Instructor FAQs

I'm about to teach my first class! What should I know?

Members often run late to class, especially on weeknights. You should delay the start of class by introducing members who have arrived on time to one another, and talking about yourself and your role at NextFab. If you hit the 15 minute mark and a member is still missing, start the class.

All our 3 hour software and lecture classes pause at the halfway point for a 5 minute bathroom break. Encourage members to stretch their legs, get a drink of water, and come back with fresh eyes. Timers, if you want to use them, are in the classroom and conference room of each location.

Attendance sheets are an important part of how we keep track of safety and certification. If a member doesn't show up for a class, make sure that you mark it on the paper sheet. If an extra last minute sign up walks through the door, note this on your sheet too. Any interesting notes you learn about your students can also be noted here for the front desk to enter into Member Manager.

As much as possible, try to get a sense of what your members are here to learn and make. The first step in every class is to introduce yourself and then ask all students to do the same. As they explain their motivations, be encouraging and offer suggestions for other classes to take or shops to explore to set them on the path to their goals.

Remember to hand out paper class surveys to your students at the end of class. Before class, fill out your name and the class name at the top of each paper. Members are often bad at remembering your name or the proper name of the class they've taken. Students should deposit the paper surveys back into the survey box, to allow anonymity if they have critical feedback.\

Good luck! It's okay to be nervous. Teaching is a skill that you get more comfortable with over time. Remember, these people want to be here, and are excited to get started.

What is a class? What is a course? How are they different?

For the purposes of distinction, a 'course' refers to the subject being taught as a whole, while a 'class' refers to a single session in that course. For example, the Roland MDX course teaches use of the MDX, but is made up of two different classes.

Is it okay to discuss what materials cost in a workshop or a class?

Yes, definitely! Admittedly, we do charge more for classes and workshops than just the cost of materials. This additional fee helps to compensate for instructor time, machine/licensing use, and facility time. We will never make the cost of a class so prohibitively expensive that we do not feel we can justify it to members. Please feel free to talk about what it costs to make a project so that the member can then go on to make more of them if they so choose.

What do I do if a member says that they want to leave here after taking a workshop or a class, to teach it for their own use or the use of a competitor?

Their desire to do this is not ideal for us, but it's also not against the terms of their member agreement. The student is completely within their right to be 'inspired' by our offerings and then to go make their own. This is just the reality of our industry.

However, if a member ever makes a statement of these intentions, please shoot the education manager an email so that we can all be kept in the loop. Make sure to note in your email if the member has taken photos or videos during class.

Can members take home copies of the presentation?

Nope! This is something we have allowed in the past and recently decided to stop doing. To protect our intellectual property, it is essential that these presentations do not leave the building. Each class has a 'one pager,' a corresponding library article to be mentioned to members at the end of class. It contains the most essential info as a reminder for when they do independent work in the shop. We often have copies of the articles in binders in their relevant shops, and members are welcome to reference these while working. As always, members are encouraged to take their own notes during classes on whatever they feel will be helpful and relevant to them personally.

Can members take photos or videos during class instruction?

Our best members are self-directed learners who understand how they best learn. For some folks, this means that visual documentation will be more helpful than taking notes by hand. Members may take photos or video of technique and machine demonstrations during class as long as they do not interrupt the class flow by doing so. They should be discouraged from taking photos or video of the presentation or any of our other protected class materials. If a member tries to do this, verbally reinforce that they'll have

access to class notes afterwards in our library, accessible through the member portal.

I experienced something weird or something that made me uncomfortable while teaching class. What should I do?

Always feel free to ask education for help if something in class doesn't go right, or if you're stumped on how to teach a unique member or situation. If something happens that you think might be detrimental to you or to NextFab, or if you're not comfortable discussing this event with education, you can also go to HR.

A member was very late to my class, but still wanted to take it anyway.

We should strongly suggest to our members that arrival after the 15 minute mark will mean too much missed material for full comprehension. Our offer to late members is that they go register for the next offering of the class at the front desk, free of charge. However, the member can decline this offer, and sit in on the class or workshop as a late arrival. Late arrivals should be tracked in the member manager notes section, the same way that we track no-shows. If you feel that the member should not receive safety certification based on parts of training they missed, note this on your attendance sheet. Education will reach out to the member to discuss next steps. Member services will step in if the member makes a repeat pattern of late or no-show attendances.

A member in my class lacked the computer skills necessary to gain competency or operate the software.

This occasionally happens. We do make it clear in our class descriptions on our website that these skills are needed to participate, but we rely on members' self-judgment of their skill level as a barrier to entry.

Try not to embarrass the member for their lack of knowledge, but know that it's okay to say they need to wait to have their question answered.

"Sure, I'll come help you in one moment. Just let me finish this example first."

Your goal is to lead the other more tech-savvy students across the finish line, while letting the less advanced member know that their confusion is heard and understood. A solid way to make them feel like they've gotten their money's worth is to offer to stay 10 minutes after class to clarify individual issues. We also have a list of resources that you can recommend for the member, where they can go to take computer operation classes.

A member found an error in our material while I was teaching the class.

Don't panic. If you're confident that the member is right in what they're pointing out, acknowledge it.

"You know, you're right! That's a mistake on our part. Everyone, do you understand why it's this way and not the other? Great. I'll make a note to fix that. Let's move on."

If you're not confident that the member is correct, but don't know if they're wrong either, it's your responsibility to follow up and figure out what the right step is after class.

"I'm not sure, that's a very good point. Let me check on that after class with some research and get back to you."

At the end of the class, I didn't feel that the member was competent enough to give them a certification.

Our ultimate goal for all members is safe use. If you really don't feel that the member will be safe in the shop, let them know.

"I think you made great progress tonight, but it seems like you might need a little more training and practice. Let's talk about the skills involved in getting you certified."

Also note this on the attendance sheet, or talk to the front desk and make sure that it's noted in member manager. If this lack of comprehension can be cleared up in 15 minutes after class, and you're able to stay and help them, this is your best option. If not, encourage the member to come back in for more practice and training with staff, at which point we'd comfortably certify them for independent use.

What are virtual classes, and will I be expected to teach them?

NextFab offers classes taught remotely, called 'virtual offerings' on our separate virtual class calendar. This allows us to teach students with appropriate social distancing, as well as special groups who may not be members of NextFab, but still need to take one of our software classes. Teaching a virtual class is considered a secondary skill for our instructors. After you've been teaching in-person classes for a while, we may train you to teach virtual classes. This is done via Zoom video conferencing. Staff stream their instruction from our instructor recording studio at each location.