

International SuccESS Strategies

Interacting with Professors, Teaching Assistants, SI Leaders, and Tutors

CWRU is a small, private university that prides itself on making sure every student feels welcomed and a part of the campus. Your presence as an international undergraduate is a benefit to everyone! You bring a global perspective to the campus and especially to the classroom.

While you are learning more about America culture, you will find that your classmates and professor, teaching assistants (TA's), SI leaders, and tutor are eager to know more about you and your culture. Even if you feel that your English is not perfect, speak in class. We are part of a global community; we all speak with accents!

In your home country, you may have a more formal relationship with professors and their assistants than what you will experience at CWRU or other USA campus.

Your professors will encourage you to ask questions in class, participate in discussion, send email, and visit them during their office hours or at an scheduled appointment. Their syllabi will list how and when to contact them.

The best approach when greeting your professors is face-to-face meetings or through email is to use the title *professor*. You might write or say, "Hello, Professor Smith." once you have used this more formal title, your professors may say that they prefer a different way of addressing them. They may invite you to use their first name.

Most American professors prefer an informal classroom environment that mixes lectures with discussions and questions-and-answer sessions.

During an American classroom discussion, faculty and students may sit in a circle and take turns talking. When not speaking during a discussion, Americans expect that participants will look at the speaker and use body language to show their interest in what is being said. They may nod in agreement, lean slight forward, and smile.

In a discussion format, some faculty will provide discussion questions prior to class, or they may distribute a printed list of questions. If you have the questions before class, prepare some brief notes so that you can comfortably speak during class.

Teaching Assistants, called TA's, are either graduate or undergraduate students who have been hired by their professors to teach, grade, and lead lab sessions. They will generally introduce themselves and may ask you to call them by their first name. Treat them with the same courtesy you would give to your professors.

SI leaders and tutors are academically successful undergraduates. They are trained to work in an informal, friendly, and supportive manner. They will expect you to participate actively in the SI or tutoring sessions. Instead of lecturing or teaching you in a formal way, they will use a method that requires that you work in a collaborative manner.