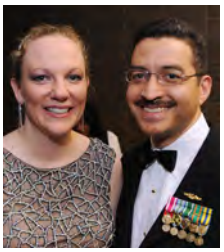
The Daily Question: Building Student Trust and Interest in Undergraduate Introductory Probability and Statistics Courses

Matthew A. Hawks (United States Naval Academy) †



A 23-year Navy veteran and native of Bellevue, Washington, Commander Matthew A. Hawks, Ph.D. Operations Research, serves as a Permanent Military Professor of Mathematics at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. A former submariner and Engineering Duty Officer, he has been stationed in nine states and served overseas on three continents. He is married to Andra; they reside in Huntingtown, Maryland with their seven children.

Abstract

Introducing probability or statistics to disinterested undergraduate students is challenging. I share an unobtrusive way to build trust with students, creating a medium to both naturally create an intimate classroom atmosphere and have your students look forward to attending each class. The context is the United States Naval Academy, a four-year undergraduate institution with an emphasis on leader development. Based on a technique of daily questions suggested by Penn State University Lecturer Dr. Heather Holleman [1], I integrate daily questions with the course content. The daily question offers opportunities for expressions of faith and invitations to further conversations. Anonymous midterm assessments and end-of-term student opinion forms demonstrate initial success of this method.

1 Introduction

> *I liked how he asked the class a question before class started. It made the class a more personal environment and we got to know our classmates better.*
>
> Statistics Student

Can an introverted mathematics professor connect to humanities students a generation removed? Is it possible for non-technically oriented students taking a required mathematics course to look forward to attending class each day? Can a Christian academic at a secular institution mention his or her faith in a math class? The reader will discover the answer to all three of these questions is a resounding "yes."

In this paper, I share a technique that costs a few minutes a day and yields a bounty of trust, interest, and connection, potentially improving the quality of student learning and opening the door for faith-sharing opportunities. I express the motivation for desiring a technique, the technique itself, and the setting for its use in Section 2. I proceed to give examples of daily question types (Section 3) and present results based on anonymous student feedback (Section 4). I also outline a helpful procedure for soliciting midterm feedback known as the Formative Assessment of Classroom Techniques (FACT). Section 5 summarizes the journey and outlines future steps, while the Appendix contains a list of daily questions.

†The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the United States Naval Academy, Department of the Navy, Department of Defense, or United States Government.

2 Motivation and Setting

> *The use of personal questions of the day gave the classroom a relaxed atmosphere. Which is good in a math class–because math is stressful.*
>
> Probability Student

Taking the time to poll the class on a question every day may seem an unwise indulgence. To provide some background, I describe the factors leading to my decision to adopt this approach and portray the environment in which it is used.

2.1 Desire for Connection

Early in my role as a faculty member, several circumstances culminated in adopting a new classroom approach. After a few weeks of teaching, I realized I was not connecting with my probability students as much as I felt I could. My students were mostly Operations Research majors, and as someone with a PhD in Operations Research, I felt I should be able to interest them more easily. This same week of that realization, I learned I would be teaching a required probability course to non-majors during the next term - students potentially more likely to be disinterested. On top of all of this, I was reading through Mellichamp [2] and felt that I was missing out on identifying myself as a Christian in class. Naturally an introvert, I fervently sought something to help me engage my students, or I would easily build a dead-end career in the classroom and lose my students semester after semester. Surely there wasn't a magic button I could push to allow me to build a classroom community and engender interest while sharing my Christian identity with my students, was there?

At this point of desperation, I received my first Faculty Commons Missional Moment weekly email [1]. In the missive, Penn State University Lecturer Dr. Heather Holleman discussed her method of building community in her writing courses. She would simply "ask students to answer one question before [her] teaching begins every single class day. The goal is to bond well with one another, build empathy, and overcome the fear of sharing authentically." She was using this technique as a way to encourage her students to take risks in their writing. Once I reviewed her list of questions, I thought, this is my "magic button." I also saw this tool as a way to vary my teaching practices and reach students with different learning styles [3]. Over the next several weeks, I resolved to incorporate this technique into the non-majors probability course.

It is important to note a few ground rules about the questions. First, students are always able to pass on any given day, since the questions may ask them to reveal more than they are comfortable sharing. Second, responses are only discussed in the context of the classroom, or directly with the person who made the response. Third, class policies remain in effect (adapted from Nardi [4]):

- The classroom is a place of mutual respect between instructor and student, and between students.
- We won't belittle people for asking questions or expressing opinions.
- Debates and critical analysis are good; personal attacks are not.
- We won't tolerate crude, sexually explicit or offensive jokes or remarks.
- We won't use profanity.

With these ground rules in place, the classroom can become a safe place for students to authentically speak their minds.

2.2 Naval Academy Academics

The United States Naval Academy is a four-year undergraduate institution with an emphasis on leader development. There are several ways in which the Naval Academy may be different from other institutions. The graduation ceremony also functions as a commissioning ceremony; graduates serve at least five years in the Navy or Marine Corps as commissioned officers. Classroom sections generally consist of 17 to 21 midshipmen; class attendance is mandatory. Students typically have a demanding schedule that includes 17-18 credit hours each semester as well as a physical education course. Time management is further tested through a professional knowledge training program. Students are responsible to learn and then train their peers and subordinates about Navy and Marine Corps history, programs, policies, and weapons systems. First-year students take weekly professional knowledge quizzes and engage in other projects administered by upperclassmen. Academy academic life also includes healthy peer competition; class ranking or order of merit plays a significant role in determining a student's service assignment following graduation and commissioning, such as opportunities in the more selective communities of Marine Corps aviation or Navy submarine warfare. The athletic and military training requirements on top of academic requirements mean successful time management is a chronic struggle.

Mathematics requirements for midshipmen include a three-semester calculus sequence and at least one additional math course determined by the student's major. Typically, Humanities majors enroll in one of two courses: Probability with Naval Applications or Introductory Statistics. [The fourth-course option of Differential Equations is required of majors in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields.] At this point of the academic program, the Humanities majors are sophomores or juniors. No longer under the strict rules of first-year midshipmen, these students also do not yet have the leadership positions of seniors. In the muddy middle, these students can yearn for both more direction and more responsibility, all the while lacking individual recognition. Furthermore, they fall into one of two groups, those who have no intention of enrolling in subsequent statistics courses (English, History, Language majors), or those who will take a follow-on statistics course as part of their major (Economics, Political Science).

Probability with Naval Applications (hereafter Probability) and Introductory Statistics (hereafter Statistics) are usually seen by the faculty as thankless courses to teach, populated by students who are likely to have a negative view of mathematics. On the contrary, these potentially jaded students are ready for a different experience in a math class. I was ready to help them to see the fun in mathematics and explore the connections amongst each other.

3 Daily Question Types

> *I personally really enjoyed our daily questions; I not only got to know my classmates better, but I felt that the prof. cared about us too.*
>
> Statistics Student

Having amplified the attraction of the technique and the setting for its use, here I outline some examples

of how the daily questions can be integrated with course content, used to establish trust, and even provide opportunities to introduce my faith. These categories are not mutually exclusive - the personal nature of the questions means that even those questions including course content are a means of fostering classroom community.

3.1 Integrating Questions and Course Topics

With some creativity, the daily question can incorporate topical course content. This integration has the benefit of providing the student with an additional access point to the material, a personal connection and interest. Although this interest in the material can be fleeting, Renninger and Hidi show that "triggered and maintained situational interest" can lead to the development of individual interest in the subject material [5]. Several possibilities for introducing topics are outlined here and shown in Table 1. Beyond those presented here, surely there are other questions that can be related directly to probability or statistics concepts.

Topic	Question
Set Operations (Unions and Intersections)	Get in groups of three. What is the most bizarre thing you have in common?
Fundamental Counting Principle	What is your favorite home-cooked meal?
Measures of Relative Position	What were you known for in high school?
Independent Bernoulli Trials	What was your first job?
Hypothesis Testing	Describe a run-in with law enforcement or the USNA conduct system.
Central Limit Theorem	How tall are you?

Table 1: Questions that lead to course topics

One early topic in Probability is Set Operations. To illustrate this topic, form student groups of three and ask them, **what is the most bizarre thing you have in common**? Some groups struggle to find any common oddity. Other groups happen across something interesting, such as common talents, injuries, family names, vacation spots, habits, etc. The ensuing discussion naturally includes the fact that the set of bizarre things about student A may have limited overlap with the set of bizarre things about student B, the difference between unions and intersections, and an illustration using Venn diagrams.

A combinatoric principle typically introduced in both Probability and Statistics is the Fundamental Counting Principle, also known as the Product Rule for k-tuples. This principle can be taught by using the question, **what is your favorite home-cooked meal**? Set up a white or black board with columns for entrée, side dish, dessert, and drink. Then, have students enter their meals appropriately, also instructing them to not bother writing duplicate entries. Once the items are entered, have a brief discussion about any unusual items. Count how many items are in each category and write the totals next to the column headings. Then, pose a question such as the following: suppose this were the menu of a restaurant, and you had to order a dinner consisting of one of each type of item. How many different meals could you choose? In my experience, several students will know the proper calculation. Introduce the mathematical notation, and now they have learned the Fundamental Counting Principle. Further examples could include the following: what if you had to use the restroom - you ask your friend to order fried chicken for you, but leave the other choices up to him or her. Now how many different meals are possible?

The daily question can be of further help with the Statistics topic, Measures of Relative Position (quartiles, percentiles, quantiles). One way to introduce this topic is to use the question, **what were you known for in high school**? Even if the answers do not include being near the top of the class, this question can lead to a discussion on how the top 10% of a class are determined.

The concept of independent Bernoulli trials is part of the definition of the binomial distribution in Probability, and is introduced in Statistics as a step toward estimating proportions. In both courses, the daily question, **what was your first job**? works well. The students get to hear who actually had jobs before college, usually jobs they never want to hold again, and I have the opportunity to explain my first job, a paper route. (Every week, I delivered papers on each of the five weekday mornings, while my brother, who was five years older, only had to deliver papers on the two weekend mornings. We split the proceeds 50-50. Did I mention he was five years older?) My paper route pay was docked $1 for every customer complaint. We treat the receipt of a complaint as a "success." Assuming I can receive no more than one complaint on any given day, and that days with complaints occur with some fixed probability independent of any other day, then each weekday can be considered an independent Bernoulli trial.

Hypothesis testing is fundamental in Statistics, and is sometimes covered towards the end of the Probability course. The question, **describe a run-in with law enforcement or the US Naval Academy conduct system**, can yield fruitful results. In addition to a raft of great stories, someone will usually mention a speeding incident. This example can be used to discuss the presumption of innocence (not speeding), the binary response of receiving a ticket or not, how much evidence is necessary for the police to act, what errors could happen along the way, how a ticket might be successfully challenged, and the calibration and accuracy of speedometers vs. radar guns. This discussion becomes a helpful framework for further teaching on any hypothesis testing topic.

Other topics can be discussed by using the daily question as a data-gathering tool. Several questions eliciting data sets are fun and useful for community building:

- **How many times did you take the ACT and/or SAT?**
- **How much sleep did you get in the last 24 hours?**
- **At this point, how many years will you serve in the fleet after graduation?**
- **How tall are you?**

This last question provides a great opportunity to teach the Central Limit Theorem. Dividing students into groups of four, have them record their individual heights in a table on the board, with one row per group. Ask them to determine the mean and variance of all of the heights, and the mean and variance of the group average height. Even though we do not necessarily meet the conditions required of the Central Limit Theorem, this exercise tangibly demonstrates the equality of means and the reduction in variance when considering sample means.

3.2 Questions to Establish Trust and Build Community

Mathematics can be stressful. Many of the students in the Probability and Statistics courses have one or both attributes shown to indicate risk of math anxiety: women and students who previously received low math grades [6]. I ask some daily questions to simply break the ice and allow for community building.

- **Do you have an irrational fear or strange addiction?**

  I like this question for several reasons; it (1) does not take a great deal of class time, (2) gives me surprising insight into the student's thought processes and influences, (3) allows people to laugh at themselves.

- **What is the funniest thing you did as a child that people still talk about?**

  This question seems to have one of the longer response times, but always leads to laughter and community building.

- **Tell us something quirky about you.**

  Although the question has a high percentage of "passes," memorable responses often occur. There may be strange physical feats or unusual habits that your students will disclose.

- **What is your favorite way to procrastinate?**

  Asked the last meeting before an exam, this question acknowledges that procrastination happens. Their answers give me some sense of the particular student's bent toward extroversion (walk around and start conversations with people) or introversion (go for a run, watch YouTube).

3.3 Questions to Open the Door to Conversations about Faith

A few questions can lead to direct or indirect sharing of faith. Although I teach in a secular environment, I do want my students to know that it is possible to be both Christian and an academic.

I have to be sure that I do not cross the line between sharing my faith and attempting to convert someone to my faith (proselytizing). I have found that students generally understand my intentions. If you do teach in a secular setting, be sure your personality supports maintaining this distinction. In the eight classrooms of teaching with this technique, the only adverse comment I have received was: "I appreciate the candor but the push toward religion was a bit too much for me. (He in no way tried to push his beliefs on us, it was just too often a topic of conversation.)" I do not know which specific question(s) led to this remark, or if it was due to one or more responses given by myself or other student(s). Moral development is one-third of the mission of the Naval Academy, and it is not unusual for religion to form the basis of that morality. Nonetheless, this is one comment too many, and I continue to work to create an environment characterized by both mutual respect and frank discussion.

- **Have you ever experienced something unexplained or supernatural?**

  Be prepared for some truly amazing responses. Each semester I am surprised at the number of "ghost stories" this question solicits. I come away much more informed about the spiritual background of my students and their acknowledgement of the supernatural. Unfortunately, many students express the popular view that anything spiritual can be assumed to be benevolent. For my part, I enjoy sharing a personal story that is particularly unlikely, such as the fact that my wife completed her doctorate while birthing (and subsequently caring for) five children, conducting five out-of-state moves (one characterized by a moving truck fire), and having her husband unexpectedly deployed for seven months.

- **What is your favorite quote?**

Of course, this question can elicit memorable movie lines, but most students will recall something that inspires them to steadfast leadership. Several students will share inspiring quotes from their faith tradition, including Bible verses.

- **What is something you believe that most people might not believe?**

  Some students will go the sports route with this question, e.g. "I believe the Jets will thrash the Patriots this year." Other students share core beliefs, like a belief in the afterlife, karma, aliens, etc. After prayerful consideration, I may share something about the Bible, such as that the Biblical flood actually happened, or that the universe was created in seven days. The phrasing of this question allows for considerable risk-taking, because in stating your belief, you are at the same time stating that you expect most people not to believe it.

- **What is the kindest act you have ever witnessed?**

  These stories will speak for themselves. Adoption, sheltering, financial provision, and various other forms of charity invariably come up as a result of this question.

These daily questions do not solicit conversion testimonies or proclamations of the Gospel. However, they do let the students know that spiritual topics are not taboo. I have the great advantage of being in uniform, so I do not feel a need to work to earn my students' respect militarily. As a PhD (if my students care about that) I have their academic respect. From day one, I can talk about military matters and the course material without any anxiety about justifying myself. So I strive to earn their emotional and relational respect, because softening those defenses will allow me to speak into their souls.

4 Assessment and Results

> *Of all the mathematics professors that I've encountered thus far in my academy career, this instructor is by far the best I've had. [He] very much cares about his students and their success and takes the time to help us both inside and outside of the classroom. I personally do not like math, especially statistics, but he made the class enjoyable and I would highly recommend him to other midshipmen.*
>
> Statistics Student

Unscientific as it is, there is anecdotal evidence that supports the efficacy of the daily question to increase student interest, classroom trust, and faith-sharing opportunities. I review two methods of obtaining feedback, and share some feedback. I am of the opinion that I came across the daily questions due to divine providence, and this feedback confirms that opinion. Positive student feedback in itself, however, is not my reward; I keep in mind what Paul wrote in Colossians 3:23-24: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward." [7]

4.1 Methods of Measurement

Gathering student feedback regarding classroom techniques can be difficult. I employed both midterm and end-of-term anonymous assessments. Perhaps due to the compulsory nature of most tasks at the Naval Academy, there was nearly a 100 percent response rate.

After the first test has been returned (about the 6^{th} or 7^{th} week of the course), I ask the students to consider what is helping their learning, what is hindering their learning, and what suggestions they might have. I use two instruments, a focus group style exercise and an online survey.

For instructors voluntarily requesting a focus group, The US Naval Academy's Center for Teaching and Learning administers a Formative Assessment of Classroom Teaching (FACT) [8]. I provide details here on the process to encourage replication of this formative practice at other institutions. The instructor turns the class over to a facilitator and leaves the room for the last 20 minutes of class. (The facilitator is a volunteer fellow faculty member from outside the instructor's Division [college].) The facilitator then leads the students through an exercise to identify techniques that have helped their learning, hindered their learning, or that they would suggest for their instructor. The facilitator then feeds this back to the instructor, who then debriefs the students. The debrief may include justification for current practices, changes the instructor will make, and/or explanations where changes would be detrimental to learning. FACTs are generally limited to one per instructor per semester. Due to the limited availability of FACTs, I give the other sections I teach an online survey with similar questions, and sequester class time to provide their responses.

Information from both the FACT and the online survey is collected on the same day, but the results can be divergent. The FACT provides a mitigating environment for criticism; students who initially disagree about the helpfulness of a particular method can debate the matter and reach resolution. The individual nature of the online surveys leaves conflicting views unresolved. In any case, by conducting these assessments less than halfway through the term, there is time to make changes for the current round of students, as well as send the message that it is permissible to dialogue about what is and is not working in the classroom.

During the last week of instruction and prior to final exams, departments administer end-of-term student evaluations of teaching and instruction. In the Mathematics Department, these Student Opinion Forms, or SOFs, are administered online. There are free-response course-related prompts and instructor-related prompts. Most of the responses I share here come from the instructor-related prompt, "Personal," which invites students to comment on the instructor's "relationship with students; classroom atmosphere; encouragement; willingness to help; enthusiasm; generation of interest; stimulation of thought; invites questions, discussion." [9]

4.2 Results

In all midterm focus groups (FACTs), the students listed the daily question as a factor that helped their learning. Of 98 free-response end-of-term surveys across five Probability and Statistics sections, 46 respondents (47 percent) mentioned the daily question - all positively. The following responses and the quotations opening each section come from both midterm and end-of-term surveys.

The daily question builds interest and reduces anxiety:

> I really liked how [he] had the class answer daily questions unrelated to statistics. It kept things interesting and students engaged.

> The questions about life you ask during class are a very cool way to keep people attentive.
>
> This instructor does a lot of work with the chalkboard and incorporates student questions and answers into his lessons. Both of which make him a very effective teacher.
>
> Made the classroom a very comfortable environment. I like coming to this class. I learned a lot from the life questions he'd ask us.
>
> I also felt more comfortable because of [him] asking philosophical questions to help break the ice.
>
> Created one of the better class atmospheres that I've experienced and very good at getting to know students. I actually began looking forward to his daily "question" which is not something I can say about all classes.
>
> Fantastic relationship with students. I looked forward to coming to class with this Professor, and hear what he has to say about recent news, or the question of the day.
>
> Asked a question everyday which made the class entertaining and not dreadful like most other math classes.

The daily question builds community:

> Thank you for asking us the "question of the day" before we start covering the day's material. I have never had a teacher do this before, and I think it is awesome. Consequently, I don't think I would ever know the interesting things about my classmates that I now do without you having asked the questions (like the one girl who has dreams every night before her sisters declare their pregnancies to the family, ha! neat!). I was worried about the method at first, thinking we wouldn't have enough time to cover all the material, but I think you spend an appropriate amount of time on the question of the day because we are still able to cover everything we need to before class ends. So, thank you.
>
> ...he fosters an atmosphere of community by asking daily questions (I was skeptical at first, but it doesn't eat up our class time–we still learn all the knowledge we need to know + we now know more about each other than we would ever have known otherwise—people have come up to me outside of class to discuss my remarks in class with me.
>
> The instructor had a great personal relationship with the class as a whole as he incorporated time in class to ask us as a group personal daily questions that sparked conversation amongst the students and shared stories of his family and job life with us as well as his time as a Mid here back in the early 90s. He definitely clicked with the entire class.

> Class atmosphere was very good. I have not had a technical course professor who has encouraged the class to get to know each other as much as he has through name games at the beginning of the year and questions each class period. It was a nice way to break up the traditional Academy classes, and made you think about more than just math

> [He] is professional with midshipman and is a favorite among his sections for the "question of the day" section of class where he asks a personal question to everyone in the class. I greatly enjoyed answering the question of the day and learning more about my classmates.

The daily question makes the instructor appear more approachable and caring, opening the door to outside conversations:

> He is a great guy and you can tell he cares about us and our futures. We do a thing called "question of the day" and the goal is to find out a little bit more of us and for us to find out more about him. Very approachable and genuine.

> My instructor always maintains the highest form of professionalism. However, the difference between him and other instructors is that he actually cared about where each and every students was from, including their life background. He is the only instructor that I have had who has asked a daily question. These questions were usually about our lives and experiences we have had.

The effect of the daily question on learning is not established. To design an experiment to do so would mean depriving some students of this technique. After receiving such positive feedback, I cannot bring myself to conduct such a study.

5 Summary and Next Steps

> *Best teacher I have had when it comes to atmosphere, relationship, and interest. I think the question of the day should be in every classroom on the yard. It takes two minutes, and changes the entire dynamic in the classroom. I think every professor should adopt this.*
>
> Statistics Student

The daily question, incorporated in desperation, has outperformed my expectations. It has been instrumental in raising interest in the course, building a classroom community, and providing avenues to deeper conversations - including those about faith. I will continue to incorporate this technique in future courses. In particular, I aim to find more ways to integrate the daily question with course material. I also hope to spread this practice so that those instructors desiring to build a classroom community have an effective and relatively inexpensive means of doing so.

References

[1] H. Holleman, *The name game professor*, Faculty Commons email, Sep. 2015.

[2] J. M. Mellichamp, *Ministering in the secular university: A guide for Christian professors and staff*. Lewis and Stanley, 1997.

[3] G. D. Lawrence, *People types & tiger stripes*. ERIC, 2009.

[4] P. Nardi, *Day-one slide*, Naval Academy New Faculty Orientation, Aug. 2015.

[5] K. A. Renninger and S. Hidi, "Student interest and achievement: Developmental issues raised by a case study," *Development of Achievement Motivation*, pp.173–195, 2002.

[6] E. L. Calvert, "A study of the relationship between level of mathematics anxiety and sex, age, mathematical background, and previous success in mathematics," 1981.

[7] *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, 2001.

[8] U.S. Naval Academy, *Center for teaching and learning - formative analysis of classroom teaching (FACT) program*, 2015. [Online]. Available at http://www.usna.edu/CTL/FACT.php.

[9] ——, *Mathematics department student opinion form*, 2015.

6 Appendix: List of Questions

There are more questions here than there are class meetings for the typical course. The first 50 questions are from Penn State University Lecturer Heather Holleman. The remaining questions are from the author, with some input from his students, Naval Academy Midshipmen.

1. What is the most interesting course you have ever taken in school?
2. What is your favorite quotation?
3. What is one item you might keep forever?
4. What were you known for in high school? Did you have any nicknames?
5. If you could have witnessed any event in sports history, what would it be?
6. What is something you consider beautiful?
7. What was your first CD or song you played over and over again?
8. What accomplishment are you most proud of?
9. If you could be an apprentice to any person, living or deceased, from whom would you want to learn?
10. What are three things that make you happy?
11. What's one movie you think everyone should see? What's a movie you think nobody should see?
12. Who inspires you?
13. What's one thing you want to do before you die?
14. Get in groups of three people. What's the most bizarre thing you have in common?
15. Whenever you are having a bad day, what is the best thing you can do to help cheer yourself up?
16. Have you ever experienced something unexplainable or supernatural?

17. What was your best Halloween costume?
18. What's the last item you purchased?
19. What was the last thing you Googled?
20. What YouTube video do you watch over and over?
21. What's the kindest act you've ever witnessed?
22. Tell us one thing you know you do well (a talent?) and one thing you know you cannot do.
23. What is your favorite way to procrastinate?
24. What is your favorite home-cooked meal?
25. What was your favorite childhood toy?
26. What do you do other than study? What clubs are you involved in?
27. What was your first job?
28. Have you met a famous person? Who?
29. What's the story behind your name?
30. Do you believe in anything that most people might not believe in?
31. I wish everyone would...
32. What's the best sound effect you can make?
33. What's the funniest thing you did as a kid that people still talk about today?
34. What idea do you think is worth arguing about?
35. Tell us something quirky about you.
36. For what reason do others often seek your help or input?
37. Share your guilty pleasure (something you enjoy that embarrasses youlike watching Disney Channel)?
38. What is one thing that's important for others to know about you?
39. Do you still do anything today that you also loved to do as a child?
40. Do you have any daily rituals?
41. What is the most misunderstood word you can think of?
42. What is the first book you remember changing you somehow?
43. Pass on one piece of wisdom to the class.
44. Do you have an irrational fear or strange addiction? Or something that started in college?
45. What's been the most surprising thing about college?
46. What is your biggest pet peeve?
47. Tell us about any animal friends you have.
48. What did you dream of becoming when you were younger?
49. What's something new you've learned this week?
50. What thought keeps you up at night?
51. What was your favorite thing about last summer?
52. Did you have a back-up plan to USNA? What was it?
53. Who would be your best man / maid of honor?
54. At this point, how many years will you serve post-commissioning?
55. How many times did you take the ACT / SAT?
56. Describe a run-in with law enforcement or the USNA conduct system.
57. How much sleep did did you get in the last 24 hours?
58. What is your superpower?
59. What is your heritage? (for example, my grandparents were from Mexico on my mother's side, and descendants of slaves on my father's side.)
60. What is your birth order?
61. (adapted from 11.) What's one Forrestal Lecture you think everyone should see?
62. What is the most memorable reaction you've had to being in uniform?

63. What is your earliest/favorite/funniest childhood memory?
64. What is one thing you are passionate about?
65. What is a pressing problem at USNA? If you could change one thing, what would it be?
66. Who is your favorite musical artist?
67. What is your favorite ice cream?
68. What topic was your funniest squad meal conversation about?
69. Where do you want to live?
70. What is your service assignment preference?
71. What is the craziest thing a teacher has ever done in the classroom?
72. What is the furthest you have traveled from home? What is the favorite place you have traveled?
73. What is the most important lesson you have learned at the Academy?
74. What are you most looking forward to in the next five years?
75. What is something you learned to do the hard way?
76. What is your favorite thing to do when you go home?
77. What was your favorite TV show growing up?
78. Where did your initial interest in the Naval Academy come from?
79. Tell us your most awkward dating story, or your most embarrassing story.
80. Do you have a favorite sport to watch? Your favorite college football team other than Navy?
81. What is your hidden talent?