

The Tao Of TALC

What is TALC?

TALC is a large, collaborative "office hour" where students work on their homework assignments in an informal, group setting. TALC is staffed by GSIs who serve as guides, rather than tutors, in helping student groups with their homework problems. In addition to supervised group work, students may discuss difficulties in their conceptual understanding of lecture and reading topics with the GSIs and their peers.

Guidelines for effective teaching in TALC:

- 1) If a student wishes to start a problem, "I don't get number 2!" First pause and ask if anyone else is working on that problem. "IS ANYONE WORKING ON NUMBER 2? Even if you aren't there, you may want to join us while we do it."
- 2) Try to put together groups of 3-6. Try to keep groups under 6 so people don't just hang out and copy down what's going on at the board.
- 3) Hand the chalk to someone. "You drive, we'll navigate." Hold the chalk out until they take it. Once they take it, step back from the board and stand behind or beside them.
- 4) Get everyone in the group up and out of their chairs. Have them put down their notebooks and get them involved in the problem solving process.
- 5) Use the Socratic Method whenever possible. Do everything you can to induce thought and help the students realize that *they* can do it.
- 6) If a student wishes to join the group in the middle of a problem, pause and have the "driver" recap what has happened to that point.
- 7) After the "driver" finishes the problem, pick someone from the group to recap what just went on. I call this the "instant replay."
- 8) If there are signs that students in the group were watching but don't get it, bring them up for a "slow motion instant replay."
- 9) When doing math problems, stress the methodology over the answer. "And you see, you can just use this ratio method for almost any Astro 10 math problem. Just follow these 5 steps every time."

Things not to do:

- 10) Never give out answers.
- 11) Never check a student's paper for correctness. "I'm not a grader, that's not my job."
- 12) Don't write on the board. Only as a last resort or in special cases. "Let the students do the driving."
- 13) Make sure that when you talk, you talk to a group. Stand within the group, not in front.
- 14) Don't get bogged down with 1 or 2 individuals. There's too many of them and too few of you. Keep moving. Get a group started and *walk away*. Don't let groups become too dependant on you.