and how we might improve
2. Give ideas for increasing attendance (online or in real life)
3. Give some techniques to help you teach computer science topics

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In Your Experience

Think about the questions.

Get into pairs.

Share your answers.

**Summarize key points that
represent what most TA's experience.**

Share with group.

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In Your Experience

1. What has worked well for you during your TA Office Hours?
2. What has not worked well for you? Have you had any bad experiences?
3. What would you like to try doing during office hours in the future?

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-Many computer science TA's report that very few students bother to show up to their office hours

-As a result, most work on their own homework or research

-Caution! It's very easy for this to become a habit so that when a student DOES show up, you subconsciously become annoyed that your work is interrupted.

-The low attendance could indicate a few things (it may or may not have to do with you, but you can be the solution):

-You aren't helpful (let's fix that!)

-You aren't friendly, don't communicate well, or don't know the material

-The time is not convenient to students or they just don't make the effort to come to campus

-Students are intimidated

-Nobody needs any help (or at least they *think* they don't)

Improving Attendance

How might you improve attendance during your office hours?

Get into groups of three.

On a piece of paper, quickly write out an answer to the question.

Pass the sheet on to the next person, continuing until time is up.

Share with the group.

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Improving Office Hours

Your ideas:

1. Familiarize yourself with the course notes.
2. Prepare questions before assignments.
3. Prepare handouts for students.
4. Show students up front how to solve a certain type of problem, and point to resources that can be used to better understand or simplify the problem.
5. Hold weekly Skype meetings.
6. Have the professor encourage students to attend.

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Improving Office Hours

7. TA's can show their faces in class.
8. Take a poll of ideas from students, and then teach those ideas during office hours for the most popular requests.
9. Write on course webpage who has what specialty.
10. Use CCSS or WebCT forums and work the time spent into TA contracts.
11. Make sure students know to email TA's.
 12. Bribe with candy or coffee.
 13. Check in the labs for students.

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Improving Office Hours

14. Make the office hours lab more attractive.
15. Meet people in the classroom.
16. Have the prof tell students when office hours are.
17. Make sure to hold office hours at a time that is convenient to most students (can even go to class to find a time by show of hands).

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Improving Attendance

- 1. Introduce yourself in class during the second week of the term, and visit again halfway through.**

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Improving Attendance

2. Learn new ways to teach the concepts.

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Improving Attendance

3. **Hold informal tutorials during your office hours.**

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Improving Attendance

4. Practice patience, especially for those who don't speak English as well as you.

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Improving Attendance

5. **Learn how to help without answering questions directly.**

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Improving Attendance

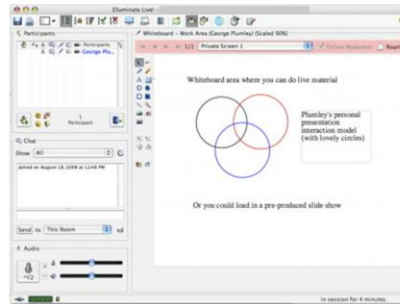
6. Work with professor to target those struggling.

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Online Office Hours

Elluminate

<http://www.illuminate.com/>



<http://www.konpresentationcoaching.com/blog/page/3/>

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- Educational Development Centre provides access codes and training on this software
- You can use whatever works for your course
 - You might even be able to just be available via MSN, though this tends to be more difficult to explain anything beyond simplistic topics
 - A course blog might help you answer FAQ's
- Elluminate works in Java, so everyone can install it
- Works well, has chat and a whiteboard, could be used for math and coding questions alike

Informal Tutorials

Answer students' questions on the board...



...and ask your own.

**It's amazing how many students will attend
when you ask questions that might be on the exam.**

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- When I took COMP 1805, one of our TA's did this. The room was full every time, and our class did a lot better as a result.
- Remember, grading will be a LOT easier if students answer more questions correctly, so doing this is worth your time!
 - Be sure you know the material very well, or ask for students to submit questions ahead of time.

Teaching CS Concepts

Adapt CS Unplugged activities.

Visualize key ideas.

Make connections.

Learn how to ask questions.

Be ready to reword and repeat.

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-CS Unplugged

-<http://www.csunplugged.org>

-Many basic algorithms are well explained in these activities

-They would be especially good for first year students, or those that aren't majoring in CS

-Visualize key ideas.

-Many students are visual learners, so the only way to properly explain a concept is to figure out how to draw it.

-You can do this for anything in CS, even coding concepts.

-May take some practice, so keep on trying!

-Make connections.

-Connect the concept they are learning to real software projects, or to applications in other disciplines.

-Increases motivation!

-Learn how to ask questions.

-You need to figure out exactly what they know and don't know

-You usually can't just say "What are you having problems with?"

-Asking leading questions can also help them figure out the answer on their own (you just show them where to look)

-Be ready to reword and repeat

-It often takes several tries to explain something.

Teaching CS Concepts

Find a partner.

You will be given a concept to teach.

Prepare a < 5 min explanation.

Teach it to another pair.

Use the ideas discussed earlier!

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The End

Questions?

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