

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 meetings on the Friday before classes begin (August 21, 2015). 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 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 helping the students learn how to solve. Read the assigned sections of the book for the first week (or so).
8. Prepare for your first discussion section. First impressions are important. Decide how you will introduce yourself. Decide how you will take attendance (from your list, or ask their names). Completely solve for yourself all of the worksheet problems (or your chosen sample problems). Consider where students may have difficulty or may ask questions. Decide which problem(s) you will ask the students to work on in pairs or groups at their desks or at the boards. Active learning is more effective for the students, but they may not realize this. Decide if there is one problem you may do as a sample. 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! Introduce the students to active learning and be prepared for some questions on this. During the class, be sure to look at student's 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 2:00 to 3:45 PM in SEO 636. We will discuss your first day's experiences during our first meeting on Tuesday, August 25, 2015.

Two generic 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/>

8/19/2015 Brooke Shipley, Adapted from a handout by Steve Hurder