

# REDUCING HABITUAL CLASS TARDINESS

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## **Abstract:**

This article is intended to offer professors an alternative solution to the increasing occurrence of late arriving students. At any given time it is not unusual that at least five to ten percent of the enrolled students will enter the class after the professor has started the lecture. While arriving late in the past may have been viewed as irresponsible, today students often feel entitled to do so. This article describes a technique used to reduce student tardiness and possibly improve class performance.

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**Keywords:** Class behavior, tardiness, classroom performance, grading

## **Introduction**

When students intentionally do not enter the classroom until fifteen or more minutes after the class begins, it can be both annoying and disruptive. Although they are still in the minority, many students are no longer embarrassed when they make a late and noisy arrival. Several of these students often carry evidence of the cause of their lateness in the form of recently purchased fast food or hot coffee. Unfortunately, this behavior is detrimental to all. It interrupts the professor's lecture flow, distracts seated students, and places the tardy student at risk of missing valuable information.

## **A possible solution**

Repeated pleas and warnings to late students have a tendency to result in nothing more than an ear full of excuses, such as "my alarm clock didn't work," "I had to drive a long distance," or "I was hungry." Frustrated by this situation in my classes, I decided to implement a new approach to address it, with a three prong goal(1) to discourage tardiness, (2) to reward those students who arrive promptly, and (3) to encourage students to read the textbook prior to exams.

In the last few days of the Fall 2013 semester, I administered short, five minute, oral quizzes at the beginning of my Principles of Accounting I classes. The process was as follows:

- a. I would recite several questions or exercises no more than twice each. The questions or exercises were based on the prior reading assignment.
- b. The students were required to quickly write their answers.
- c. If a student arrived during or after the quiz, the questions and exercises would not be repeated for them.
- d. Some questions were simple, such as asking the students to write definitions of terms. The majority of the accounting exercises were more complex and related to the course content.
- e. The quiz was designed to give students an easy 10 point head start on the final exam.

Admittedly, giving students quizzes at the commencement of class is not a novel idea. Many teachers and professors have found the practice useful to encourage students to read the assignments and improve student learning. My approach was distinguishable because of the manner in which the quizzes were administered and how they were used to calculate the students' final exam grade. Specifically, the quizzes were time sensitive, required good listening skills and counted as part of the final exam. Students could earn up to 10 points on the final exam prior to actually sitting for the exam. The final exam, therefore, was worth 90 points.

## **Results**

This technique involved a total of fifty-nine enrolled students. An average of 81.3% of the enrolled students completed all or some of the quizzes. In the past, late and absenteeism was 15-16% or averaged nine to ten of the enrolled students. Because the students were aware of the importance of arriving on time due to the potentially negative effect on their grades, tardiness and absenteeism was reduced to, on average, 6%.

There was little significant increase in the final exam grade in comparison to the previous exam. The fact that the final exam was longer than the previously administered exam may have contributed to the lack of a measurable improvement in grades.

## **Conclusion**

When given an additional opportunity to improve their performance, students will make the effort to arrive early, read the required assignments and participate in class. The following factors may also encourage prompt attendance:

---insuring that the first fifteen minutes of class are effectively utilized

- clearly establishing and reminding students of classroom behavior policy
- linking final grades to class room behavior, where permitted by university rules.

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