

Getting the Academic Help You Need

Asking for help is hard. You're putting yourself out there, admitting that you don't know, exposing yourself to potential criticism. You might worry that your questions will lead others to doubt your abilities, or you might experience the common "[impostor syndrome](#)" phenomenon: the worry that maybe you don't really belong. Or you might feel that, as a good student, you should sweat it out on your own, and that asking for help is only a last resort.

Seeking help is more challenging for some and less so for others. For example, people who already feel confident about a particular subject area are often – ironically – more comfortable asking for help than those who are novices. This makes sense: it can be more intimidating to admit you don't know something if you're not feeling confident about it in the first place. People who don't see their experiences reflected in the environment may have a heightened concern about how they will be judged or accepted, and this, too, can cause worry about asking for help.

It's important to remember that **asking for help is a sign that you care about learning**. It's also an **important form of self-advocacy**. Your questions mean that you want to learn, and that is what you are here for and what you deserve to accomplish. There is no shame in speaking up when you don't understand something yet – with the emphasis on [yet](#).

Five things you can do to help ensure you get the help you need and deserve:

1. Remind yourself that even if everybody else looks like they're breezing through, [they're not](#). Your advisors and faculty know that **all Northwestern students struggle academically at one point or another**, but that they often take pains *not* to make that known.
2. **Go to office hours**. Your professors and TAs reserve that time expressly for you. If you're nervous, try going with a friend! And if you can't make the office hour times, it's OK to ask for a separate appointment. Not sure how to prepare? We have [advice](#).
3. **Make use of your [academic advisors](#)**: they have lots of knowledge and are there to help guide your path.
4. **Take advantage of the academic support services** available to you, through your academic department, [ASLA](#), the [Writing Place](#), and other campus resources.
5. **Reach out to your fellow students**. You'll find that others are looking for help, too. And hearing another student's thought processes can give you new perspective on a problem or idea that you may have been viewing through a single lens.

Would you like to talk with somebody about academic challenges you are facing? [Make an appointment with](#) an ASLA staff member. Your academic advisor and faculty members are also great resources.

More information at northwestern.edu/asla. Questions? asla@northwestern.edu

See [accompanying video](#).