



Talk to Your Professor About a Grade

You studied nonstop for six days for an exam, or stayed up all night to write a paper. You are confident that you submit your best work, but when you receive your grade, you are let down. Or, maybe your friend did better than you, and you think their work wasn't as good as yours. You decide to meet with your professor.

Before Your Meeting...

Collect all appropriate paperwork (e.g. syllabus, assignment) and organize it for your meeting. Make a brief outline with a list of salient points.



Set up an appointment. Send an e-mail to your professor when you're calm. Or, stop by office hours to set up an appointment.



Have an attitude of curiosity, instead of preparing to argue. Be open to learning from the professor why a certain grade was given. Keep in mind that a fair grade will not likely be changed.

During your meeting...

Be polite and calm, always. You are asking questions to gain an understanding from an expert in a field. Do not use an angry tone. Do not accuse your professor of being unfair. When you take your anger out on your professor, that will likely change his/her opinion of you, but it will not change your grade.

Determine the type of assignment and grade you received.

1 Objective grade?

- Was your answer marked wrong when it was correct, or was your score totaled up incorrectly?
- These errors are often easily fixed.
- Politely and calmly point out the error to your professor.

OR

2 Subjective grade?

- Did your paper or open-ended essay exam receive an unsatisfactory score?
- Remember that a subjective grade is left to the professor's interpretation.

Ask the professor what he/she views as the shortcomings of your work. Did you add enough detail? Did you leave out important information from class or from readings?



Listen to your professor's response. Try to listen for understanding, instead of listening to respond or argue. Do not interrupt your professor.



Show your professor how you believe you fully answered the prompt (if you are convinced you did), or how the evidence you provided addresses the prompt.

Remember that working really hard on something does not guarantee a particular grade. Also, needing a certain grade to avoid probation is not a convincing reason for a professor to change a grade. Perhaps the outcome of the conversation will provide you with tips to receive a higher grade on the next exam or paper.

The Ombuds Office can help you prepare for a conversation with your professor, or help you if the conversation didn't go as well as you had hoped.

Call us at (805) 893-3285 to schedule an appointment.