



## Navigating Class Absences: Helpful Hints for Talking to Faculty

As stated in the [Class Attendance policy](#), “[T]he university expects students to attend all regularly scheduled class meetings.” Sometimes circumstances arise that prevents a student from attending class or getting an assignment in on time. Illness, injury, a death in the family, or other obligations can sometimes interfere with academic success. When these situations arise, we have compiled some tips for working with your faculty to explain the situation and to ask for the support and leniency you need to get back on track.

### Give Them Advanced Notice (When you can)

- Ideally, you should let your instructors know as far in advance as possible when you will need to miss class.
- If you are ill or another emergency has occurred, reach out to your instructors directly as soon as you are able to let them know of your absence.
- Check the syllabus to see if your instructors have a preference on how you should communicate with them. Email is a great first step, but you might also want to stop in and see your instructor during office hours or offer to set up a time to meet via Zoom or speak over the phone.

### What to Say

- Honesty is the best policy.
- Before engaging in conversation or sending an email, make sure you are familiar with your instructors’ absence policy.
- Be clear and concise when explaining your absence. Include the general nature of your situation, the dates you were or will be absent, and when you expect to return.
- You don’t have to go into extreme detail of your personal situation or explicit details of a medical condition, but your instructors will need enough information to decide how to handle your absence.



## Be Prepared to Do the Work

- Review the syllabus to see what you missed or will be missing.
- If you know about your absence in advance, try to get the work done ahead of time or complete missed assignments as soon as possible.
- When you talk with your instructor, provide them with a proposal on how you will get caught up. Include specific dates of when you will turn in missed assignments or days/times that you are available to make up a missed lab or exam. (Reminder: It's still up to them if they are going to excuse your absence and permit you to make up the time or work! While you are proposing a plan, you are still asking for their permission, so be respectful.)
- If you are worried about falling behind or need some extra support, consider working with a [Tutor](#) or making an appointment with the [Writing Center](#).

## Talk to Classmates

- It's always a good idea to try to get the contact information for at least one person in each of your classes. At the beginning of the semester, introduce yourself to someone sitting near you and ask if you want to exchange contact information in case one of you needs to miss class. This way you can ask them for any notes or to share anything you might have missed while you were out.

## Be Realistic

- If you've reached out to your instructor, allow them a reasonable amount of time to respond. If you don't hear back within 2-3 business days, try following up with a phone call or go to their office hours.
- In some cases, such as science labs or courses with extensive in-class participation requirements, it can be very difficult to make up missed work. Your instructor may be willing to work with you, but the extent of flexibility might be limited.
- Instructors may require attendance in their courses. Students are expected to master material covered in a course and complete required assignments. If you miss too much class or are too far behind, it may not be possible for you to successfully pass the course. Be mindful of the Pass/Fail/Withdrawal deadlines and consult your instructor to determine whether it is in your best interest to withdraw from the course.
- Instructors need to be fair and equitable to all students, which means they may be unable to excuse your absence or allow you to make up the work.



## Other Considerations

- In certain circumstances, the Dean of Students Office may send a [Notice of Absence letter](#) to faculty on behalf of the student, notifying them of their absence. Please read the [Class Attendance Guidelines](#) for more information. A student who needs to miss class due to a religious observance, a governmental obligation, or has missed 3 or more consecutive days due to illness or injury (with appropriate documentation), can request a Notice of Absence letter. However, please know that the discretion to excuse the absence and/or allow the student to make up any missed work always lies with the instructor.
- If your absence is related to a documented disability, you may wish to connect with the [Ross Center for Disability Services](#) to find out what support they might be able to provide.
- If you have attempted to reach out to your instructor but have not been able to get in touch with them after a reasonable amount of time has passed, or feel unsatisfied with the outcome, your next step is to reach out to the Chair of the department in which the course is located.

## Example emails to instructor(s):

### **Example 1:**

*Dear Professor/Dr. (name),*

*I am writing to share with you that I have not been able to attend your class (course name and days/times class is held) on the following dates (insert dates) due to (insert situation/reason). I have been trying to catch-up on course work as best as possible given the circumstances.*

*Can we set up a time to meet and discuss the missed work and possible next steps?*

*Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.*

*Sincerely,*

*(your name)*



**Example 2:**

Dear Professor/Dr. (name),

*I'm writing with my sincere apologies for having missed so many classes over the past (insert time frame). I know how important it is to be in class, and that I've missed out on a lot of opportunities. Over the past (insert time frame), I've been dealing with some (insert situation/circumstances... "extended health issues"... "some difficult family issues"... ) that have prevented me from being fully present at UMass Boston or in my classes.*

*If you agree, I'd like to set up a time to meet to discuss my circumstances with you and to get your advice on the best path forward. My sincere hope is that I can make up some or all of the work I have missed, although I recognize that doing so might be difficult. Is there a day and time we can connect soon?*

*Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.*

*Sincerely,*

*(your name)*

**Questions or concerns? Contact us!**

**Dean.Students@umb.edu**

This document was adapted from the following sources:

<https://in.nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/203/Absence-Student-Help-Guide.docx-8.17.23.pdf>

<https://www.elon.edu/u/administration/student-life/dean-of-students/student-concerns-outreach/how-to-talk-to-faculty/>

