

Math 589: Surviving the first day

1. Find out for which class or classes you are TA! Find out *what time and where* your TA sections meet!! Check this again from the online course schedule on Monday, or even early on Tuesday. Rooms may change at the last moment.
2. Go to the classroom(s) where you are to teach before your first class meets. Notice how long it takes to get there. Inspect the room, stand in front, and pretend there are students there. Get a sense of how big the room is, or how small. Check out how the blackboard works, or whiteboard if that is what you have. Think about how students can work in groups at their seats or at the board.
3. Find out who is the Instructor for each class you are assigned, and make sure to meet with her or him before the first class. Attend the orientations on the Friday before classes begin (August 23, 2013). Determine the expectations for your problem sessions, grading of quizzes and homework, proctoring and any other duties.
4. Get a copy of the course syllabus from the Instructor or the course website, and any other standard course materials given to the students. Get a copy of the course textbook(s) from the Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies, Mary Hemby, in SEO 338.
5. If your classroom has a chalkboard, get a box of chalk from the front office, and take it to class each meeting. If your classroom has a whiteboard, get several markers from the front office (SEO 322), and take them to class each meeting.
6. Get a list of the students in the class (Start at: <https://apps.uillinois.edu/> or at my.uic.edu)
7. Look over the book, to get an idea of how difficult the material is, and what sort of problems you will be showing them how to solve. Read the assigned sections of the book for the first week.
8. Prepare your first lesson. First impressions are important. Decide how you will introduce yourself. Completely prepare enough sample problems to occupy the entire time, but don't expect to finish them all. Consider where students may have difficulty or may ask questions. Decide which problem(s) you will work on the board and which problem(s) you will ask the students to work on in pairs or groups. Active learning is more effective for the students. So even if you are working at the board, encourage students to be involved.
9. Just Do It! Show up on time, speak clearly and slowly, say Hi! and ask their names (or take attendance from your list), and then do an example on the board. During the class, be sure to look at their faces to see whether they have questions, are frightened, or asleep, or maybe, happy they got you as the TA.

Recall, TA = "Test Assistant", not "Theory Assistant".

During the semester, Math 589 will meet Tuesdays from 3:30 to 4:45 PM in Taft 117. We will discuss your first day's experiences during our first meeting on Tuesday, August 27, 2013.

Two websites specifically about preparing for your first day of teaching:

<http://taproject.rutgers.edu/publications/handbook/beginning-teaching.php#first-day>

<http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-guides/preparing-to-teach/first-day-of-class/>

8/8/2013 Brooke Shiley, Adapted from a handout by Steve Hurder