

BUILD YOUR SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS

Your questions are part of the process.

Being a student means more than completing assignments and passing exams. You also have a role in making sure you understand what is expected of you, know what resources are available, and speak up when something does not make sense.

You do not need to know everything. You just need to be willing to ask, follow up, and take an active role in your education.

Use these six habits to become a stronger self-advocate as a student.

1

Read the Information You're Given

Before asking someone else for an answer, take a few minutes to review the information you already have.

Check your:

- ☐ Course syllabus
- ☐ Program requirements
- ☐ Emails and announcements
- ☐ Student portal
- ☐ Assignment instructions
- ☐ Registration information
- ☐ Financial information
- ☐ Important deadlines

WHY IT MATTERS

You may find the answer you need, and you'll be better prepared to ask a specific question if you still need help.

TRY THIS Create one place where you keep important school information so you can easily find it when you need it.

2

Ask Specific Questions

"Can you help me?" is a start, but a specific question can get you a much more useful answer.

INSTEAD OF

"What do I need to do?"

TRY

"I completed my prerequisite, but I'm not sure whether I need to submit my transcript again. Can you confirm the next step?"

Specific questions make it easier for advisors, instructors, and staff to understand what you need.

TRY THIS Before reaching out, write down exactly what you are trying to figure out.

3

Speak Up When You're Confused

Confusion is not a sign that you are failing. If you do not understand an assignment, requirement, deadline, or next step, ask for clarification. Waiting because you are embarrassed or worried about asking the "wrong" question can allow a small issue to become a much bigger problem. Asking questions is part of being a responsible student.

TRY THIS Before reaching out, write down exactly what you are trying to figure out.

4

Keep Records of Important Conversations

When you have an important conversation about your education, keep a record of what was discussed.

Save:

- ☐ Important emails
- ☐ Financial information
- ☐ Appointment confirmations
- ☐ Important deadlines
- ☐ Advising notes
- ☐ Follow-up instructions
- ☐ Requirement information

After a phone or in-person conversation, consider sending a short follow-up email:

"Thanks for speaking with me today. I wanted to confirm that my next step is..."

This gives you a written record and gives the other person a chance to correct anything you may have misunderstood.

5

Know Your Requirements

Do not assume someone else will always know what you need to complete.

Take ownership of understanding your:

- ☐ Program requirements
- ☐ Prerequisites
- ☐ Application deadlines
- ☐ Entrance exam requirements
- ☐ Transfer requirements
- ☐ Graduation requirements
- ☐ Financial responsibilities

You do not need to memorize everything. You just need to know where to find the information and who to ask when you need clarification.

TRY THIS Keep a simple checklist of your requirements and update it as you complete each step.

6

Don't Wait Until a Small Problem Becomes a Big One

Missed a deadline? Confused about a requirement? Having trouble keeping up? Address it early. The sooner you communicate about a problem, the more opportunities you may have to find a solution.

<div>INSTEAD OF THINKING</div> <div>"I'll figure it out later."</div>	<div>TRY</div> <div>"Who can help me understand this, and what should I do next"</div>
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Taking action early can help you stay on track and avoid unnecessary stress.

A QUICK CHECK-IN

Your Self-Advocacy Checklist

Before you move forward, ask yourself:

☐ Have I read the information available to me?	☐ Do I understand what is expected of me?
☐ Do I know my important deadlines and requirements?	☐ Have I asked questions when something is unclear?
☐ Am I keeping track of important conversations?	☐ Am I addressing problems before they become bigger?
☐ Do I know who to contact when I need help?	

TAKE ACTION

My next self-advocacy step

Write one question to ask, person to contact, or task to complete.

REMEMBER

You have a voice in your education.

Being a self-advocate does not mean you have to figure everything out alone.
It means taking an active role in your education by asking questions, staying informed, following up, and taking action when you need support.

Your education is your journey.
Take ownership of the next step.

Save this for later. You may not need these reminders today, but you might need them when your next question, deadline, or challenge comes up.