

## YOUR VERY FIRST SECTION

1. Get there a few minutes early; bring the textbook, your notes, and a few extra copies of the syllabus.
2. Write the following on the far left side of the board, *and do not erase it for as long as you're in that room*:

Math X, Prof. Y  
TA: Your Name  
Office: AP&M Z  
Office hours: W  
Email: `yname@math.ucsd.edu`

3. At the top of the hour, introduce yourself (and say the stuff on the board).
4. If the course has a website, tell them, and write that down, too.<sup>1</sup>
5. Go over the highlights of the syllabus (again, since many students have already heard it from the prof.): particularly important are homework/quiz/exam policies and percentages.
6. Ask if there are any questions. Wait a moment.
7. Tell them what sections will be like, and that, while attendance is not strictly mandatory, you strongly advise them to come every week.
8. Tell/remind them what your office hours are.
9. Give a brief overview of the course material.
10. Ask if there are any questions. Wait a moment.
11. At this point, there are probably about 35 minutes of section left (or 40, if you spoke too fast). In subsequent meetings, it will not be uncommon for students' questions to take up the rest of the time. However, on this occasion, probably only a few lectures have occurred, and students may not have begun the homework assignment. Here are some options for the rest of section; you should think about this carefully in advance:
  - (a) Say something interesting and insightful or philosophical (if you dare) about the material you'll be covering.
  - (b) Give a review of common algebra mistakes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Don't erase it, either.

<sup>2</sup>Students will make so many dumb algebra mistakes during the course that your head will spin. In most classes, a review of common algebra mistakes would be time well spent.

- (c) Give them some problems to work on. If you did an algebra review, have them simplify some nasty expressions you've concocted. Brain teasers or calculus warm-up type problems are good, too. You can try to get them to work in groups so they get to know some of their classmates, which can make a big difference in their attitudes about the course.
12. Do your best to keep them the entire 50 minutes (setting a precedent of letting them leave early can be dangerous). Then say bye-bye.
  13. Tell students who come to you with add-drop forms that you can't sign anything.
  14. There will also be students who come to you after class asking if they can attend a different section than the one they're scheduled for. I usually say something like this: "Try to get into the other section off the waitlist. If that doesn't work, talk to the TA of the section you want to attend next week. Most likely s/he will let you in, as long as the room isn't too full." Just remember that students swapping sections makes record-keeping more cumbersome, so try to keep it to a minimum.
  15. Deflect all questions you can't answer to the professor (this applies during section, too).
  16. Reflect on each section:
    - (a) Was your boardwork large, legible, and organized?
    - (b) Did you speak clearly, loudly, and not-too-fast?
    - (c) Did you address the class and not the chalkboard?
    - (d) Did you convey enthusiasm via inflection and gesture?
    - (e) Did you ask students for ideas on how to solve problems?
    - (f) Did you stop periodically during a solution presentation to ask if there were questions?
    - (g) Did you ask specific questions of the students? (e.g. "why did we compute the derivative in this step?")
    - (h) Did you repeatedly emphasize key points?
      - (i) Where applicable, did you demonstrate multiple possible solutions to a problem?
      - (j) Did you provide sufficient detail, while also finishing problems efficiently by skipping steps where appropriate?
    - (k) Where possible, did you provide students with logical step-by-step methods of solving a problem?
    - (l) Did you indicate links among different concepts that arise in problems?