

Understanding the way each course is structured can help you maximize your learning in and preparation for each course. Adapted from Maureen Tartaglione's "How to Read a Syllabus."

The Syllabus

The syllabus is a contract between the student and the professor. Most professors put a great deal of thought and effort into creating the syllabus. They appreciate students who read it carefully and thoroughly BEFORE asking questions.

Note the following on a course syllabus

Professor's office hours	If you have courses scheduled during all of a professor's office hours, ask him/her if s/he responds to emails or makes alternate appointments.
Dates of all major assignments and exams	If you have a conflict, you should talk to the professor during office hours before the drop/add deadline. Map out your major assignments and exams on a semester calendar with all assignments from all courses.
Materials needed for the course	Buy all materials on the syllabus even if the professor says the text is not required. These materials are helpful tools.
Rules and policies	Review all policies regarding grading, absences, tardiness and participation.
Topics	Review when topics will be discussed and when readings are due. Preview material before it is covered in class and READ assigned readings before they are due.
Submission requirements	Know the appropriate submission methods for all assignments.

Use your course syllabus	
As a reference	Refer back to the syllabus often and before asking the professor any questions.
To make a reference guide	Create a quick reference guide for all of your courses with information above.
Understand your professor's preferred method of communication	You may obtain this information from the syllabus or by asking the professor during office hours
Understand your professor's teaching style	If your professor teaches in a style that does not match your preferred style of learning, then the responsibility for accommodating differences in teaching and learning styles falls on you. Take the information the professor gives you and reprocess it using your own learning style.
Show your professors that you are interested in their course	Sit up front, be prepared for class, ask meaningful questions, visit during office hours when necessary, examine returned tests to improve future performance, know the syllabus to avoid asking unnecessary questions, be on time, and avoid creating distractions in class with phones or other devices.

Adapted from <http://www.cas.lsu.edu/>