Making the Most of your TA

TA vs. Professor

1: **TAs are closer to the coursework,** sometimes by decades. We remember what our points of confusion were, and can give you tips and tricks for getting past those confusing parts.

2: **TAs are more like advanced peers** than professors, who are definitely superiors. We can often relate to what you're going through on a more personal level. Talk to us if you're struggling—we won't judge you for it (we were probably there once also!)

Utilizing Your TA Effectively

1: Go to office hours or make an appointment. We *have* to sit there for two hours a week. Come use our knowledge. If you can't make it, schedule an appointment. We're *very* happy to find alternate times.

2: Come with specific questions. Try to identify your points of confusion *before* you come to office hours. What concept are you getting stuck on? Did a particular reading or example confuse you? This helps us identify a path to clarity more quickly, though the most important thing is that you come at all.

3: Ask LOTS of questions. Ask about the smallest detail or the biggest picture. No question is too "silly" for us to answer, and we won't judge

4: If you need more, ask. Want scans of our worked out problems? A second set of eyes on an outline before you start writing? Ask us! We're often more than happy to help, but students never make the request.

5: Ask for general advice. We are TA's because we successfully completed the coursework ourselves; we have our own strategies, hints, and tips for success that we're happy to share, if you ask!

Different Classroom Types and Success Strategies

Large Lectures

1: Get to office hours (professors and TAs) for 1-on-1 time

2: Use recitation and lab to dig deeply into the material

3: Don't be easily distracted during lecture. Put away your phone so you can remain focused. This is important in large lectures where it's easy to stop listening.

4: Make a study group. Find 2-3 other people you work well with and who complement your knowledge and skill level; find people on your floor/ in recitation section/ in lab section.

Laboratory Courses

1: Go in prepared. Read the lab objective, instructions, and questions before you arrive. Spend lab time conducting the experiment, not figuring out what to do.

2: Actively connect theory to practice. Constantly ask yourself "how does this activity help me better understand the theory."

3: Ask your bench partner when you have a question. Studies show we learn best when we are challenged by peers. Use lab time to ask peers questions about hard or confusing material; consult the lab instructor if you're still stuck.

Recitation Sections

1: Ask lots of questions, especially the ones you didn't have time for in lecture.

2: Ignore "that guy," who tries to make everyone else feel small or purports all of the material to be easy. Your learning is more important than their ego.

3: Ask for problem solving/ critical thinking techniques. Lectures don't have time to dig into deep problem solving techniques. Ask your TA to talk about *specific strategies* for picking apart difficult passages, analyzing hard figures, etc.

Small/ Discussion Based Classroom

1: Participate often; your contribution matters *enormously* to everyone's learning.

2: Make space for others who haven't spoken yet. Take a step back from speaking, or prompt a fellow student who might be more timid.

3: Learn from each other. This is a time to voice your thoughts and listen earnestly to the thoughts of others. Pay close attention to when others/ the professor speaks.