

Support for Chemistry Courses: FAQ's

I. Who can support my learning in chemistry?

- Your professor should be your *first* resource. Make it a priority to attend his or her office hours. If you cannot make any office hours, e-mail your professor to set up a time to meet with him or her.
- If it is 7:00 PM or later you can find the drop in tutors in Doane Hall of Chemistry C.111.

II. What if I am nervous about going to see my professor because I don't know what to ask them?

Your professor is used to helping students who are confused about this material so you do NOT need to be nervous or shy about coming to office hours. However, you will get more out of your time in office hours if you take some preliminary steps prior to showing up. Here are some tips for how to prepare to get the most out of office hours. You should consider doing ONE of these things prior to any visit.

1. Re-read the sections in the book that pertains to the material that is confusing you. Correlate the discussion in the book, including any chemical or mathematical equations, with your notes from class. Make a list of all the things that don't match up between the book and your notes.
2. For each mathematical equation in the reading or your notes, write an explanation of what each variable or symbol in the equation means to you. Go beyond simply naming the variable to looking in the text for a physical, concrete understanding of what that quantity tells you. Make a list of all variables that you don't understand at this level.
3. Attempt to work the homework problems that were suggested for this material. As you work the problems write an explain for WHY each step in the solution makes sense. How does it correlate with the reading and the class notes? Make a note of each step of each problem for which you cannot come up with an adequate explanation.

You do not need to do ALL of these things before every visit, but you should pick one to work on. Your goal at office hours should be to obtaining satisfactory explanations for the inconsistencies you have noted, or symbols you don't understand, or for steps of the problems that you have a hard time completing. Take any lists or notes you make, your work on problems (complete or not), and your class notes with you to office hours.

III. What can I expect my professor to do when I ask a question at office hours?

You should expect your professor to answer a question with a question.

- Your professor is trying to discover what your misconceptions are so that he or she can best help you correct them.
- Pay close attention to the types of questions your professor asks you. He or she is helping you learn what types of questions you need to ask yourself in order to solve a problem you are having difficulty with.