



Learning Students' Names

Research is clear that good teachers in higher education are those who build relationships, and learning students' names is a beginning step in that process. It can be a daunting task—especially in large classes—but fortunately there are numerous strategies to help faculty in this endeavor.

The following are a few helpful tips for learning students' names in the first days of a new academic term:

1. Name Tents and Photographs

Ask students to write their first and last names on the front of a folded piece of cardstock, which becomes a *name tent* for use during each class period. Additionally, the study of digital photographs of each student holding his or her *name tent* can be a helpful way to test your knowledge of names outside of class (see accompanying video for example).

2. Peer Introductions

Facilitate peer introductions during class by asking students to assemble into pairs and providing them a couple of minutes to get to know each other. As each person introduces his or her partner, students will learn names and interesting facts about others in the class more quickly.

3. Interesting Facts

Each person in your class wants to be perceived as important; therefore, learn something unique about each student and use it to your advantage to build relationships and accentuate points and examples of course concepts. Arrive early to class and talk informally with students as they arrive. Discuss favorite hobbies, activities, or career aspirations.

It has been said that *people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care*. Learning names of students is the first step in creating a positive learning atmosphere.