

Guide for New Teaching Assistants

Complementary Activities



Table of Contents

Before Your First Day

- 01 – Campus Resources to Support Students and TAs
- 02 – Questions to Ask Your TA Supervisor
- 04 – Preparing Your Introduction
- 06 – Panning Your First Day
- 07 – Managing Your Nerves
- 08 – Making Teaching Goals and the Importance of Self-Reflection

Introduction to Teaching and Learning Strategies

- 11 – Introduction to Active Learning
- 12 – Introduction to Facilitating Discussions
- 13 – Introduction to Grading and Feedback
- 14 – Introduction to Collecting Feedback from Students

Reflecting on Your First Semester

- 15 – Revisiting Your Teaching Goals
- 17 – Skills Developed Through Teaching Assistantships
- 18 – Reflecting On and Documenting Your Teaching Experiences

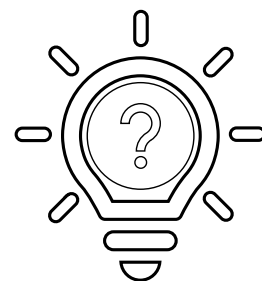
Campus Resources to Support Students and TAs



Now it's your turn! Make a list of resources you want to share with students and a plan for how and when you will share them.

What resources do you want to share with students this semester? When and how will you share these resources (e.g., discuss in class, post on CourseLink, handout)?

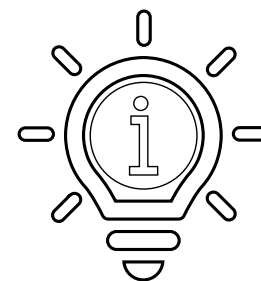
Questions to Ask Your TA Supervisor



Now it's your turn! Which of the questions below do you need to ask your TA supervisor? Check all the ones you want to make sure to ask. Below, we've also provided a box where you can brainstorm any other questions you may want to ask.

- What are the terms of my teaching assistant position? What are my duties and how much time should I spend on each (e.g., facilitating seminars, lab demonstrations, review sessions, office hours, field trip supervision, lecturing, grading, exam invigilation, answering student e-mails)?
 - If you are teaching labs, ask about equipment, emergency and safety procedures, and preparation/clean up
- What technology or audiovisual equipment do I need to know how to use?
- Do I have access to the CourseLink site for the course and what will I be using it for (e.g., inputting grades, monitoring discussion boards, marking assignments, posting recorded videos)?
- If my duties include meetings, what should I come prepared to discuss?
- Are there other TAs involved with this course? How will we ensure consistency of information taught and consistency of grading for students? Will we meet as a group?
- How much of my teaching involves reinforcing lecture material and how much involves introducing new material and concepts?
- How much autonomy will I have to present new ideas, use different teaching methods, or present perspectives different from the instructor's? How much supervision will I have?
- What can you tell me about the course (e.g., course syllabus, learning objectives, demographics, history, learning activities and my place in their design, implementation, or assessment)?
- What are the course policies with regard to late assignments, missed classes, plagiarism, cheating, and re-grades? Are there other policies I should be aware of?
- If I am unable to attend a class/lab/tutorial, what should I do and/or who should I contact?

Other questions for your supervisor or course instructor:



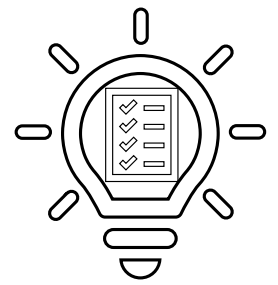
Preparing Your Introduction

Now it's your turn! Review the tables below and check of the ideas that you want to include in your introduction, then take a moment to brainstorm your own ideas below.

What to Include in Your Introduction	
About the Course	About You
<input type="checkbox"/> Goals for the semester <input type="checkbox"/> Expectations for your students (more details in the next section) <input type="checkbox"/> What your students can expect of you (more details in the next section) <input type="checkbox"/> Social norms for the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/> Your Name <input type="checkbox"/> Your Pronouns* <input type="checkbox"/> Your Research <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching philosophy or teaching style <input type="checkbox"/> Your education and background (e.g., What experiences do you bring to the course? What interests you about the topic of the course?) <input type="checkbox"/> A fun fact about yourself so your students get to know you as a person
Setting Expectations	
Expectations for Students	What Students Can Expect From You
<input type="checkbox"/> The structure of the course – what will you and the students be doing when you meet? <input type="checkbox"/> Policy for late assignments, extensions, attendance, grades etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Expectations for student-student and student-instructor interactions <input type="checkbox"/> Online etiquette (e.g., for CourseLink discussion boards or online video/chat platforms) <input type="checkbox"/> Co-create a classroom contract	<input type="checkbox"/> How/when students can ask questions (e.g., do you have office hours?) <input type="checkbox"/> Set boundaries for yourself as a TA (e.g., when will you respond to emails?) <input type="checkbox"/> How fast can students expect to receive their grades? <input type="checkbox"/> How and when can students ask you for a re-grade? (e.g., do they have to ask in writing? Do they have to wait a day or two after receiving feedback?)
What else would you like to discuss with your students during your introduction?	

Take some time to compile your ideas from above and draft a sample introduction you could use.

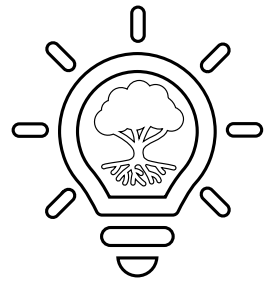
Your Introduction:



Planning Your First Day

Now it's your turn! Use the Preparing to Teach Template below to plan your first day.

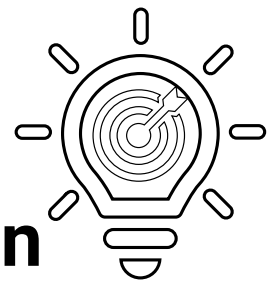
Goal or Purpose:		
Timing	Content or Activity	Materials to Prepare or Access
Wrap Up:		



Managing Your Nerves

Now it's your turn! What are some things you plan to do to help feel confident and prepared for your first day?

Making Teaching Goals and the Importance of Self-Reflection



Now it's your turn! The questions below can help get you started on setting teaching goals for this semester. Give them a try! This also lets you save your goals to revisit them at a later date.

1. What would the best first day of class look and feel like for you as the teaching assistant and for your students?

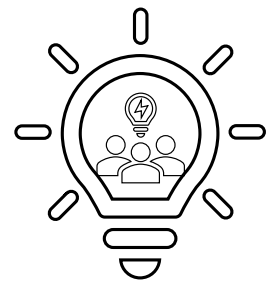
2. What steps can/will you take now to better your chances of having the best first day?

3. By the end of this semester, what do you hope to be able to say about yourself as a teacher? What are your goals for yourself as a TA for the semester, and how can you support yourself in reaching these goals (e.g., reaching out to teaching colleagues for support and accountability, locating resources, attending workshops)?

4. What are your goals for your students for the semester, and how can you support them in reaching these goals?

Now it's your turn! Use the steps of the Gibbs Reflection Cycle to reflect early in the semester.

Description: What happened?
Feelings: What were you thinking and feeling?
Evaluation: What was good and bad about the experience?
Analysis: What sense can you make of the experience?
Conclusion: What do you need to improve on?
Action Plan: How will you improve?

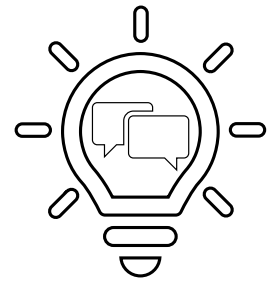


Introduction to Active Learning

Now it's your turn! Plan which active learning strategies you can apply to your own teaching this semester.

What active learning strategies do you want to try this semester? How will you incorporate them in your teaching?

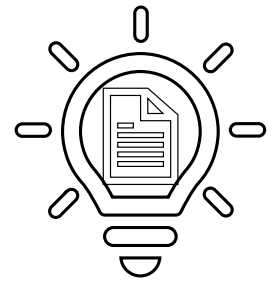
Introduction to Facilitating Discussions



Now it's your turn! Plan which strategies for facilitating discussions you would like to implement in your own teaching.

What strategies do you want to use to facilitate effective discussions?

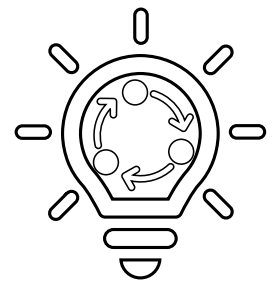
Introduction to Grading and Feedback



Now it's your turn! Reflect on how you can provide effective feedback for your students this semester.

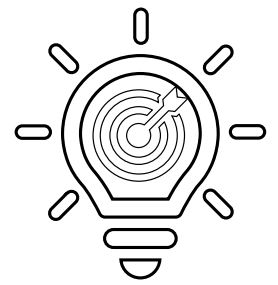
What types of assignments will you be grading this semester? What strategies will you use to help grade and provide feedback?

Introduction to Collecting Feedback from Students



Now it's your turn! Plan how and when you will be collecting feedback from your students this semester.

Make a plan for collecting feedback. How and when will you collect feedback from students this semester? How will you share the results of the feedback with students?



Revisiting Your Teaching Goals

Now it's your turn! The questions below can help you reflect on your TA experience (the first three questions below relate to questions #3 and #4 from [Making Teaching Goals](#)).

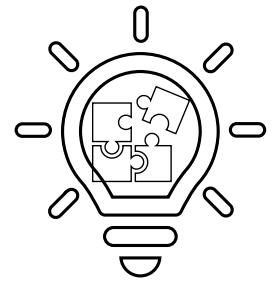
1. How would you describe yourself as a teacher and your approaches to teaching? Does your answer match what you wrote at the beginning of the semester? If so, how? If not, why not?

2. What were your goals for yourself as a TA for the semester? Were you successful in reaching these goals, why or why not? Did your goals change throughout the semester? What are your future teaching goals?

3. What were your goals for your students for the semester? Did your students reach these goals? How do you know?

4. Thinking about the past semester, what things would you stop doing or do differently? What would you like to start doing in future teaching roles? What worked well that you will continue to do?

Skills Developed Through Teaching Assistantships

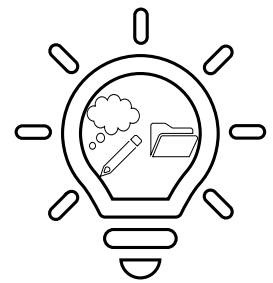


Now it's your turn! Reflect on and record what professional skills you have been able to develop this semester as a TA.

What skills did you develop as a TA this semester?

How did you develop these skills? Which skills would you like to continue developing as a TA?

Reflecting On and Documenting Your Teaching Experiences



Now it's your turn! Use the table below to start keeping track of information related to your teaching experience that can help with developing a teaching dossier. There is also space to record your answers to some of the additional questions for reflection.

	Notes
Position (e.g., TA, sessional lecturer)	
Course name	
Year and semester	
Course format and days (e.g., weekly 3-hour lab)	
Program level (e.g., first year course)	
Number of students	
Responsibilities (e.g., grading written reports, facilitating seminar discussions)	
Reflections (e.g., what did you learn while teaching this course, what worked well, what would you change, how did this teaching experience affect your practices?)	

<p>Evidence What evidence related to this course have you collected to possibly include in a teaching dossier (e.g., TA evaluation, informal student survey, lesson plan)</p>	
--	--

The following are additional questions that you can use to reflect on your first semester and/or to help develop a teaching philosophy statement and dossier. Space has been provided on the next page to reflect.

1. What is your approach to teaching? What teaching strategies do you most often rely upon? Why?
2. What characteristics describe an ideal university learning environment?
3. What are your strengths and skills as a teacher? What strategies have been particularly effective in terms of student learning and engagement?
4. What areas of your teaching require improvement? Why? How do you intend to improve?
5. What strategies have you used to evaluate and gather feedback on the effectiveness of your teaching?
6. What have you learned about yourself as a teacher? Have your students, peers, or the instructor provided direct feedback? What have you discovered about your teaching based on this feedback?
7. What teaching tasks do you find the most rewarding? Which teaching tasks do you find the most challenging?
8. What is the most significant thing that has happened to you as a TA?
9. What is your proudest teaching moment? Why?
10. What teaching moment do you feel most dissatisfied about? How can you improve upon this?
11. What are your future teaching goals?

Answers to additional reflection questions: