

# Being a TA at UCR

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## The Idea

- TAs are the face of the Dpt
  - Critical for undergraduate education
- You need to take it seriously
- Teaching can be a lot of fun

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## How can you achieve this?

- You need the right attitude
  - Pride, professionalism, care
- You need to
  - Prepare
  - Communicate
  - Support each other

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## Having the right mentality

- Fact: TAs and Instructors are on the same team
- Assume the role with pride:
  - You are the Dpt, you are the course, you are the lab
- Communicate and speak up
  - Follow the decisions made by the team
  - Express concerns and objections politely
- Be cooperative and proactive
  - Be a team player
  - Help other TAs

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## Roadmap

- Being a good TA
- Doing good presentations/lectures

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## Being Professional

- Beware of your responsibilities in lab
- In case of problems, take initiative to detect/solve them
- Discuss and determine all policies with your instructor ahead of time
  - Grading policy
  - Lab procedures, student responsibilities
  - Academic dishonesty

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## Being Effective

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- Be a good leader: firm and fair
  - Set rules to make life pleasant for everybody
- Be proactive:
  - Thinking ahead can save way time at the end
- Manage time well
  - In lecturing/lab,
  - Between TA duties and your own work
- Establish relationship with students

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## Plagiarism is an offense

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- **Plagiarism means using another's work without giving credit.**
- **Plagiarism includes the copying of language, structure, or ideas of another and attributing (explicitly or implicitly) the work to one's own efforts.**
- **Unpublished sources are, but are not limited to:**
  - class lectures and notes
  - speeches
  - handouts
  - casual conversation
  - other's students' papers
  - material from a research service

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## Handling plagiarism

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- You don't have to resolve it, just report it!
- Report to the instructor
- Instructor meets the student
  - Usually they confess!
  - Checks facts and claims, if disputed
  - Sends to the appropriate office

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## Roadmap

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## Doing good presentations

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- Preparation
- Oral and Written communication
- Making things interesting
- Humor and jokes

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## Preparation

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- Think about your audience, goal, context.
- Develop your plan (slides, notes, speech)
  - Target to the needs of your audience.
- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse
  - Make sure you know what you are talking about.
  - Have a few skeleton points in front of you.
  - Have fully worked out difficult parts

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## Oral communication

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- Speak in a way that feels natural but
  - **Loud**, and **slow**.
- Speak as in a one-on-one conversation.
- Make eye contact: not all but a few
- Mind your body language:
  - Don't pace up and down nervously
  - Don't fidget with your hands

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## Written communication

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- Write legibly, don't rush
- Use **large** enough letters!
- Try to be concise and clear
- What you write should capture the lesson:
  - Main important points
  - In a stand alone fashion, is possible

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## Being interactive

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- Students are often afraid to ask or answer questions
  - Encourage them!
- Best trick: long pauses work well
  - Try waiting for 3 seconds
- Use questions:
  - Help you see if they follow.
- Answer every question:
  - Even if to only promise to follow up later.
  - But, take irrelevant material *offline*

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## Making Things Interesting

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- Try to use examples
- Motivate your lecture
  - I.e. this is important to know, needed in next course
- Break monotony:
  - Take a vote on current events (who likes the Lakers? Who plays tennis? Who saw the new movie?)
  - Tell them a what happened to you or a friend
  - Ask them a puzzle (even irrelevant to class, solve next time)
- Get a student to do something on the board

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## Humor and jokes

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- Do what comes naturally
  - Try things slowly as you build confidence.
- Must be appropriate:
  - Forget about cultural/religious/political jokes
  - Good rule: make fun of yourself or neutral things
- Prefer jokes with words: not slapstick
- Avoid extremes: too many jokes is not good
  - Find a balance, like everything in life.

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## Some Safe Jokes

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- "Wow, this quiz was difficult, I am glad I am not taking this class"
- Recovering from a "bad" joke: "Anyway, I though it was funny. Good thing I am not a comedian"
- Don't be discouraged
  - They usually appreciate your efforts.

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## Least liked TA attributes

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- Our TA speaks too softly (Number 1 problem)
- My TA is not fair
  - Vague definition of fairness though
- My TA is not helpful, s/he does not know...
- My TA is arrogant and condescending.
- Our TA is never in his/her scheduled office hours.
- My TA favors certain students.

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## Conclusion

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- A TA represents the Dpt and UCR:
  - Be professional
- Do your job well
  - It can be very satisfying
- Try to make things interesting
  - Don't overdo it

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