Bad Teaching Advice

Ask The Practical Professor #3

Dear Practical Professor,

I enjoy reading your tips every week, but do you have any bad advice for teachers? It would be fun to read, and it might also be good to know. Thanks!

J.F. – Good idea! Here’s some bad advice for anyone who wants students to seek them out for help.

B.S. – Always sound as smart as you can in class. Use lots of jargon and “college words,” and never, ever admit when you don’t know something. Be perfect and all-knowing.

J.F. – You also want to make sure you project your clear assumption that students are weak, lazy, and not dedicated. This is especially important on the first day of class. You should organize your course this way (with pop quizzes, surprise assignments, etc.) and make your syllabus as intimidating sounding as possible. Take a defensive tone in all your interactions and communications with students.

B.S. – That’s good! Never require that students meet with you and never remind students of your office hours and availability after the first day of class. Never mention in class that students have been meeting with you. Always do your most important prep work right before class, so that if a student swings by before class, you can’t talk. Fill your schedule immediately before and after class with meetings, so that you’re unavailable when students are most likely able to talk.

J.F. – This should go without saying: always keep your office door closed. Give students nothing more than the room number of your office. Don’t use reference points on campus to make it easier for them to find you. Even better, teach back-to-back classes. That way, you’re less able to help students before and after class when they are already on campus and likely most aware of the questions they have and the help they need.

B.S. – When you’re teaching, pretend that you have no personal life and at the same time make the class all about you and what you know.

J.F. – Yes, and under no circumstances ever mention any recent interactions with children or dogs. You do that, and students may find you approachable and start coming to you for help.
Also available!

Teaching

A series of practical and innovative teaching tips for college faculty

The Top 10…

No. 1 – The All-Important First Day of Class
No. 2 – Ways to Make Your Teaching Life Easier
No. 3 – The Crucial Second and Third Classes
No. 4 – Ways to Show Students that You Respect Them
No. 5 – Promote Effective Student Study Skills
No. 6 – Components of a Well-Planned Class
No. 7 – Observe Your Teaching Tendencies
No. 8 – Ways to Keep Your Students Learning
No. 9 – Ways to Get Feedback on Teaching from Students
No. 10 – Using Short Writing to Assess Learning
No. 11 – Getting More (and Better) Student Questions
No. 12 – Mixing Things up Mid-Semester
No. 13 – Engaging Different Input Preferences
No. 14 – Helping Students Stay the Journey
No. 15 – Ways to End Your Course
No. 16 – Resources for Learning and Teaching
No. 17 – Create a Memorable AND Functional Syllabus
No. 18 – Ways to Build Your Students’ Self-Efficacy
No. 19 – Practical Study Tips to Share with Your Students
No. 20 – Laddering Thinking Skills
No. 21 – Learning Based Ways to End Lessons
No. 22 – Ways and Reasons to Be Vulnerable While Teaching
No. 23 – Using Student Groups
No. 24 – Components of a Complete Learning Experience
No. 25 – Ways to Use Visuals for Learning
No. 26 – Students’ Locus of Control
No. 27 – Help Students with Rigorous Writing Assignments
No. 28 – Ways to Shake Up Your Teaching
No. 29 – Teaching to Inspire
No. 30 – Paths to Mindfulness

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