How to Talk to Professors!

Step 1: Make an Appointment.
- Review the syllabus for your instructor's office hours. Go to his/her office during those hours.
- If you are uncertain of your instructor's office hours, ask your instructor after class!
- If your schedule conflicts with the office hours, tell your instructor why you cannot make the scheduled office hours. Then tell him/her about your specific concerns.
- Set up a specific time to meet with your instructor.

Step 2: Establish Rapport.
- Be on time for your appointment.
- When you arrive, be pleasant, smile, introduce yourself and remind your instructor what class you are in.

Step 3: Present Your Concern.
- Focus on the specific questions you have identified as problems.
- Have your problem(s) written out so that the instructor can see where your difficulties lie.

Step 4: Provide Background Information.
- Briefly tell your instructor about your high school background and preparation for the course.
- Explain the study strategies you have used to understand the material.

Step 5: Redirect for Clarification.
- If the instructor's explanation isn't clear, redirect his/her attention to the specific point where you become confused.
- "Talk through" your problem so that the instructor hears your reasoning.

Step 6: Summarize Resolution of the Problem.
- "I was missing this step in... I need to apply this formula..."

Step 7: Thank Your Instructor.
- Ask to come back if necessary.

(This advice, developed by the Retention Office at the U. of Toledo, first appeared in Recruitment and Retention in Higher Education.)