My father used to say that anytime you get a new boss, you should ask what his or her greatest pet peeve is and then never do that thing. It wasn’t until recently that I thought about using this advice to help students succeed in my classes and others. Trust me, a lot of professors have the same pet peeves. So, understanding mine probably can help you in many of your classes. So, here is my version of **10 Ways to Tick Off Your Professor**.

1. **Losing or failing to read the syllabus**
   Professors spend hours planning, updating and tweaking each course’s syllabus. I spend an average of four hours on a syllabus, even if I’ve taught the class before. I take that document seriously because I consider it a contract between the professor and the student. I outline all of my expectations in the syllabus and assume I am setting students up for success. Most other professors do the same. It really makes professors angry when students don’t read the syllabus and ask questions about items specifically addressed in that document. Keep it. Love it. Cherish it.

2. **Taking value away from classmates**
   No student should be allowed to impede another student’s learning. This most commonly happens when students make loud noises (on purpose) or talk to others during class. This rudeness really gets me worked up. Students who take value away from other students are removed from my class immediately.

3. **Inappropriate use of technology**
   Texting during class probably is my biggest pet peeve as a professor. It’s just rude and distracting. We’re not so important that we can’t make it through a single class without communicating via technology.

4. **Missing deadlines**
   All professionals work on deadlines. That’s especially true of scientists like physicists. I teach future professionals. There’s not much more to say about that from my perspective.

5. **Discussing grades in class**
   This is the student equivalent of discussing how much money you make with your coworkers. It’s just poor manners and a bad idea. It shouldn’t happen.

6. **Giving excuses**
   Professors aren’t interested in hearing all of the reasons you can’t do something. Just do it. When I hear excuses, I automatically think “everybody’s got problems.” I can’t help it. My pity meter is broken.
7. **Being late**

My father said, “if you’re five minutes late, you might as well be five hours late because it means the same thing.” It means you didn’t care. You think whatever you were doing is more important than what is scheduled. Being late is a sign of arrogance. Be reliable. Show up on time. Being on time also sends an important message. It says “you can rely on me.” It shouts competence, which professors love.

8. **Asking ‘Did we do anything?’**

It’s rare that a student makes it through an entire semester without missing a class. Many of these absences are legitimate with causes like illness or car trouble. Whether the absence is excused or not, the approach to gathering information about the missed class session is one of professors’ greatest pet peeves. You should never ask your professor something like, “I was absent for the last class session. Did we do anything?” Most professors have the same mental response to this question. It’s something like, “No. You weren’t here, and we just couldn’t go on learning without you.” So, how do you find out what you missed in the class? Ask the professor the right way. Say something like “I was absent for the last class session. I got the notes from Amy. What else do I need to do to catch up?” Being proactive about asking for notes or assignments from other students and asking this question correctly alters the professor’s response from snarky to helpful.

9. **Not problem solving**

Students have more access to information than ever before. If you don’t understand a concept or the way something works, look in your notes and textbook first. If you still don’t understand, try consulting what my coworker calls “the Google machine.” Don’t get me wrong, professors want to help you, but they also want you to take an active part in your learning. You can have a more informed discussion with your professor once you’ve clarified what you don’t know and separated what you understand from what specifically still confuses you. In other words, don’t run straight into your professor’s office every time you discover and issue. Try to solve your own problem before you ask for help.

10. **Sighing and whining**

Sometimes it seems students think that if they sigh and whine when a professor starts to give an assignment that the professor will forgo the work. It’s almost like they think the professor will say, “Oh, I was going to give this assignment. I planned it all semester. But, since you sighed, I’ll just skip it.” It doesn’t happen that way. You probably just tick the professor off. In relation to this topic, sitting in the professor’s office and whining also does not help you accomplish your goals. The time you’ve spent griping could have been used toward solving your problem instead of wasting you and your professor’s time.

The above is a lot, but it really all amounts to professionalism. Students reflect in the classroom how they will behave in the workplace. The prompt, prepared and professional students are the ones professors want to recommend for great jobs.