

The Student-GTA Relationship

More than likely, you're only a few years older than the students in your class...so how are you supposed to be their *teacher*? What role do you take? Do you try to be their friend? It's a tricky line to balance. You're still a student, but also a teacher. Here are a few tips to use in developing your own student-TA relationships:

- Like Aretha said, it's about RESPECT. A mutual respect between you and the students is essential for good communication in the classroom. If you respect your students as learners, they'll respect you as an instructor.
- While we all enjoy being "liked," being a TA is not about being a "friend" to the student.
 - It is understandable that you may identify with the students and so determining the appropriate boundaries may be difficult.
 - You are a teacher and in an authoritative position, students who think of you as a friend have difficulty seeing this side of your job, so it is best to maintain a professional distance in the lives of your students.
- Yes, it is important to maintain a role of authority, but be sure not to allow the distance between you and the students to become too rigid. A sense of approachability is desired so that the students feel at ease about coming to you for help.
- It may be difficult, but it is important to portray self-confidence in your role as a TA. Students can be quite intimidating, but it is important to remember that they are in your class to learn what you have to teach them. However, be sure not to let this authority turn into arrogance.
- It is also important to portray authority in the classroom. Do not hesitate to reprimand students when they are in the wrong. This is especially true in the beginning of the semester. If students do not learn that you follow through with the rules of the classroom or laboratory, they will just try to bend more of them. This is especially true about goggles, for some reason they hate those things!
- Be aware of your own assumptions and biases. Do not let these affect your relationships with the students.
- Be yourself. Let your personality shine through in the way you teach and lead the atmosphere of your classroom. For example, if you are a joking person, it will only make you uncomfortable to try to maintain a strict atmosphere...just don't forget about the learning while you share a laugh with your students.
- Since you can't be a close friend to your student, be a mentor! Let students see that you are going through the same struggles of class and work; you'll get through it together.

Based on this great source from Temple University:

N. Cadesky. "Negotiating the TA-Student Relationship and its Challenges." Temple University.

<http://www.temple.edu/tlc/resources/handouts/TAs/Negotiating%20the%20TA-Student%20Relationship%20and%20its%20Challenges.pdf>

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