

# 10 TIPS FOR TALKING TO TEACHERS

1. **Make an appointment to meet and talk.** This shows the teacher that you're serious and you know he or she has a busy schedule. Tell the teacher how much time you'll need, be flexible, and don't be late.
2. **If you know other students who feel the way you do, consider approaching the teacher together.** There's strength in numbers.
3. **Think through what you want to say before you go into your meeting with the teacher.** Make a list of the items you want to cover. You may want to copy your list for the teacher so both of you can consult it during your meeting – or give it to the teacher ahead of time.
4. **Choose your words carefully.** *Example:* Instead of saying “I hate doing reports, they're boring and a waste of time”, try “Is there some other way I could satisfy this requirement?”
5. **Don't expect the teacher to do all the work or come up with all the answers.** Be prepared to make suggestions, offer solutions, even recommend resources.
6. **Be diplomatic, tactful, and respectful.** Teachers have feelings, too. And they're more likely to be responsive if the purpose of your meeting is conversation, not confrontation.
7. **Focus on what you need, not on what you think the teacher is doing wrong.** The more the teacher learns about you, the more he or she will be able to help. The more defensive the teacher feels, the less he or she will want to help.
8. **Don't forget to listen.** Many students need practice in this essential skill. The purpose of your meeting isn't just to hear yourself talk.
9. **Bring your sense of humor.** Not the joke-telling sense of humor, but the one that lets you laugh at yourself and your own misunderstandings and mistakes.
10. **If your meeting isn't successful, ask another adult for help.** “Successful” doesn't necessarily mean getting what you want. Even if the teacher nixes your request, your meeting can still be judged successful. If you had a real conversation – if you communicated openly, listened carefully, and respected each other's point of view – congratulate yourself on a great meeting. If the air crackled with tension, the meeting fell apart, and you felt disrespected (or acted disrespectful), it's time to bring in another adult – perhaps the school counsellor or another teacher you know and trust. Once you've found help, approach your teacher and try again.