It can be difficult to converse with professors before or after class. Another class may be entering the room, and your professor may have to rush to another class. So professors designate office hours to allow ample time to be available to their students outside of classes. They enjoy talking with students who are inquisitive and interested in learning. In fact, professors wish that more students would use their office hours. Take advantage of their willingness to help you.

- Be brave! Knock on the door, even if it’s closed.
- If the professor’s back is to the door during office hours, don’t walk away. Knock politely. Try to overcome any self-consciousness. Don’t worry about appearing “stupid.” If you have a question or if you need clarification, you have a right to ask and most professors welcome questions. Colleges and universities require professors to hold office hours; it is part of their job to be available to help students.
- Come with a specific goal (for example, ask about the best ways to study for the course) or a question about course content. Don’t waste your professor’s time with irrelevant questions.
- Come prepared with necessary materials. For example, if you have a question about something in the assigned reading, bring your book with the page and passage marked.
- Although some professors may seem formal in class, most are friendly and approachable in one-on-one conversations.
- If you didn’t do well on an exam, ask your professor if you can analyze your errors during office hours. Try to recall why you selected each answer and then consider why another answer was correct. This can be especially helpful after the first exam.
- Remember that professors enjoy discussing the content of their courses. This is what they teach, read about, research, and write about -- in short, what they devote their careers to.
- If your class is large, introduce yourself to your professor during office hours.

If you’re not free during your professor’s office hours, call or send an e-mail with your question. Most professors have e-mail addresses and voice mail, and their contact information should be on the course syllabus. No matter how you contact your professors, they will recognize your initiative and your interest in the course.