

# Top 20 TA Traps

This list has been compiled by mentor TAs to help you avoid some common pitfalls of being a TA. These are the top twenty things TAs do that interfere with the work of teaching.

## General Management

- Helping groups too much.
- Not comprehending or ignoring student questions.
- Not interacting with students at their eye level.
- Not discussing the main point(s) of each class meeting with the students in the form of a lesson summary at the end of class.
- Not managing your class time wisely. For example: no end discussion in lab or discussion session because your class ran out of time.
- Not managing the chalkboard space appropriately / asking groups to put up too much on the board.

## Cooperative Groups

- Not doing an evaluation of group functioning.
- Not assigning group roles or using them to help dysfunctional groups.
- Not assigning groups according to a plan based on gender and past performance.
- Not having introductions when new groups are formed.
- Not calling on individual students to explain what their groups have written on the board. Note that one way to avoid this is by asking all of the skeptics (or some other group role) to explain their group's answer.
- Not assessing your class and diagnosing which group(s) are having the most problems either with the physics concepts or cooperating with one another.

## Discussion Sessions

- Too much or too little presentation of problem to the class.
- Not having read the discussion problem and checked the solution beforehand.
- Allowing students to use their books in discussion and not giving them an equation sheet (or writing the fundamental equations on the board).

## Lab Sessions

- Being unfamiliar with new lab equipment.
- Not reading the assigned lab problems and solving the predictions and method questions ahead of time.
- FOR COMPUTER BASED LABS: Not switching the computer user in each group during a class period.
- Grading predictions too easily.

## TA Duties

- Not participating in team meetings.

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Periodically, you should review this checklist and examine your teaching habits. What do you need to work on? Your mentor TAs can help you with any troubles you have.

Notes: