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