

Being a TA at SLA Beeber

There are multiple ways and methods to being a good student-teacher, but it's important to have access to different approaches to teaching and different methods to try out. Here are some highlights that I found important to creating and maintaining success in my placement class.

Get to know everybody

- Getting to know everybody is an important part of establishing a relationship with the underclassmen who you are now interacting within an academic setting. The most common and efficient way to get to know everybody is to find out their names. One way I found the most interactive is by going around and personally asking students for their names. It shows that you're trying and it also allows them to ask your name if they don't know you.
- A less interactive and much more formal method of learning everybody's name is by doing attendance. I know there have been instances where TAs are tasked by their placement teacher to do the attendance, but if that's not something you usually do, you can offer. More often than not, the teacher will let you do that.
 - A good time to learn everyone's name is within the first month.

Your teacher is your greatest resource

- At the beginning of your TA journey, you will be spend most of your time observing your teacher placement. This phase is important because it should work as a major influence on the way you navigate your classroom as you begin to develop teaching strategies. Take note of their successful tactics that you would love to test and explore. Some things to observe about your teacher are:
 - Which students the teacher tends to help more
 - The different approaches they use to introduce important concepts
 - Methods the teacher uses to moderate the students' efficiency and keep them on task.
- Ask questions! You are there to learn too, so there shouldn't be any hesitation to ask for assistance or clarification from your assigned teacher. They will always be willing to help and reiterate.

[How observing other teachers can improve your teaching.](#)

Be a familiar face

- Make sure you constantly show up to class. You get a lot of freedom in this class, so the teachers aren't keeping track of your attendance. To familiarize yourself with the class beyond knowing their names, it is dire that you interact with them. The biggest way to do this is to be friendly.
- Being friendly is a broad concept in the classroom, but there are many methods to achieving it.
 - One is by being their friend—in its actual intention. Although you are in a place of authority, you still are a student. A student who has probably been in the same class as the students in your placement. A sense of trust can be created without you trying to assert your dominance over them.
 - This is the method I always used, and it has so had much success that the students in my placement class have greeted me or started a conversation with me outside of class.
- This source has great tips, and they are ones that I have subconsciously used to interact with students. One thing to remember is that these methods are probably best used casually. (not TOO casual, you're still in the classroom!) You never want to force yourself onto students. Find an opening where you can fluidly slide into a comfortable state with them.
 - [6 Easy Ways to Build Relationships with Your Students](#)

Build your credibility

- There are many ways to build your academic credibility. I found that the most effective way is to start by minding everybody's business—academically of course. Usually in classes where there is a lot of group work, it's easier to insert yourself into their discussion or group activity. No student is perfect and casually helping them eliminates the fear of asking a TA, or even their teacher, for help.
- You also have to prove yourself to be reliable. Know what's going on! Students aren't only confused about how to do something, but also about what to do. Even if you didn't know the instructions of the assignment before class, pay attention when your placement teacher is going over instructions. Even if you're not the most capable in the subject you are placed in, helping clarify the instructions to students who may have missed it goes a long way.

Know what students to help

- As a student, you know there are consistently diligent students, and students who need more guidance. Other TAs and I have found that the ones who need a little push benefit the most from learning strategies like 1-on-1 because it helps them stay on task and opens the floor up to more questions.
 - I've had experiences with students that I've regularly worked 1-on-1 with who later came to me for the same 1-on-1 help. Consistency is key to building relationships and opening a line of communication with you and your students.
- Though it's more interactive to focus on helping students that need the help more, don't forget to check on the diligent students too.

Keep up with your log

- A recurring assignment you will be given in the TA course is a quarterly submission of a TA log that you are expected to keep updated. Not only is it a big part of your grade, but also useful in keeping track of occurring events in your classroom, burning questions that were taken from your documented experience, and/or notes from a recent meeting with your teacher.
 - My advice for keeping up with the log is by filling it out during class. If something memorable happens that you wanted to document, try taking a little bit of time during the next class to fill out a line in the log instead of remembering to do it on your own time. Use the class periods as times to do assignments for the course (TA log, lesson plan creation, etc)

Regularly meet with your teacher

- As a TA, you need to get in the habit of scheduling meetings with your placement teacher regularly. These meetings do not have to be every week, it could be once a month, or once a week, but make sure you are constantly checking in with them.
- Use these meetings as an opportunity to address any questions you may have about situations in your placement. Later in the year, you will need to meet with your placement teacher while you are working to create your lesson plan. They will be able to help you the most and give you feedback on your developing task. *Remember your teacher is your greatest resource.*
- In addition to meetings with them, take the time to email them about changes in your schedule. You need an open line of communication with your teacher to prevent constant confusion.

Get access to Canvas!

- Getting access to Canvas makes all of your teacher's given assignments visible to you. Every TA is encouraged and expected to meet with their teacher, but sometimes, your placement teacher might spontaneously make a new assignment. Having access to Canvas makes impromptu changes in the lesson plan easy to inform yourself on.
- With access to Canvas, you can also fill a grading role in the classroom. Teachers do get overwhelmed with grades so as their TA, they may task you with grading some small assignments to ease their workload. If this is a job that your placement teacher has talked to you about your preferred role in the classroom, it's always an option to engage yourself within the classroom and hopefully reveal what students might need more help..

Develop independence

- At the end of the year, you should be long past sitting in the back of the classroom all of the time—even though it's all you can do during some classes. Independence is something you gain by naturally filling roles that just need to be filled at the time.
 - There are many examples of this. One is by taking the role of authority when your teacher is out. If you have access to their Canvas and have been in contact with your teacher, filling the role of a substitute is something that you can
 - Some TAs, like myself, specialize in helping students with their assignments. One way of developing independence is by constantly filling roles that you always fill. If you always walk around and monitor the students without your placement teacher giving you that task, you are fully able to step into the role of an actual teacher
- This is something that takes more time to develop. You aren't expected to teach a lesson on your first day as a TA, but if you consistently observe, learn and create, you can quickly be an inspiration and role model to the kids, while developing experience in the teaching field.