

Ten Tips for Dealing with Nervousness on the First Day of Class

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Each new semester as I walk down the hallway to my classroom, I am a little nervous, even after 27 years of teaching experience...and I'm okay with this. I think when I get to the point where I don't feel this anxiety, I won't be as effective a teacher. After all, I will be walking into that classroom for the next four months and it's important to make a good first impression. Below are 10 tips to help you get off to a great start.

1. Develop your own routine before going to class. Take a short brisk walk beforehand. Twirl your wrists to gently shake the stress out of your arms. Relax your shoulders; people tend to "hunch up" their shoulders when tense. Do some deep breathing.
2. Check out your classroom before the students get there. Walk around and get familiar with the room, podium, how the seats are arranged, etc. Make sure you know how to work any technology you'll be using.
3. The first few minutes are crucial. Your students are curious about you and the course. Everything (how you dress, walk, present yourself) are clues as to your personality and credibility. Walk briskly and with purpose into the classroom.
4. Chat briefly with the students as they come into the room to make yourself (and the students) feel more comfortable.
5. Act confident and enthusiastic about what you will be doing that first day. Don't say that you are nervous as this makes the students uncomfortable and you will lose credibility with them.

6. Also, it's best not to tell your students that this is the first time (if it is) that you have taught this particular course. You should know more about the topic than they do so they'll assume you're an expert.
7. Use notecards or form to gather information about your students (name, email address, past class experience with the topic, work experience, etc). This takes the focus off you and onto the task which gives you time to get comfortable.
8. As you begin, make eye contact with two or three people in various parts of the room. Learn their names and use them several times. You are essentially beginning to build a relationship with your students.
9. Be enthusiastic about being in the classroom so that they will be also. Don't just stand behind the podium but move around and move toward them. Look happy to be sharing your knowledge with them.
10. Start with something that is easy for you to talk about. Tell a story you've told often before, read something that is relevant to the class from the newspaper, share something from your days as a student or talk to them about why you went into teaching.

Above all, picture yourself doing an excellent job. It's going to be a great first day of class!

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