



# Graduate Orientation 2016

Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

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University of Alberta Earth & Atmospheric Sciences  
Graduate Students' Society



# Benefits of being a TA

- *You never truly know something until you can teach it to someone else*
- Presentation skills
- People skills
- 'On the spot' thinking
- Improve your CV
- Graduate Student Teaching Awards



# Two simple rules

- **Be prepared**
- **Don't make up answers you don't know**



# Good Teachers

- Well prepared
- Organized
- Interested and engaged
- Patient and helpful
- Respectful



# What TA'ing involves

- Preparing for the lab
- Introducing the lab to the class
- Helping students during the lab
- Helping students outside the lab  
(office hours)
- Marking labs



# Preparing for lab

- Read lab and background BEFORE class
- Examine rocks, fossils, etc. before class
- Do the lab before lab to catch mistakes or problem areas
- Arrive early to set up the lab
- Know where extra equipment and supplies are stored



# Introducing the lab

- State key objectives and why the lab is important
- Be clear with expectations for lab/assignment
- Outline what students do in sequential order
- Highlight potential problem areas
- Go over key points and problems in previous labs
- Be BRIEF and CONCISE (15 minutes is ideal)



# Presentation Tips

- Prepare well (don't wing it)
- Rehearse what you will say
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Project your voice
- Make eye contact
- Where possible, show rather than tell
- Be excited!



# Working with your Co-TA

- Take turns with presentations and marking
- Work as a team!
  - Answering questions
  - Student expectations
  - Lab materials/answers
- Keep it professional and lead by example
- Don't interrupt, but ask if there is anything to add
- Check with other TA's for the class



# Helping students in the lab

- Get to know names ASAP
- Be proactive in offering help, but not pushy
- Ask questions, don't give answers
- Be enthusiastic, respectful, and encouraging
- Encourage group work and discussion
- Watch for students that may be too shy to ask for help
- Be fair with time
- NO CONDESCENSION



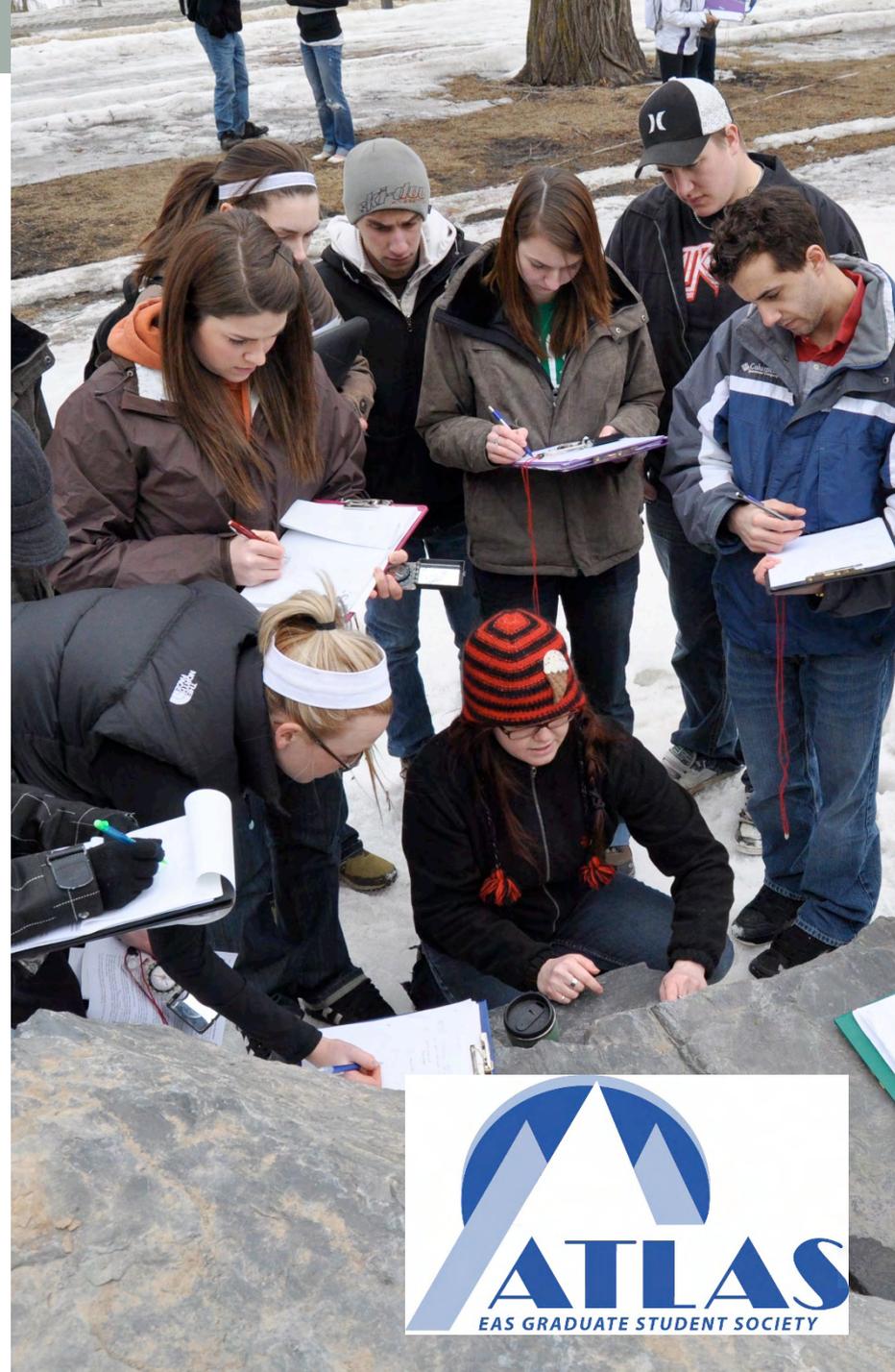
# Helping students outside the lab

- Students REALLY appreciate TA's who are available outside of the lab
- Don't let them take up all of your time



# Marking

- Make expectations clear early on
  - Provide examples
- Be prompt (about a week turnaround)
- Be fair (no favoritism)
- Be consistent (between sessions and weeks)
- Give them the benefit of the doubt



# “Don’ts”

- Don’t criticize the course, the prof, or other TA’s in front of the students
- Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know.”
- Don’t try to be buddies
- Don’t make inappropriate jokes
- Don’t be afraid to go to the prof with questions or problems
- Don’t engage students that contact you inappropriately
  - Tell students email or office phone only
  - No Facebook or cell phones
  - Cc your co-TA or prof if necessary



# If you are unsure...

- Ask for help!
  - Other TAs
  - Lab Coordinator
  - Professor



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