First day of class

These are a few simpleminded tips for your first hour ‘on stage’. The first section sets the tone for the rest of the semester so it’s worth getting off to a good start.

- Prepare well. It’s worth spending extra time on planning and writing out your first section. In physics, you typically have plenty of material to cover already in the first section so you dive right into the material. Being well prepared also gives extra confidence.

- Give the students all your relevant data — e-mail, office no. and office phone no. — and announce when you will hold office hours. Throwing in a few words about where you’re from and what you do is also a good way to break the ice.

- Get everyone’s e-mail so you can set up a mailing list.

- Do a round letting every students say their name, major and perhaps reason for being in this class. Letting people say a bit more than just their name allows your students to get to know the people next to them and gives you useful information about the academic background of your audience.

- Make sure you are familiar with the organizational details of the course - office hours, grading, midterm, when homework is due etc. Students often ask about these things (even if it was announced in lecture...).

- Tell your students how you plan to structure the section so they know how things are going to run.

- Encourage questions and interaction from the beginning — it’s much easier to get a good ‘flow’ if people interact from the beginning. Also encourage feedback. It will be useful for you and lets your students know you’re open for suggestions.

- Consider arranging “Meet the TF”-sessions (see the TF Handbook).

- Accept that your first section isn’t going to be your greatest — and that that’s fine. Your students are probably also nervous and there are still many months left of the semester.

Good luck out there!