

5 Ways to Get Better at Asking for Help at Econ451

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The following guidelines will help you get the help you need in an effective way. Effective communication is highly valued in the job market and can also help you improve your personal life. This guideline is based on “5 Ways to Get Better at Asking for Help” by Wayne Baker.

1 Know what you want to ask

Identify what you do know and where you are stuck. Why are you stuck there? What information will help you move forward? Knowing where you are is as important for you as for the person helping you.

2 Ask SMARTly

Formulate your request following the SMART method. Here are some examples:

Specific I need help understanding STATA error code r(601), I’m including a snapshot.

Meaningful - why you need it I want to overcome this error to finish step 1 of problem set 1.

Action-oriented - ask for something to be done Can you guide me through the steps?

Real - authentic, not made up I got this error by using the command *use*. Here is my code.

Time-bound - when you need it (reasonable) I’d like to be able to finish my work before next class.

3 Don’t assume you know *who* and *what* people know

When communicating with others, those others are different from you. They do not know what you know, and they may do things in a different way. Be explicit about what you know and what you have done:

- **I know** my computer is a mac and they have a different operating system than Windows.
- **I’ve tried** using “ ” around the file name
- **I’ve googled** “STATA not opening files”
- **I did** followed the youtube tutorial you sent me

4 Create a culture where asking for help is encouraged

Check how your classmates are doing and if they need help too. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

5 Earn responses to your requests by generously helping others in the first place

Connect with your classmates, form study groups and help each other. By being proactive and helping others, others will also want to help you.

References

Baker, W. 5 Ways to Get Better at Asking for Help, *Harvard Business Review*, 2018