

Resource Guide

Strategies for Learning Student Names

Learning the names of students in your classroom is a small, but high impact practice that helps build a sense of belonging. Some of the benefits of students having a sense of belonging are they feel more invested in the course, more comfortable speaking in class, and seeking help. This guide describes a strategy for learning student names in your classroom.

- **Pre-Study:** Use the class roster to study students' names before classes begin. Even just ten minutes of flashcard-type study by covering up the names to test yourself can give you a head start once you get to the classroom and use the following techniques.
- **Attend:** Ensure you are actively listening when students introduce themselves. It is easy to get lost in our thoughts, multitask, or prepare for the next portion of class. Focusing and paying attention when someone is telling you their name is essential.
- **Say:** Say the name at least twice during your interaction, out loud if possible. Repeating the name will help the name information to be stored in your long-term memory. This can also help you correct mispronunciations of names outside your native dialect.
- **Associate:** It is easier to remember names when you can associate other facts with the person. Relate the student's name to other information you have about them like which class they are in, a hobby they have shared, or some other neutral fact. You can use keywords or mnemonics to help you create associations.
- **Retrieve:** Your memory will be stronger if you practice the new name. Practice remembering the name by repeating it (and mnemonic, if used) shortly after your introduction. If you are heading back to your office after class, try repeating the name once you get there, or halfway back and when you arrive if you have a longer walk.

Resources

Miller, M. D. (2024). *A Teacher's Guide to Learning Student Names*. University of Oklahoma Press.

Glenz, T. (2014). Learning Students' Names. *Journal of Best Teaching Practices*, 1, 21–22.

Cooper, K. M., Haney, B., Krieg, A., & Brownell, S. E. (2017). What's in a Name? The Importance of Students Perceiving That an Instructor Knows Their Names in a High-Enrollment Biology Classroom. *CBE Life Sciences Education*, 16(1), ar8. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.16-08-0265>

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center by email at cttl@slu.edu.