



## Preparing to participate

Active participation is a skill that you'll need to develop. It's not just the ability to ask a question, or being an extroverted person.

You need to know the content or at least have some idea of the structure of the class you're attending. What's more, you need to make sure that you're ready to learn. This means building on previous knowledge, scaffolding ideas, and learning new information.

However, it can also mean having to wrestle with differing opinions, views, or even having to shift your beliefs and form new conclusions. If this happens, you need to be prepared to do it in the most productive way possible.

The areas below are just some preliminary steps you can take to prepare for your classes. They'll help to make sure that you're an active member of the class, no matter what format the class takes.

### Preparing for the lecture, tutorial, or workshop

Have you completed your mental checklist for each of your classes? If you're studying full time, you'll have four units at any given time. This means you're likely to have around four to eight classes to prep for each week. Yes, this does seem daunting, but it's easily accomplished if you're prepared. This little checklist may be helpful to get your head into the right space before each class. Ask yourself:

- Have I downloaded the lecture/tutorial notes?
- Have I read the set readings for the week? See [The why, when, and what of reading](#) (PDF, 382 kB) and [How to read effectively](#) (PDF, 519 kB) for tips.
- Have I completed any self-directed activities required for the class?
- Have I checked the unit schedule in the Learning Guide for any extra information?
- Do I know where I'm going this week (sometimes rooms change week to week)?
- Have I prepared notes from the learning content?
- Have I been to the toilet (just before the tutorial... seriously! It seems many students forget every tutorial)?

### Having a positive attitude and open mind

Do you ever find yourself asking the question: why bother trying to be positive or open-minded the entire semester? Maybe it's in response to attending yet another class talking about stuff that just isn't your cup of tea. It's week 9 and you've had enough!

Well, no, it isn't easy to stay positive and open minded 24/7. It *is* important, though, to ensure you manage your time well so you can allow spaces for rest and relaxation. If you come into a class with a negative attitude and closed off to what will be presented, you automatically put your body in a state of stress. You are transforming that experience into one where you're almost guaranteed not to get the most out of the class.

So, to ensure you don't rob yourself of the opportunity to engage fully, give yourself some time to get into the right frame of mind.

### **Encouraging and supporting your peers**

Surprise! Almost all of your peers are in a similar circumstance to you.

Your class will be so much more productive and enjoyable if all students encourage and support each other. Take some time to look at the 'Phrasing' section of [Communicating your ideas](#) (PDF, 75 kB) to find some useful ways to approach discussion in classes. Even if you bitterly oppose someone's views or opinions, you can still be supportive and not tear them down.

### **Practise your skills**

You may be naturally talented at some things and may find others are more of a challenge. Can you easily talk with your peers but struggle to put together a presentation for a class? Can you make the best looking presentation that wows everyone but can't properly communicate your content? Knowing your skills is important for being able to get the most from a class but also to ensure you build on your strengths and then work on the skills that you know are not yet developed or refined.



#### **Activity: Learning your strengths**

A useful task to help in you in understanding how well you can participate in your classes is to assess your skills and traits. Have a look at the strengths activity in [Track, Progress, Success](#) (PDF, 125 kB).

### **Ask questions, seek advice, request feedback**

'There is no such thing as a stupid question unless you never ask it.'

Not sure how you're travelling? Unsure if you correctly understand the content? Feel like you're missing something? Ask! It is forever surprising how many students never ask a question and regret it later.

Your lecturers, tutors, professional, and technical staff are employed to facilitate your learning. Part of their role is to ensure you are progressing, understanding, and engaging with your course content. However, they're not mind readers, and nor can they anticipate every possible question. You'll have the relevant academics' contact details in your Subject Outline. Make use of them!