

# The Higher Education Classroom Experience

by Sophia



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn what a productive higher education classroom experience is like and what you are responsible for in creating that experience. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

## 1. A Productive Classroom

Every classroom, whether it's in person or online, is an environment with a general feeling or mood—an atmosphere. The instructor sets the tone and certain students affect the class positively or negatively more than others, but every student contributes to the atmosphere in some way. In an in-person classroom, your classmates' energy and attention are visible to you.

Distracted students—for instance, those who are using their laptops to shop online—distract other students. Conversely, attentiveness and engagement can be contagious as well. Though online students can't literally see and hear their classmates, an online class's atmosphere can still be felt in the students' patterns of behavior—in how actively they communicate, how timely their posts are, or how thoughtful and careful their comments are.


While there is no way to guarantee the engagement of all of the students, a productive classroom has an atmosphere that is open, welcoming, encouraging, and positive. In such an atmosphere, students are more likely to show up to class or sit down to work at their computer on time, prepared, and eager. They are more likely to listen attentively, take diligent notes, share their thoughts or ask questions when appropriate, and engage thoughtfully and respectfully with their classmates. One student cannot single-handedly make a classroom productive, but, again, every student contributes to the atmosphere.

---

## 2. Student Responsibilities

So, what specifically are an individual student's responsibilities in creating and maintaining a productive classroom?

Student Responsibilities	Description

Being prepared	This responsibility entails having read the course syllabus carefully, as well as any other communications you've gotten from the instructor, so that you know what you are supposed to have read, what assignments you are supposed to have completed, and what materials you are supposed to have or bring with you to class. Of course, your responsibility is not just to know what to do but also to do it; students can foster a productive classroom by understanding and meeting expectations.
Being on time	In an in-person class, students arriving late can interrupt productivity and distract both their instructor and their classmates with the sounds of turning doorknobs, whispered apologies, creaking chairs, and opening book bag zippers. They can also miss important information given out at the beginning of class or compel the instructor to stop what she's doing to repeat it. In an online class, punctuality has different implications but is nonetheless crucial to a productive classroom. In fact, because assignments in an online class can depend on posted responses to your peers, failure to complete assignments on time can have more of an impact on the overall environment.
Behaving appropriately and respectfully	Your conduct has an effect on your fellow students and the overall atmosphere of the classroom. You don't want to be distracted, and you don't want to be a distraction to others. This means having only what is necessary in front of you—course materials, notebook and writing implements, laptop or tablet. In general, it is appropriate (and recommended) to have water with you in class, but you may want to check with your syllabus or with your instructor before bringing food. As much as possible, you want to sit calmly and quietly—sometimes nothing can be done about coughs and sneezes—but be mindful of those around you. Lastly, and this is perhaps the most significant piece of advice for contemporary students, short of an emergency it is not appropriate or respectful to use your phone during class.
 SUMMARY	

A **productive classroom** in higher education is one where students are highly engaged in learning and are focused on the course content. You have an important role to play in the productivity of your class. Your **student responsibilities** include being prepared, being on time, and being respectful and appropriate.