



# ACADEMIC TIPS

<http://academictips.org/>

## Abstract

Everything you need to get going at your goal of becoming a better scholar.

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# Study Techniques

## Best Places to Study

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**Library.** One of the best places to study is the library; a nice quiet environment.

**Classroom.** If you're looking for a place where you and a bunch of classmates can go to study, all you have to do is find an empty classroom. Classrooms have everything you need: blackboards, projectors, seats and desks, and no distractions. Note: if you're alone, you'll probably want to keep the door open.

### Feedback from other students:

**Erika:**

If I feel I'll become distracted in my dorm room, I study elsewhere -- away from the phone and TV.

**M.:**

I study in the Honors College study room and lounge, the library, and empty classrooms. I like to vary the location. It's important to be comfortable -- not too hot or too cold. It's also important to get away from nagging family, friends, phone, TV, etc.

**Michele:**

I like to study in the library at least once every day. Why? Because I'm surrounded by other students, some of whom may be in the same course. In the library there are certain sections for quiet and not so quiet studying. There are also private rooms available for studying in groups.

**Sandra:**

I have my own office at home with a big desk and a big chair. There are no phones or TV's in my office. When I'm studying I keep the blinds closed to keep distractions out. If my mind starts to wander, I just remind myself how much time I'm going to save by learning this now and not having to cram later.

**Teayonia:**

I like to study in a not too noisy and not too quiet environment. If it's too noisy I get distracted. If it's too quiet I might get bored.

**Kathy:**

I like to study at home, but I'm trying to get away from that because there are too many distractions at home -- the phone, my bed, the fridge, the radio, the TV. It's a good idea to study at a library close to home or with friends in a group.

**Marko:**

I like to study in the quiet areas at the library and I also like to close myself up in a room at home away from any possible distractions.

**Priyanka:**

I like to study in bookstores. When it's time for a break, I can browse or go get some coffee. That's a nice incentive.

**Muhammad:**

Library is Heaven for studies.

## Concentration Tips

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The art or practice of concentration is to eliminate distraction and focus on the task at hand. If you find that you read through material and suddenly discover that you have no idea about what you've just read, or if you attend lectures and have difficulty paying attention to what is being said, these tips may help.

1. Stick to a routine, efficient study schedule.
2. Study in a quiet environment.
3. For a study break, do something different from what you've been doing (e.g., walk around if you've been sitting), and in a different area.
4. Avoid daydreaming by asking yourself questions about the material as you study it.
5. Before lectures, look over the notes of the previous lecture and read the course material pertaining to the lecture so that you can anticipate the main ideas that the instructor will cover.
6. Show outward interest during lectures (attentive expression and posture) to self-motivate internal interest.
7. Resist distractions by sitting in front of the room away from disruptive classmates and by focusing on the instructor through listening and note taking.

## Note Taking Techniques

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The most comprehensive note taking systems require attention on your part. You must be alert enough in class to take legible, meaningful notes. You can't rely on "writing everything down" because a lot of information in a given lecture won't help you actually learn the material. If you have problems determining the specific relevant points in a particular class, you can always ask the professor to clarify them for you.

### The 2-6 Method:

The 2-6 refers to the way you divide the space on your notepaper. Make two columns, using the red line on the left of the page as your border. Then, when you take notes in class, use the 6 column for the notes and the smaller 2 column on the left as a highlighting system. Write main headings and important points on the left, including material you think you will be tested on. When you're finished, you should have a comprehensive page of information that you can quickly scan for important points. Studying is 99% perspiration; if you give it a real, concentrated effort over the course of a semester you will see an improvement. Your academic success is entirely up to you.

### Split Page Method:

Class lectures and your textbook--they're the primary sources of course content and you need to learn both. So combine them with the split page method of taking notes. Just divide your notebook page in half lengthwise. Draw a line down the middle of the page. Take class notes on one side of the page and outline the text on the other side. When you study you'll have both. Class notes and text together, integrated. Some students find it helpful to add a third column for questions they need to ask the professor.

### Using Group Notes:

Are you tired of struggling to keep up with a lecture while copying page after page of notes in class? My advice? Don't take the notes -- at least not every day. Instead, form a group with some of your classmates and take turns taking good class notes. When it's not your day to be the note-taker, really concentrate on what is being said in class. You might want to jot down a few particularly important points, but mostly try to participate in class. Ask questions when you can't understand the point your teacher is trying to get across, and score points by answering questions your teacher asks. After class you can either photocopy the notes from your classmate, or better yet, copy them over by hand while reviewing in your mind what happened in class.

### Secrets to Taking Better Notes:

As a writer for Edinboro University and its Alumni News magazine, I spend a lot of time interviewing people. A key interviewing skill is taking good notes--a skill that is just as valuable in the classroom. There is no magic to taking good notes, just common sense. It's simply a matter of being thorough and accurate. Now, not many people can write fast enough to capture everything their professor says in class, so it is a good idea to also use a tape recorder. That way you won't miss something while you write, and you can double-check the tape for accuracy. Whether you use a

recorder or not, it's important to transcribe your notes as soon as possible while the subject is still fresh in your mind. By re-writing or re-typing your notes, you become more familiar with the material. You mentally reinforce what was said in class. And you get practice writing the information, making it easier to write the material a second time whether it be for a test or a term paper.

### Noteworthy Notes:

Are your grades as good as you want them to be? Are your notes worth reviewing? Notes are phrases and abbreviations that we hurriedly jot down while trying to follow a lecture. Later, when we go back to review our notes, there are times when we can't seem to understand or remember what those key words and phrases meant; sometimes we can't even read our own handwriting. Here is a note-taking study tip that has proven to be effective. After you have finished class, immediately rush to the nearest computer lab and retype your notes. You need to rewrite those phrases as complete thoughts and sentences; dot your I's, cross your T's and use "cut and paste" to put your notes into some type of a logical sequence. While retyping your notes you are using several modalities: you review as you read your notes aloud, you use your hand to type, and you reread again as you proof read what you have typed. Research indicates that 80% of new material can be recalled if you review notes within the first 24 hours of presentation. Also, clean typed notes are easier to read and highlight as you study. If you retype your notes daily, you will keep the task from becoming overwhelming, you will learn good study habits that aid in memory retention and, at the same time, improve your grades.

### Attend Class:

The most important advice I can give to you is to make sure you attend your classes. Attendance in class enhances the chance you'll get a passing grade in a course. In addition to attending class, it is important to brush up on your note-taking skills to really achieve optimum success. Some general recommendations for improving note-taking skills are to:

1. Read all textbook material relevant to the topic being covered prior to attending class.
2. Make sure you take notes in class. If you fail to take notes, much of what you learn from the lecture will be forgotten in a few days. If you have something written down on paper, you can always refer to the material later.
3. Ask professors who lecture too fast if you can tape record their lecture. You'll generally find that many professors are willing to assist you in your efforts to gain as much from their lecture as possible.
4. By attending class and utilizing the note-taking techniques just described, your chances for success in college will increase significantly.

### Prepare For The Lecture:

The greatest advantage is that:

1. You are familiar with the subject.
2. You know what to ask.
3. You are not going to waste time by writing down stuff that is already there in your study material. Rather, you know what to write, where to pick links and to clear your concepts.

By the time the lecture is over, you are in a much clearer state of mind. This way, taking down notes becomes more meaningful and worth the time you spent doing it.

### Use Colors:

This may take a little bit longer but it will work. Just give it a chance. When you are taking notes change the color of your pen! Don't write in blue or black ink. Writing in color will help you retain 50% - 80% more of the information without reading it a second time (also highlight in purple). I am a teacher of adult education and this is the rule for my class room.

## Skimming Tips

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Recall how you find a name in a telephone book? You don't read any more than necessary to find the name you seek. Notice that you go directly down a column of news. Maybe you use your finger to guide your eyes. This type of reading is usually called scanning. Skimming uses the same type of skill mechanically but a different skill mentally. In scanning, you know what you are looking for. In skimming you don't.

Since you don't know exactly what you are looking for while skimming, prepare yourself by reading the title, source, author, and picture: then you question yourself, -- who, what, when, where is this likely to be mainly about? With a questioning mind you direct your eyes down the column of print, or in a zig-zag, if the lines are quite long. Look for exact names of people, places, things, ideas, numbers, and words like therefore, whenever, until, because, and instead, to clue you to how and why.

When you first start to learn to skim you may see only the words in bold type, italics, digits, or capitalized words. Soon you will note new or unusual vocabulary. As you become an efficient skimmer your span of perception will develop and your ability to make closure will increase.

Skimming is a step you should always take before you read any article of factual or practical narrative. You will soon be able to detect most important facts, strange vocabulary, and words that are clues to important relationships.

It's a good practice to skim everything in mass media after reading the title and first paragraph. You may get all the information you want. This keeps your skimming skills from deteriorating, or will give you the practice you need to develop necessary skills.

Skim everything you intend to read before you make a final decision to read, discard, or study the material.

Skim all highlighting and develop a read-skim pattern to use for rapid review. **And don't overlook this!** Reviewing frequently and rapidly is the best way to memorize (or simply remember information) from notes and long text assignments.

## Time Management Tips

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### 1. A Personal Time Survey:

To begin managing your time you first need a clearer idea of how you now use your time. The Personal Time Survey will help you to estimate how much time you currently spend in typical activities. To get a more accurate estimate, you might keep track of how you spend your time for a week. This will help you get a better idea of how much time you need to prepare for each subject. It will also help you identify your time wasters. But for now complete the Personal Time Survey to get an estimate. The following survey shows the amount of time you spend on various activities. When taking the survey, estimate the amount of time spent on each item. Once you have this amount, multiply it by seven. This will give you the total time spent on the activity in one week. After each item's weekly time has been calculated, add all these times for the grand total. Subtract this from 168, the total possible hours per week.

Here We Go:

1. Number of hours of sleep each night \_\_\_\_\_ X 7 = \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of grooming hours per day \_\_\_\_\_ X 7 = \_\_\_\_\_
3. Number of hours for meals/snacks per day - include preparation time \_\_\_\_\_ X 7 = \_\_\_\_\_
- 4a. Total travel time weekdays \_\_\_\_\_ X 5 = \_\_\_\_\_
- 4b. Total travel time weekends \_\_\_\_\_
5. Number of hours per week for regularly scheduled functions (clubs, church, get-togethers, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Number of hours per day for chores, errands, extra grooming, etc. \_\_\_\_\_ X 7 = \_\_\_\_\_
7. Number of hours of work per week \_\_\_\_\_
8. Number of hours in class per week \_\_\_\_\_

9. Number of average hours per week socializing, dates, etc. Be honest! \_\_\_\_\_

Now add up the totals: \_\_\_\_\_

Subtract the above number from 168.  $(168 - \text{_____}) = \text{_____}$

The remaining hours are the hours you have allowed yourself to study.

## 2. Study Hour Formula:

To determine how many hours you need to study each week to get A's, use the following rule of thumb. Study two hours per hour in class for an easy class, three hours per hour in class for an average class, and four hours per hour in class for a difficult class. For example, basket weaving 101 is a relatively easy 3 hour course. Usually, a person would not do more than 6 hours of work outside of class per week. Advanced calculus is usually considered a difficult course, so it might be best to study the proposed 12 hours a week. If more hours are needed, take away some hours from easier courses, i.e., basket weaving. Figure out the time that you need to study by using the above formula for each of your classes.

Easy class credit hours \_\_\_\_\_ x 2 = \_\_\_\_\_

Average class credit hours \_\_\_\_\_ x 3 = \_\_\_\_\_

Difficult class credit hours \_\_\_\_\_ x 4 = \_\_\_\_\_

Total \_\_\_\_\_

Compare this number to your time left from the survey. Now is the time when many students might find themselves a bit stressed. Just a note to ease your anxieties. It is not only the quantity of study time but also its quality. This formula is a general guideline. Try it for a week, and make adjustments as needed.

## 3. Daily Schedules:

There are a variety of time schedules that can fit your personality. These include engagement books, a piece of poster board tacked to a wall, or 3 x 5 cards. Once you decide upon the style, the next step is construction. It is best to allow spaces for each hour, half-hours for a busy schedule. First, put down all of the necessities; classes, work, meals, etc. Now block in your study time (remember the study time formula presented earlier). Schedule it for a time when you are energized. Also, it's best to review class notes soon after class. Make sure to schedule in study breaks, about 10 minutes each hour. Be realistic on how many courses to take. To succeed in your courses you need to have the time to study. If you find you don't have time to study and you're not socializing to an extreme, you might want to consider lightening your load. Tips for Saving Time Now that you know how you spend most of your time, take a look at it. Think about what your most important things are. Do you have enough time? Chances are that you do not. Below are some tips on how to schedule and budget your time when it seems you just don't have enough.

## 4. Don't be a Perfectionist:

Trying to be a perfect person sets you up for defeat. Nobody can be perfect. Difficult tasks usually result in avoidance and procrastination. You need to set achievable goals, but they should also be challenging. There will always be people both weaker and stronger than you.

## 5. Learn to Say No:

For example, an acquaintance of yours would like you to see a movie with him tonight. You made social plans for tomorrow with your friends and tonight you were going to study and do laundry. You really are not interested. You want to say no, but you hate turning people down. Politely saying no should become a habit. Saying no frees up time for the things that are most important.

## 6. Learn to Prioritize:

Prioritizing your responsibilities and engagements is very important. Some people do not know how to prioritize and become procrastinators. A "to do list" places items in order of importance. One method is the ABC list. This list is divided into three sections; a, b, or c. The items placed in the A section are those needed to be done that day. The items placed in the B section need completion within the week. The C section items are those things that need to be done within the month. As the B, C items become more pertinent they are bumped up to the A or B list. Try it or come up with your own method, but do it.

## 7. Combine Several Activities:

Another suggestion is to combine several activities into one time spot. While commuting to school, listen to taped notes. This allows up to an hour or two a day of good study review. While showering make a mental list of the things that need to be done. When you watch a sit-com, laugh as you pay your bills. These are just suggestions of what you can do to combine your time, but there are many others, above all be creative, and let it work for you.

## 8. Conclusion:

After scheduling becomes a habit, then you can adjust it. It's better to be precise at first. It is easier to find something to do with extra time than to find extra time to do something. Most importantly, make it work for you. A time schedule that is not personalized and honest is not a time schedule at all.

## Tips for Effective Studying

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In order to excel in college, you must first learn how to study properly. Contrary to historical opinion, there are many effective ways to learn information; it is a question of figuring out what works for you. What type of studying best suits you? What time of day are you most efficient? What is the proper environment for you to study in? Before you can answer these questions, you have to do a little research. It takes an effort but the rewards are more than worth it.

### Memory

When we first learn something, information is processed into the brain to form a neural trace. This trace first enters your sensory memory, and then, if you're paying attention, to your Short Term Memory, or STM. If you keep working to process the information and adapt it correctly it then moves to your Long Term Memory, or LTM. The information processed into your LTM is more or less permanent; with occasional reviewing you will not forget it. The trick is to adapt the information you really need into your LTM as quickly as possible. Your STM has a small capacity and a short duration; you may learn something very quickly, but in 24 hours you will lose 80% of that information. The STM is fast and easily accessed, the LTM is slower but larger.

### Repetition

The key to learning something well is repetition; the more times you go over the material the better chance you have of storing it permanently. Before you begin this process, however, it makes sense that you determine the type of learner you are. There are three basic types of learning: Visual, Auditory and Haptic. Most of us are, in fact, some combination of the three, but chances are one style will suit us more than the other two. Take some time to look over the types and figure out which category best describes your method of learning.

### Visual Learners:

Visual learners study best when the material is graphic, ie. charts, tables, maps, etc. When in class, visual people should look at the professors when they are speaking, participate in class discussions and take detailed notes during lectures. When studying, study alone in a quiet place and try to transcribe your material on paper. When possible make drawings, graphs or tables of complex abstract ideas and work alone. Visual learners often have trouble working while having a dialogue, even if the dialogue directly pertains to the subject matter.

### Auditory Learners:

Auditory people work best when they can hear the material. Read aloud, go over your notes and talk to yourself about the important points. Before reading, set a purpose and verbalize it, after you've finished be sure to summarize out loud what you just read. Speak your ideas into a tape machine as if you were having a conversation with someone, if you can, talk to your friends about the material. Because Auditory learners sometimes have trouble keeping columns aligned, try doing math computations by hand, on graph paper.

### Haptic Learners:

Haptic learners are the most maligned division; they are the people that can't sit still. Haptics have to pace around the room, they must have music or a television playing in the background and are almost constantly finding themselves distracted. Despite what parents and teachers have been saying to the contrary, Haptic learning is just as

effective as the other two, more traditional, types. Instead of fighting against your nature, adapt to it and find a method that really works. Make studying more physical; work at a standing desk, pace around the room, do reading while on an exercise bike, chew gum. Try to use color when you can; highlight your readings, read with a filtered light, put posters and bright colors around your desk. Haptic people should vary their activities, if you feel frustrated or 'clogged up' do something different for a few minutes. Try and keep a list of distractions as they come to you; once you write them down, they won't bother your concentration as much. If you want to, play music in the background at whatever volume you choose to. When reading, try skimming over the chapter to get a solid basic meaning before you really dig in. Try to visualize complex projects from start to finish before you begin them. Visualization is a useful tool for Haptic people, it helps you keep a positive, productive outlook on the task at hand.

## SQ3R

The SQ3R method is the reading and studying system preferred by many educators. Reading research indicates that it is an extremely effective method for both comprehension and memory retention. It's effective because it is a system of active reader involvement.

**Step 1. "S"= Survey** Before you actually read a chapter, or go over a particular section of notes, take five minutes to survey the material. Briefly check headings and subheadings in order to understand the author's organizational pattern of ideas to be discussed. Scan all visual material. Read introductory and summary paragraphs. This preview will enable you to anticipate what the chapter is about.

**Step 2. "Q"= Question** Create interest in the material by asking: What are the main points of the chapter? As you read, keep the question in mind and figure out the most important points. It gives you a clearly defined purpose for reading, and helps you maintain interest in the material.

**Step 3. "R"= Read** Read the chapter actively for meaning. Go through the paragraph before underlining, then underline key words and phrases to help you recall the main points. Be selective, you don't want to highlight non-important points or miss anything that can help your comprehension. Summarize main concepts in your own words in the margins. The more active you are in the reading process, the more you will retain.

**Step 4. "R"= Recite** After every few pages, close your book and recite aloud the main points to the questions you posed in step 2. Try to recall basic details as to the author's intent by putting them in your own words. Verify your answer by checking the text. If you can't remember the text, read through it again. If you don't get it now, you won't remember it for a test. Take as much time as you need to answer your questions. Don't be frustrated, this takes more time but the information will be clearer in your mind.

**Step 5. "R"= Review** finally, review the chapter every so often to fix the material in your mind. Keep rereading your margin notes and underlinings. Verbalize the sequence of main ideas and supporting facts to aid retention. Numerous reviews are a lot more effective than one cramming session the night before an exam. Review once right after you've finished reading and then every couple of days. The SQ3R is time consuming at first, expect it to take ten to fifteen percent longer to read a given chapter when you first begin. Research indicates a 70% increase in retention after two months of using the system and, eventually, a reduction in time spent preparing for exams.

## Note Taking Techniques

The most comprehensive note taking systems require attention on your part. You must be alert enough in class to take legible, meaningful notes. You can't rely on "writing everything down" because a lot of information in a given lecture won't help you actually learn the material. If you have problems determining the specific relevant points in a particular class, you can always ask the professor to clarify them for you. The 2-6 Method The 2-6 refers to the way you divide the space on your notepaper. Make two columns, using the red line on the left of the page as your border. Then, when you take notes in class, use the 6 column for the notes and the smaller 2 column on the left as a highlighting system. Write main headings and important points on the left, including material you think you will be tested on. When you're finished, you should have a comprehensive page of information that you can quickly scan for important points. Finally if you have any questions or need more help, stop by and talk to one of our counselors. Studying is 99% perspiration; if you give it a real, concentrated effort over the course of a semester you will see an improvement. Your academic success is entirely up to you.

## Trials and Tribulations in College

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It's a tough job to be a student. The endless assignments and stockpiles of information. It can make you into an academic couch potato. Therefore, don't neglect a balanced lifestyle -- the active with the academic. Keep your physical self in tune. There's substantial evidence which shows that high academic performance is more likely to occur when you're physically fit. Obvious conclusion? Routinely take yourself out for a jog, or a vigorous walk, or hit some racketballs, or play basketball -- whatever you can enjoy. Make it something that cranks your internal machinery into high gear for at least twenty minutes each time. Do this no less than three times a week. Wow -- that can be an investment of only an hour a week, and it's basically free. In return, your body will thank you and your brain will be refreshed.

### Seek Help When Needed

Take this tip from a student who knows. Don't let those studies get behind. If you're having a difficult time in a course, falling behind, or spending too much time having a good time, this message is for you. Ask for help now, before it's too late. When I started college, I wasn't aware of the importance of an education. I was a freshman who didn't know what I wanted. When I fell behind, I skipped class rather than going for help. This put me on academic probation. I was lucky though, I found help through the Academic Support Services. They helped me find a direction, and I learned there are tutors available to help with those troubled classes. Class stopped being a burden and began to be interesting. I realized I could do the work and people here helped me to focus. If you feel like things are generally over your head, get help. There are people who care about you and want you to succeed. Take advantage of the help that is provided to you. Remember, you are here for a reason. Don't party yourself out of school. You can do it.

### Withdrawing From a Course

None of us likes to have to quit in the middle of something we've started, but sometimes it's the only alternative. Withdrawing from a course is not something to be taken lightly, but unforeseen things can happen that make it necessary. If you find yourself in the position of having to withdraw from a class, know the rules. The last day to withdraw from a class with a "W" grade is posted at the beginning of every semester. After the official withdrawal date, withdrawing from a class is possible for extenuating circumstances, but it's a more complicated procedure and it will only be approved if the reasons are truly extenuating. Keep in mind that poor classroom performance is NOT an extenuating circumstance. It is also important to be familiar with any financial aid implications before withdrawing from a class.

### Campus Involvement

The college experience is certainly a unique one that will have many implications for the rest of your life. It is important to dive right in. The experience will be more rewarding and enjoyable if you step right up to the plate. Get involved in campus life, not only in the classroom, but in other areas as well. Life will surely be easier if it is shared with the people around you. Many students are timid when it comes to talking with others, especially teachers. Talking with and getting to know your instructors is as important as showing up for class. Teacher-student involvement is an indication of a serious and committed student. So study hard, get involved, and enjoy yourself!

### Top Ten Reasons: Why Are You Flunking Out?

I'm bringing you, direct from the home office in Sioux City, Saskatchewan Today's "Top Ten List." The subject of this Academic Survival Top Ten List is "Why are you flunking out of Edinboro University?" O.K., here we go, the top ten reasons you're flunking out of Edinboro is:

#10 All the professors in this school are morons.

# 9 The cafeteria food is secretly laced with a chemical that makes me stupid.

# 8 A college degree is over rated. Sharon Stone did not complete her Edinboro academic program and look how famous she is.

# 7 A college degree is really unnecessary. John Wayne Bobbitt doesn't have an Edinboro degree and he seems to have put things back together pretty well.

# 6 The scheduling computer predetermines my failure. How could I possibly be expected to attend classes that begin before noon?

# 5 My QPA is 0.20 right now. However next semester I'm joining the fraternity. They have all the tests and required academic materials on file so I can expect a 4.00 next Fall.

# 4 I'm an important link in the local Edinboro economy. Shoot, if I went to class and studied, the "Hotel" would probably go bankrupt.

# 3 Human development necessitates a prioritizing of one's life. Right now I'm concentrating on my socialization skills.

# 2 It's not what you know but who you know. So right now I'm dating 3 of my professors.

# 1 I'm not failing the system, the system is failing me.

O.K., so there are a lot of reasons for not doing well academically. However, some day you've got to accept that you, and you alone are responsible for your life and its success or failure. If you are not trying to be the best student you can be right now, you're wasting time, money and risking your chances of future happiness. Quit whining! Get to class and keep up on your assignments. That task should be #1 on your 'Top Ten List.'

## College and Alcohol Reading

Most people come to college expecting to have a good time while they're here, and some think that means drinking games or chugging contests. Did you know that most students at Edinboro don't drink heavily? Fewer than half drink even once a week, and only one in five drinks three nights a week or more. On the whole, at every campus in the country -- including Edinboro -- the less students drink, the better their grades are. Think about it. If you drink lightly -- or not at all -- you're much less likely to miss classes, do poorly on an exam, have trouble concentrating, or have to spend time dealing with the aftermath of a binge. So take a minute to look at your lifestyle and make some healthy decisions about alcohol and other drug use. If you choose not to abuse, you not only have a lot of company at Edinboro, but you're far more likely to succeed academically.

## Stay Clean and Stay Cool

College can be a transitional period for many students. It's hard to know what to expect--academic pressures, different environment, making new friends and "fitting in". WOW! I used to think fitting in meant hanging out with my friends and drinking all the time. Now that I am in graduate school, I realize that one doesn't have to drink to have fun. Alcohol is a drug. You don't have to drink or do drugs to be 'cool'. Be high on life, not drugs. And remember it is O.K. to say NO. Don't let someone tell you that you have to drink or it's O.K. to just have one beer. If you don't want it don't take it. If someone is your friend they'll understand.

## Clubs and Organizations Involvement

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### 1. Opportunities to Meet People

Your studies should be very important to you, but in order to be a successful student, you need to balance academics with a social outlet. A great way to meet both needs is through student clubs and organizations. Student clubs and organizations will provide you with a wide variety of opportunities to become involved on campus and throughout the community. Being a part of a club or organization will provide you with new life experiences, valuable leadership skills and abilities, and opportunities to express creativity and talent. It is important that you find an organization that best fits your needs. So, please remember to get involved.

### 2. Resume Benefits

If you'd like to become involved in some extra-curricular activity while being a student, that is a good idea. Participation with your peers to accomplish goals, as well as for social interaction, is worthwhile now and prepares you for similar involvement with professional organizations once you graduate. Involvement also looks good on your resume. You must remember your priorities, however, and keep your studies first. Good time management and study habits are imperative. At least two hours of study out of class for every hour in class is a good guideline. Good lecture and textbook note-taking is essential. Ask questions in class, read as you go, and answer questions at the end of the chapters. A monthly calendar should include the highlighted dates of upcoming quizzes, tests, assignment deadlines, and the meetings of your organizations. Remember, most organizations require a certain QPA for active membership. You might consider a club that is related to your major as one of your selections.

### 3. Resources for Athletes

Many athletes find that they have some trouble adjusting to the work load that they get from their classes. Along with all of the tough homework, the time commitment for a sport is sometimes 40 hours a week. There are some resources, though, that can help. First, talk to your coach if you are experiencing difficulties. They'll be happy to help you, because they want to see you do well in the classroom, as well as on the field. Second, some of your upperclass teammates may have had some of the same classes that you're taking now. Talk to them and see what help they can give you. Finally, don't forget about the free tutoring in the library and Lawrence Towers. The students who provide the tutoring are very capable, and can often provide you with the help you need. Remember, if you don't have the grades, you can't play. Playing a sport for the university is a privilege, just like driving. If you keep getting speeding tickets, you get your license taken away. In the same way, too many F's will keep you on the bench.

### 4. Balancing Studies and Extra-Curricular Activities

Striking the balance between studies and extra-curricular activities is difficult and should be done on a person to person basis. However, in this tip, I would like to emphasize the importance of student clubs and organizations. Beyond the phrase 'looks good on your resume'--which is true indeed--active participation in a student organization or club has other benefits. Nearly all major areas of study have a club. By participating in these clubs you have the chance to meet others with common interests and faculty who teach some of the major courses. Other organizations deal with issues not directly related to your field of study. Examples include service organizations related to specific hobbies, such as the Ski Club or Planetarium Club. Contact your campus Student Activities Office for more information. Have fun and GET INVOLVED.

## Your Learning Style

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### Figuring Out Your Learning Style

Take a pointer from a wise sage named Socrates -- the one who said, "Know thyself." Each of us has our own unique learning style. For example, are you the person who says, "I can't think when it's noisy. I need quiet!" On the other hand, does your roommate always have the stereo playing when she studies? That actually could be because she needs to screen out distracting sounds with music. While some of us like quiet, others need music; some like bright light and others dim; some like to be bundled up in an afghan, while others need the fan. There are those who learn best by making lists, outlines, and charts -- others by reading or note-taking. And still others learn best in small group discussions. Take advantage of the offices on campus that can teach you more about your learning style. By taking time out to get to know your own style of learning -- not only will it help you make the grade, but Socrates would give you a gold star.

### How Do You Study Best?

It's important as a student to realize one's learning style if you want to be successful. By learning styles I mean that we need to understand the ways that we study the best. Whether it be quiet, whether it be with noise, whether it be in a place where there is a lot of lighting, not much lighting, whether it be lying down, or sitting up. Those are important to the success of how well we will learn and how well we will take in the information that we are dealing with. Another thought I would like to leave with you regarding success as an academic student is that we should put aside a time of day that we want to make use for studying. Consistency is the key to success.

## Taking Lecture Notes

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### Lynne:

When taking notes make sure to pay attention to the teacher when they are speaking write down what the teacher says if he says it more than once. Make sure that you understand what the subject is about and if not then ask questions. But the practice to getting good grades is R-E-V-I-E-W that's right review. Review over text books and notes on a daily basis.

### M.:

Do not miss a lecture, ever, no matter what. Read the chapter before the lecture and bring coffee. Professors don't care if you bring a whole gallon if it helps you keep alert.

**Prince:**

Reading the chapter once before the lecture helps you understand the material and stay interested in the lecture. Also, try to stick around in the lecture room after class and fill in what you missed or left out.

**Kesha:**

I try to read before the lecture, but if not, I just bring my book to class and highlight what the professor talks about.

**Erika:**

Always sit in front and just keep taking notes. Try to write throughout the entire lecture.

**Melissa:**

I outline my notes as I am taking them and then later I highlight important headers.

**Sanobeia:**

It's better to pay attention and write good notes in class, rather than taping lectures. Also, highlight headings in the notes because when you are studying for an exam, then you can immediately pick out important information you need to know.

**Belia:**

I use the Cornell Method for taking notes. In my notebook, before class, I draw a line, making a 1 1/2-inch margin on the left. Then I take notes on the right side of the paper and add questions pertaining to the notes on the left side.

**Evelyn:**

I underline main topics, definitions, and anything the professor repeats or emphasizes.

**Kamilah:**

If you miss class, get notes from someone you know is a good note taker.

## Reading Strategies

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**Marko:**

In high school I didn't have to read. I could get by just studying my notes. In college you can't do that. Many tests and quizzes are based on the readings.

**Alana:**

Before reading a chapter, I go through and look at anything in bold letters (ie. headings and definitions) so I'll know the general ideas of the chapter.

**Erika:**

Sometimes I scan to prepare myself. I estimate the amount of time needed to cover all the material and that helps me avoid procrastinating. If my mind wanders, I'll take notes while reading.

**Marko:**

I don't highlight everything because everything won't be on the test. I highlight the most important points in the text. When I finish a chapter, I read the summary. Finally, I skim through the chapter one final time.

**Kesha:**

Read the chapter summaries and look over the bold terms because evidently the author feels those things are the most important. Also, time yourself! Then go tell someone what you read about to make sure you understood it.

**Sanobeia:**

Study whatever is boring early in the day because if you study at night after a hard day, forget it, you're going to go to sleep!

**Priyanka:**

Don't get stuck on specific words or specific statements you can't grasp. A good idea is to get a sense of the text as a whole. As you read, make connections with other parts of the book.

**Miguel:**

I don't sell my books back. I sometimes use them for future reference.

**Kamilah:**

The more you read, the faster you'll read. You need to find something you like to read and then read more often.

## Resources

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**Miguel:**

I think the most important thing is not just going to class and reading the book, but whenever you have a question, it's absolutely necessary to speak to the professor. He's the one that knows the topic and he's the best one to answer the question.

**Kathy:**

See your TA's during their office hours and talk to your professors. The first semester here I sat in the back and was an unknown face. This semester I got to know my T.A.'s and professors and went to see them during their office hours. I feel more comfortable now and I think it's helped me do better.

**Dawn:**

Get help right away. Don't wait until you're doing badly in a class and have to catch up.

**M.:**

It's a good idea to get to know professors and T.A.'s. I've actually gotten to be on a first name basis with a couple of my professors. They want to help. Reach out when you need them.

**Prince:**

The only way to get to know a professor is to sit in the front row of class every day. Then go to her/his office hours. Also, get to know the T.A.'s. You spend more time talking with them, and they know you well enough to help you.

## Studying for Exams

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**Kelly Brown:**

Studying for exams follows up to taking notes in class. A good way is to highlight the important notes you have taken. Turn those into questions which you should answer as a practice quiz. Don't forget to take breaks and watch that those short 5-10 minute breaks don't run into long two hour breaks.

**Kamilah:**

Study a little every day and make it fun. Do it with friends and order a pizza.

**Belia:**

After about an hour of studying I take a 10-minute break. You need to take a little break and relax, then go back to the books.

**Manuel:**

I like to study in the same location with a friend. About an hour into studying I check up on my friend or he checks up on me. We do this to make sure our minds don't wander. We take a 10 or 15-minute break and then continue studying for another hour or so.

**Terrell:**

Get to know your TA's because they can give you good study techniques. My art history TA gave me a study technique in which I used an outline to record important information about each work of art. It helped me to study for the quizzes and final.

**Kira:**

I like rice krispies treats, so before I go off to study I make a batch of treats and take them with me. After I've been studying for awhile I'll eat one.

**Brian:**

After the first test you get an idea of what the instructor wants and so you change your study habits to what you think the instructor will ask on the following tests.

**Priyanka:**

Talk to your professors regularly. Exploring verbally what you learned during lectures helps you retain things.

**M.:**

Don't just memorize; understand key facts. Try to remember things as stories to be retold, like the hottest gossip that you're going to repeat. A lot of students study in groups, but I prefer to work on my own.

**Prince:**

The best way to prepare for an exam is group study, because two heads are better than one. Start studying at least three days before the exam. Also, don't just memorize; that lasts only a few days and gives you limited knowledge. You really have to sit down and understand the concept, formula, or theory.

**Erika:**

I use note cards when studying for an exam.

**Kesha:**

I constantly quiz myself on the material and try to answer questions from the book.

## Stress Control

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**Priyanka:**

Working out or playing sports relieves stress. You should have incentives after your homework is done: go out, talk with a friend, read for pleasure, have fun. You could try a workshop on stress reduction offered by Psychology Live (Counseling Center).

**Evelyn:**

I work out to relieve stress. Before a test I practice breathing techniques. If I'm still anxious during a test I chew some gum.

**Kamilah:**

I read "Love Is ..." in the Sun Times every day. It makes me smile.

**Kesha:**

I pray, pray, and pray!

**Alana:**

To control stress and remain positive, I call people in my family or my boyfriend. They'll usually talk to me and make me feel comfortable about any situation.

**Teayonia:**

I go to church, participate in positive activities, and surround myself with positive people.

**Tyesa:**

I stay in constant contact with my adviser from AAAN. I also gain support from older students as well as my positive peers.

**Terrell:**

I play a favorite game or joke around with my friends. A good laugh can help relieve stress.

**Sandra:**

I study as much as possible until I have an adequate understanding. Then I don't think about my studies while I'm doing other activities.

## Time Management and Motivation

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**Kira:**

I use two planners. In one I list my homework assignments and in the other my appointments and work. I highlight each item as I finish it.

**Dawn:**

I write a "to do" list once or twice a week. I decide on priorities and try to do the items in order of importance.

**Belia:**

I write out the assignments from each syllabus in my planner daily. I use a different color ink for each class. Each day I also write down my reading and other assignments to do.

**Melissa:**

I use a 16-week calendar and plot out all exams, papers, and major projects. This allows me to see where my busiest weeks are and to plan accordingly.

**Nancy:**

Writing assignments in my Daily helps me plan which days I may need to take off from work.

**M.:**

Check and reply to E Mail once a week. Get an answering machine; don't get a TV.

**Kathy:**

Resisting friends is important. You have to learn to say no. I hate to miss things. I want to be there having fun, but I remind myself I have to keep my priorities straight. School has to come first. There will be other times to see my friends.

**Marko:**

I tell my friends to leave me alone during the week. Weekends are for friends, but during the week is for school. I shut off the TV and leave the phone unplugged.

**Michele:**

With a lot of jobs on campus it's possible to get some studying done at work. I limit my work to 10 hours a week.

**Teayonia:**

To keep myself motivated, when I finish studying I reward myself with food and different activities. I also think about what happened to my friends who didn't keep focused on their grades.

**Evelyn:**

I reward myself by shopping! It's something to look forward to when studying.

**Brian:**

I keep a daily reminder. My friends laugh at me when I have to check my book to see if I can hang out with them, but if I have a test coming up -- or a paper -- I have to prioritize.

**Tyesa:**

I tell my friends not to call at certain hours. If they don't listen, I tell them that I am paying too much money not to get an A out of my classes.

## Tips for Effective Studying

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**Richard Lee:**

I always sit in the front of classroom. I attend all class meetings. I ask questions to professor about anything that I don't understand, either from textbook reading or from lecture. I read and study half chapter per day twice or even 3 times to completely remember what I read. Procrastination is my biggest enemy.

Sandeep.k:

To have a thorough knowledge of a particular concept, it's better to refer different books to master that particular concept. Mere learning of a subject would be of no use, deep research has to be put in to master it. It is always better to start from basics of any complicated subject.

## Public Speaking Tips

I'm always amazed by the number of students who freak out over having to stand in front of a group and talk. In one word, my advice to them is relax.

Second, I'd like to suggest that they enroll in a section of fundamentals of speech. In "fundies," students learn that there is no magic formula for dealing with nervousness. However, they gain valuable confidence and they do learn how to actually make nervousness work for them.

And a "fundies" class is the ideal place to get rid of the fear of public speaking. Your classmates are a friendly audience and, at least in most cases, your instructor is pretty friendly too. Everyone wants you to succeed.

So if you're nervous about speaking in front of a group, relax and check into the next available section of fundamentals of speech course.

## University Life

### Tips for University Life

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For many first-year students, the University may be their first experience living away from home for an extended period of time. It is a definite break from home. The individual's usual sources of support are no longer present to facilitate adjustment to the unfamiliar environment. Here are tips for students which may provide realistic expectations concerning living arrangements and social life on campus. In addition, students may benefit from information concerning resources available to them at the Counseling Center.

- The first few weeks on campus can be a lonely period. There may be concerns about forming friendships. When new students look around, it may seem that everyone else is self-confident and socially successful. The reality is that everyone is having the same concerns.
- If they allow sufficient time, students usually find peers in the university to provide structure and a valuable support system in the new environment. The important thing for the student to remember in meeting new people is to be oneself.
- Meaningful, new relationships should not be expected to develop overnight. It took a great deal of time to develop intimacy in high school friendships; the same will be true of intimacy in university friendships.
- Increased personal freedom can feel both wonderful and frightening. Students can come and go as they choose with no one to "hassle" them. At the same time, things are no longer predictable. The strange environment with new kinds of procedures and new people can create the sense of being on an emotional roller-coaster. This is normal and to be expected.
- Living with roommates can present special, sometimes intense, problems. Negotiating respect of personal property, personal space, sleep, and relaxation needs can be a complex task. The complexity increases when roommates are of different ethnic/cultural backgrounds with very different values. Communicating one's legitimate needs calmly, listening with respect to a roommate's concerns, and being willing to compromise to meet each other's most important needs can promote resolution of issues.
- It is unrealistic to expect that roommates will be best friends. Roommates may work out mutually satisfying living arrangements, but the reality is that each may tend to have his or her own circle of friends.
- University classes are a great deal more difficult than high school classes. There are more reading assignments, and the exams and papers cover a greater amount of material. Instructors expect students to do more work outside the classroom. In order to survive, the student must take responsibility for his or her actions. This means the student needs to follow the course outlines and keep up with the readings. The student must do the initiating. If a class is missed, it is up to the student to borrow lecture notes from someone who was present. If

the student is having difficulty with course work, he or she needs to ask for help--ask to do extra work, request an appointment with an academic advisor, or sign up for tutoring or other academic-skills training at the University Learning Center.

## Fight for First Year in College--- By Steve Gladis, PhD

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### Getting Started:

#### Myth vs. Reality

The world is full of myths -- common ideas that exist but are not true. Unfortunately, often such myths rule what we do and dominate our behavior. Myths can cause disorganized thinking and set up a system of behavior that is based on misconceptions and doomed to failure.

Let me give you an example of how this works. Consider the teenage girl with poor self-esteem who has accepted the myth that college is just for "smart kids". For whatever reasons, she is convinced that she is not smart. Over time, these attitudes will begin to pervade her thought process, and she will convince herself of the hopelessness of her situation. Eventually, she will begin to act in an inferior way, and select unchallenging courses, and perform poorly in high school. In essence, she will act out the myth-and fail to go to college.

Such destructive myths come from various sources. Some originate with kids themselves, either as defense mechanisms to cover for past or future failures or as ego boosters for successful kids who like the idea of making college sound difficult. In short, we often don't know the specific sources of myths or the motivation behind them.

This book does not pretend to be anything more than a guide designed to steer students away from the Myths and toward the Realities of how to survive the first year of college.

### Train Early!

#### Myth:

"I'll get started studying when school starts."

"Hey, I just finished 4 years of high school, and I need a rest."

"I went to a good school. I'm ready for college."

"Summer is for fun, not school."

"I got A's and B's in my college prep courses."

"September is for school, not July."

"Enough already with the studying."

"I need a break or my head will explode."

#### Reality:

Start training now, like an athlete.

Can you imagine an athlete who wanted to qualify for the Olympics but absolutely refused to train for three months before the Olympic trials?

Outrageous.

No one would take such an athlete seriously. However, that's what most students who graduate from high school do to prepare for the biggest academic event of their lives thus far: College. They work very hard for four years: Study, take tests, take PSAT's, take SAT's, even expensive preparation courses. They take gifted and talented and AP courses, visit and apply to a number of universities, sweat out the acceptance process, get accepted, and graduate from high school. Then they promptly quit training for three or four months. Some students have been known to quit studying when they get accepted to a college. They take on the I'm-on-board attitude, the I-don't-have-to-sweat-it-now attitude. **Wrong.**

Getting in shape and staying in shape is as vital to your academic fitness as it is to your physical fitness. You can't just turn it off and on like a switch. A slow and steady pace wins this race.

This is about the toughest suggestion to self impose. It requires the most personal discipline, and frankly, not all students can or will do this. But I will guarantee that those who have the fortitude to do so will succeed.

### Survival Tips:

Set up regular study hours. By now you may be saying to yourself, "This guy is nuts if he thinks I'm studying regularly in the summer, when I didn't even do that during the year." OK. But if you would take even as little as 1 hour a day and devote it to keeping the blade sharpened, it would yield great results. In fact, this is a great idea to remember: Small changes can result in big wins. Look at pro golfers and pro athletes in general. The person who loses a tournament is not dramatically worse, just a small fraction, but that makes a huge difference.

### Read-choose anything, but read something.

There's an ad that occasionally shows on TV that says, "Reading is fundamental." Remember that ad and act accordingly. Your reading will determine much of your success or failure in college. Many students don't enjoy reading; so, they do less and less of it. Learn to enjoy it, and you'll read more and increase your reading effectiveness. It's a simple but inevitable, progressive process. Start by reading whatever you like. I don't care if it's soup labels, comic books, short stories or cowboy novels: Read. As you read more, your interests will broaden; the progressive process will happen naturally-trust me.

### Start keeping a daily calendar.

Poor time management causes some of the worst problems students have in college. During class discussions my students always stress this one. Here's the problem: In college you'll have what seems like loads of time. You may only average 3 or 4 hours of class a day. So it seems like there's time to burn. Also, it's unstructured time-the type that slips through your fingers like sand. However, the projects and homework assigned in college are much more substantial than those in high school, with virtually no oversight by teachers or parents. The combination of unstructured time and larger projects proves disastrous for the first-year students who don't keep a calendar and schedule their work. This problem is not limited to students in college. In fact, one of the hottest professions in the workforce is project management. Buy yourself a monthly calendar. Monthly ones work best because you can "see" one month ahead. Weekly calendars are too short-sighted. I suggest you practice setting up milestones and timelines for simple projects this summer. Write them on the calendar. Just get used to using it before you're in the middle of the first semester wondering how in the world you'll ever survive.

### Write constantly.

Runners know that to make it through a race, they have to develop their wind. Simply put, they have to practice running to be ready for the race. So it is with writing. If you don't write regularly, you lose the edge, the confidence, the fluency. Start by keeping a daily journal. Buy yourself a spiral notebook or my personal favorite, one of those black-and-white marble covered composition books you used in elementary school. But begin writing. Start with your random thoughts. What you think about what's going on around you: Your hopes, fears, and dreams. Like reading, it does not matter what you write but that you do write regularly. Like reading, writing is a fundamental of college life. You'll get far more writing assigned in college than you did in high school. The other effect of keeping a journal is that if you read what you've written, you'll find it a great way to sort out where you're headed. Your writing will reveal what's going on inside your head. Writing can be sounding board, like a friend who listens to your innermost thoughts. The journal is the best way I know to build up your writing wind.

## Attend All Classes

### Myth:

"I can afford to skip a class or two."

"I'll get a friend to take notes for me."

"If I leave early, I'll get a jump on the weekend."

"I never get anything out of class when I do go."

"I need the extra sleep much more than the class."

"That jerk doesn't deserve my attendance."

"I'll reward myself for my birthday."

## Reality:

You must attend all classes.

Woody Allen once said, "Showing up is 88% of life.". Let me adapt that for college: Attendance is 95% of college academic life. If you skip class for one of a hundred excuses you may fabricate, you lose...every time. Recently a student came to me with a partial assignment saying that he did not know about the additional requirement that had been announced in class for the past two weeks straight. My response was, "Whose fault is that?" No more discussion. You simply cannot get the information or assignments straight if you're off playing touch football, catching a movie, or just sleeping in.

What happens when you miss a class? Several things:

You miss assignments and amendments to assignments. Teachers must amend projects by the very nature of academics: Information changes, equipment is not available, or stuff happens. In any case, you have to be there to get the scoop.

You get behind. Even if someone takes notes for you, you fall behind. It's tough enough to understand your own notes two or three days after you've taken them-unless you review them soon after you take them. After a while you slowly but surely slip so far behind that you'll never catch up. It's a slippery slope and it's hard to climb back up once you've slid down.

You project an I-don't-give-a-damn attitude to the professor. Trust me. Professors notice the no-shows and give no breaks to students who skip class. NONE. Think about it. Professors take their subjects seriously. They spend years preparing and researching to qualify to teach. And then students skip class with no more excuse than it was a great day to sleep in or to get an early start on the weekend. Professors notice the no-shows.

Just the opposite message comes through when you do make it to class. You show that you're concerned, dedicated, and ready to learn. In fact, it has been my experience that if a student makes the attempt by being there for every class, turning in all the assignments, and by calling or stopping by for extra help-I will go the extra mile or two to help. Most teachers I know are in the profession to help people. But we can only help those who are available and willing to meet us halfway.

## Survival Tips:

### Set a 100/100% show-up goal.

Make it your goal to show up to 100% of your classes 100% of the time. Start off with that fixed in your mind. Put everything else in second place, right from the first day on campus. School is your primary job. If you were to miss work every time you thought it was a nice day or whenever you had a headache, or-you fill in the excuse-think about how long it would take your boss to fire you. Go for perfect attendance. It sounds like an elementary school concept, but believe me it's critical.

### Communicate with the Professor.

Call, e-mail, or send a note with a friend if you're sick. Sounds kind of goofy? Maybe, but it makes an impression. Again, it sends an important message: "I care enough to let you know I am on the injured list, but I'm still on the team." Again, use e-mail, phone, fax or personal note, but make sure you try.

### Ask two people for their notes.

This may sound like overkill to you, but it's not. As I mentioned before, it's hard enough interpreting your own notes, let alone someone else's. By getting copies from two classmates, you're more likely to piece together what actually happened.

### Double check about assignments or handouts.

Be absolutely sure that you check with two classmates or the professor about any handouts given out in the class you missed. Also, check on whether any new assignments were given, or if modifications/clarifications were made. I have found that this is one area where students constantly fumble. While they get the notes, they often forget to ask for handouts or special instructions given. Usually, the result is that you may turn in a project only partially completed and receive a poor grade.

## Audio tape, if permitted.

To get 100% recall of a class you missed, audio taping is the best way. Asking a friend to tape a class you'll miss is a bit burdensome, but very useful. You (or your friend) must check with the instructor first. Don't tape without the professor's permission. Some teachers do not like being taped. Most will not care. By the way, I have found that taping classes even when you are there, especially for those classes where you're having trouble, is a great idea. My daughter did that in college and found that taping supplemented her notes and helped her studying tremendously. But remember: Always ask permission first.

## Form Study Groups!

### Myth:

"I can do it myself."

"Self-reliance. That's essential."

"I'll go it alone."

"If you want anything done right, do it yourself."

"If I get any help, it's like cheating."

"Me, I can trust. Others, I'm not so sure."

"If I do it, I know I can depend on it."

"Independence is a virtue."

"I'll pull myself up by my own bootstraps."

### Reality:

Form study groups to survive. To illustrate to my classes how groups almost always outperform individuals, I ask one student to randomly choose a letter of the alphabet. Let's say the letter chosen is "S." Then I ask three people to leave the room and work together to come up with names of singers whose last names begin with "S." The rest of the class works independently. I predict that the group of three outside the room will outperform anyone left in the class. Guess what? I always win because, in fact, the small group outperforms any individual in the class by almost 3 to 1.

There has been a significant amount of communications research done on small group performance. Small groups consist of 3-5 people convened to focus on an issue. Groups of two, dyads, lack the power of groups of three or more. On the other hand, groups of 5 or more become unwieldy.

### Small groups out-perform individuals because:

1. Small Groups generate more options while brainstorming. This process fosters many ideas to be generated as quickly as possible.
2. Small Groups can better evaluate ideas. Groups correct misinformation, bias, erroneous assumptions, and the like.
3. Group decisions enhance harmony. They are essential where there is buy-in required after the session, such as choosing a correct solution that all must live with after the decision is made.
4. Small groups will almost always win. However, in an emergency where you need a quick decision, you're probably better off making a decision yourself. In that case, groups might slow the process down to the point that the decision is too late. Also, in cases where expertise counts and you have an expert, then often the expert will out-perform the group.

But if you're studying a subject and need encouragement, support, feedback, clarification, and help, you can't beat the power of a small, dedicated group focused on mastering the task.

### Survival Tips:

#### Form study groups after the first few classes.

Wait and see who the reliable students are before you join a group. Jumping in too soon might mean ending up with a less productive group. Be particularly observant about who does the homework, knows the answers, and seems to have a genuine interest in the class before you decide to form a study group.

**Keep the group number to a handful and make it diverse.**

A group of 3-5 people is ideal. Two people are better than one, but 3-5 are much better than two. Groups of more than five make it too difficult to get together or make decisions. Also, vary the group by both gender and race because the diversity will make for a richer decision-making process.

**Vary personality types and include the professor's type.**

What you want to avoid is having everyone in the group with the same personality type. If possible, try to have a person or two in the group with a personality similar to that of the professor. By having different personality styles in it, the small group becomes a more diverse critical test audience to use before launching new ideas.

**Meet at a regular time and place.**

Setting both a time and place will ensure, above all else, that people will have something ready for the meeting. It's much like telling someone you'll go for a walk or meet them for lunch. You'll tend to do it if you've agreed on a time and place. Putting a study group in your schedule is the best way to make certain that you'll study. Block out your schedule and set your priorities.

**Be persistent.**

Don't give up on the group. If at first you don't succeed-try, try again. Groups need to get comfortable with themselves. They need to establish trust and confidence. That comes only with time. Don't give up at the first sign of problems. Work through them with candor and caring for every member in the group. And always keep the objective in mind: To understand, to learn, and to help each other through the course.

## Study The Professor!

**Myth:**

"Only the subject material matters."

"The subject is the only lesson I have to learn."

"Teachers are all alike."

"Keep focused on the objectives and the rest will fall into place."

"Who gives a damn what she thinks."

"Screw him. I do my work and that's all that counts."

"She's not my boss; she's just a teacher."

"I'll do what I want, when I want."

"It's a free country."

**Reality:**

Study the professor as well as the subject.

Let's begin with two simple, but important truths: First, people are different; and, second, professors are people. Try never to forget these two truths as you go through your first year of college.

Take the first truth: People are different. You know intuitively that this is accurate if you've ever had a family, friends, or more to the point, roommates. I'll use roommates as an example. In August prior to the start of your first year, seemingly normal people suddenly invade your life and turn into monsters within a month, a week, and in some cases, a day.

Let's examine just a few ways that people are different. Some people are shy and quiet. They like being alone or only with one or two good friends. They enjoy, even revel, in their privacy. They actually recharge their personal energy when alone. On the other hand, other people are gregarious and enjoy being with people. They hate quiet and dislike being alone. Being around people recharges their energy level, and the more people the better. But, put a gregarious sort with a privacy lover as roommates, and sparks may fly.

Next, let me talk about people who are what I call get-it-done-now people. They love making to-do lists and scratching things off them. They were born to organize the world. While you're out at the library, they rearrange the room. They're human alarm clocks and must be early by an hour for everything. On the other hand, there is the hey-

what's-the-rush people. Time is for them a relative measure. They use a sundial for a watch if they even own a watch. They don't mind being late as long as they're having fun. Surprise, fun, chill-out are their favorite words-words that can drive the more workaholic get-it-done crowd bananas.

So far we have not even talked about all the other variables like ethnic backgrounds, multicultural differences, socio-economics, you name it.... Actually, it's a wonder that any two people get along. In fact, the people we like the best are people who think and act like us. I call this falling in love with the mirror. This is not healthy because you close yourself off from a wide world of options and limit your ability to understand others and effectively operate in our diverse world. Treating people as if they were all the same, by ignoring their differences and approaching life and school based on only your preferences, can lead to real personality clashes, and ultimately disaster.

In short, people are different. Respect it and deal with it.

The second truth: Professors are people. When I was in college, I had no idea where my professors lived or if they had families or lives outside of school. For all I knew, they were all locked in a vault each evening and then unleashed on Monday to feed on us poor students during the day. Not so.

They too have personalities as well as ethnic, social, economic and political differences-just like you. Some are shy, others gregarious; some are serious, others more fun-loving; some are old, others young. The list is very long.

Your task is to adjust to them - not for them to adjust to you. This is not easy. You are responsible for learning their styles and accommodating to them, not the reverse.

Above all, remember that people are different and that professors are people.

### Survival Tips:

#### Find out your own personality.

Sit down and take an inventory of yourself. You may not have ever done this before. Figure out your preferences: Things you like. By inference, the opposite of what you like will likely give you fits. Consciously knowing your likes and dislikes is a strong start in getting to know and understand others. Remember that you will tend to like people almost immediately who share your preferences and values-people just like you. Be careful that you don't ignore the rest of the world in the process.

#### Read the syllabus closely for hints.

See if there are any significant hints like: "strong class participation is a must" or "10 points off per day for a late paper" or "all work must be accompanied by an outline." Each instruction gives you insight into the person. For example, "strong participation" indicates a gregarious teacher who values strong social interaction. The teacher who takes off 10 points per day for late work is likely a get-it-done-now person.

#### Talk to other students who have had the professor before.

Nothing beats experience. Interview former students and ask them about the professors, their likes and dislikes. Become a bit of a researcher. See if their answers are consistent. For example, if they all tell you the teacher likes documentation in term papers to be exact, then you know where to place emphasis when you prepare a paper. If you get consistent information, it's likely to be true.

#### Ask questions in class.

Better to ask up front than have a big surprise down the line...at your expense. Ask if there is a late penalty, how important documentation is, and similar questions. Teachers would rather you ask than assume. If the class is huge and you're a bit embarrassed, then schedule time for office hours and have your questions ready to go.

#### Assume all professors are human.

It may seem ridiculous and redundant to have to say this, but so many students see professors as aloof and not of this world. Like you, they have families, likes, and dislikes, good and bad days. They too pay rent, buy groceries and lose loved ones. In short, they have the same daily pressures and issues going on in their lives as you do. Don't expect that they won't act and react like humans.

## Establish Regular Study Habits!

### Myth:

"I'll study when I get the assignment."

"I'll look like a real nerd if I start studying before we even get assignments."

"Lighten up. This is a long run."

"Chill out. I'll go out and unwind."

"Get serious, I have no idea what the Professor is going to cover."

"Why waste time second guessing?"

"This is the perfect time to get to know everyone-before the workload picks up."

"College isn't just about studying; the social part may be more important."

### Reality:

Establish regular study habits from the start.

The first semester at any university is one of the most exciting and potentially one of the most dangerous times in your academic career, for several reasons.

You're away from home, in many cases, for the first time. Free at last to make your own decisions. That's both the good and bad news. Good news: You can do anything you want, whenever you want. Bad news: You can do anything you want, whenever you want. Granted, there are no nagging parental questions: "Did you get your homework done?" or even worse, "Let me see it." But while the nagging's gone, so is the pressure and help of oversight.

There's a ton of pressure to get to know everyone, right away. Many roommates, suitemates, and classmates succumb to this pressure. Eventually, most recognize that this will not work unless they have nothing else to do.

You may not have anything specific that's due right away. You don't have a paper or research due for a month or two. So, it's tempting to sit back and enjoy the extended summer.

Fall is about the nicest season of the year. Cool evenings and warm days-perfect for picnics, football, or just about anything you can think of. Studying does not rank up there with the coolest things to do on a beautiful autumn day.

In fact, you'd be hard pressed to find a single thing about the early part of your first semester freshman year that makes studying attractive. But the **Reality** is that **not** starting early may mean failing later. Stuff just has a way of piling up on you. Here's a typical scenario: You let a few reading assignments slide and then you put a short paper or two on hold. Multiply the procrastination by five or six other "minor" assignments you also let slide and you're talking some serious pileup problems. And it all sneaks up on you very innocently.

### Survival Tips:

**Find the time of day you learn best-AM or PM.**

Most people are either morning or night people. Determine which one you are and use that time to do the most important job you have while in school...surviving. To test whether you're a day or night person, ask yourself these questions: "Do I like waking up early and getting a start on the day?" If you answer this "yes," you're likely a morning person. So, set an hour or two every day to hit the books in the AM. Schedule it ahead of time. Pay the study master first. If you answer "yes" to the question "Do I get going later in the afternoon or evening?" then you're most likely a night person; so set aside time in the evening to study. This gives information the best shot at sticking to your brain.

**Let your friends know that your study time is sacred.**

While you may get some grief early on from people, as soon as they know you're serious, you'll get few, if any, invasions of your study time. People will actually respect that you say what you mean and mean what you say.

**Find a place to study.**

Dormitories, especially freshman dorms, are notoriously bad places to study. Understand that and deal with it. Places like unused classrooms, library carousels, coffee shops, the back of an auditorium, a car-anywhere away from friends will do. They may hassle you to see a movie, party, or just hang out. You can do that later. Hit the books first.

## Give yourself a break.

Just as scheduling regular study time contributes to success, so does taking a 5-10 minute break every hour. Rest your eyes, wash your face...turn off the brain for a few minutes. Then get back to it. If you find yourself dozing off, stop where you are. Allow yourself to doze off-sitting up, not lying down. You'll find this "sitting doze" a form of meditation that increases alertness and concentration.

## Just do it.

The Nike commercial says: "Just Do It." I say we should adapt that to academic studies: "Just study it." Establishing the habit right away is key. The first day you have classes, find a place to study, and keep going there at your best study time, even when you think you're wasting your time. The routine of having a regular time and place to review your notes and read the required material will be more beneficial than you can imagine.

## Ask for Help

### Myth:

"I don't need any help."

"If I keep studying, I'll get it."

"I'm smart, I'll figure it out."

"Only dumb people have tutors."

"What will others think if they know I'm getting tutored?"

"I'm cheating if I get my own private teacher."

"Something must be very wrong if I need that kind of help."

"I never needed to ask for help in the past."

### Reality:

Asking for help is smart, not stupid.

Most people are hung up on the idea of asking for help. From the time we're born, we are told that the American ethic is self-reliance. Pull your own weight, row your own boat, pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and a host of other similar sayings pervade our culture.

There's also a notion that if you reach out for help, you'll be labeled as abnormal, and we all know how important it is to be in the center of the bell curve. I've always been stunned by the irony of teenagers who strive for the absolute autonomy and individuality as they separate from their parents, only to dress, speak, and act precisely as their peers do. They often go to extraordinary measures not to color outside the careful lines drawn by their peers. In short, if no one else is being tutored... it's not cool.

I remember when my daughter took statistics in college. She's a bright young woman who graduated with honors. But statistics nearly drove her nuts. She began to have that typical self-doubt and her confidence slipped. This is quite normal, but what she did was not. After consulting with the teacher, she decided that she needed extra instruction; so, she hired a tutor. She met with him quite regularly and salvaged her grade through hard work and determination.

If you still have doubts about the normalcy of tutors, think about Olympic and professional athletes. Can you possibly imagine any high-caliber athlete not having a private coach, at least periodically? Most private coaches travel with their athletes to be close by when trouble arises.

What about the top level musicians? Could you imagine them not having private, ongoing tutoring or teaching? They must have help to keep them sharp in an increasingly competitive world.

So, if tutors (coaches and private instructors) are good enough for the very best competitors in our country, don't you think we all should give them a try, especially when we're faltering a bit? Besides, many schools even offer tutoring free of charge.

## Survival Tips:

### Talk to the professor early in the semester.

You'll see this one come up over and over again because it's one of the best pieces of advice I can give. Don't wait until you're literally bailing out water from a sinking ship. Once you see some water seeping in, talk to the captain of the ship. Early is much better than later, but most students with problems wait too long to come in. And the first thing I or any other professor will say is, "Why'd you wait until now?" Many times, when students come in asking how they can salvage their grades, it's just too late.

### Ask for recommendations from the professor.

Often the professor will know who is a good tutor and who is not. Finding the right fit is vital, and often the professor can recommend the best graduate assistants and even undergrads who are most suited to help to you.

### Go to the student counseling office.

Most colleges have a counseling office that will help you find a tutor. Often they keep databases of tutors and their fees, and you can usually obtain a printout. Tutors' rates will vary depending upon their expertise, but at least you'll get an idea of prices. Most universities have standard fees that tutors should charge; so, even if you go off campus for a tutor, you'll know the ballpark figures.

### Look at tutors as an investment, not an expense.

Don't get hung up on money. Tutors are among the best dollar-for-dollar investments you can make. Like private coaches, they speed up your recovery from problems and can provide stress relief. They may cost several hundreds of dollars, but the relief is worth thousands. However, let me say again: Many schools will offer free tutoring.

### Don't be afraid to change if things don't work out.

Remember that tutors are people who have individual personalities and quirks that you might find annoying and whose teaching style is not productive for you. If so, move on to another tutor. Tutors provide a service and when the service is a liability, cut your losses. If you find this awkward to handle face to face, do it by e-mail or letter. Often an e-mail or letter with a follow-up phone call, at most, takes care of a tough situation. But don't continue to pay for a bad product or service.

## Develop a Positive Attitude!

### Myth:

"I don't have to like a course to do well."

"This course sucks."

"This professor stinks."

"I'm entitled to my opinion."

"I'd rather have a dental filling than go to this class."

"I'm not learning a damned thing in that class."

"This is THE worst class I have ever taken."

"Why me?"

"I'll write letters to friends to occupy my time in class."

### Reality:

**Attitude, not ability, will determine your success in college.**

Some people will mightily disagree with me on the notion that you must like something to do well. OK. That's your opinion, and you're entitled to it! But my experience in a classroom is that students who have an "attitude" (a negative disposition) toward either the subject or the teacher do not perform as well as they should.

I have watched this "attitude" phenomenon for years. In fact, it's so prominent in required courses that you cannot miss it. The school tells students that they must take English 101 or COMM 101, and students resent it. It's human nature to rebel when someone says you must do it. In contrast, I find that in elective courses students have more of

an interest and the results are dramatically different. They participate more in class, read the assignments, turn in higher quality materials, talk to the teacher more, and generally are more fun.

Don't think that intelligence (ability) will substitute for a good attitude, because it will not. Underline NOT. Being bright is a gift that many people squander because of a bad attitude. The world is chock full of half-baked geniuses, potential Olympic athletes, and superstar talents that never made it. Why? Because attitude, not ability, will determine your success.

Think about your own experiences. How many great potential athletes, students, workers have you seen come down the pike brimming with the ability-the aptitude-but whose attitude was impoverished? The results are always the same: Excuses. "I would have, could have, should have." "That damned coach hates me." "That instructor doesn't like the way I dress." The list goes on. You've heard it over and over by those who fail to reach their altitude...usually because of their attitude.

## Survival Tips:

### Think like an advertiser.

In advertising, the first thing the ad must do is tell the customers how the product or service will benefit them. Otherwise, it's nearly impossible to sell anything. Therefore, find the benefit to you by looking at the syllabus and discovering two or three issues that you find interesting. Focus on those for starters. Other benefits will follow.

### Look for long-term, not short-term, benefits.

As you begin to look for benefits, beware of shortsightedness. Students tend to look for instant gratification-what's in it for me...right this very second in my life. This will disappoint you because it's difficult to see how Columbus' rationale for exploration in 1492 has any direct, right-now impact on your life. Rather than this myopic stance, take the long view to learning. Ask yourself, "What can history teach me?" "Will understanding the why's help me understand the what's?" The answer is absolutely... YES. What you learn in college helps prepare you to think through important issues and apply them to your daily life.

### Act like a baby-sitter.

Pretend that you're counseling a younger brother or sister about a particular class and you sense a negative attitude. You want to tell them how important such a course is and why it should be taken seriously. What advice would you give? I discovered this approach when I was about 12 years old and was baby-sitting for our neighbor's kids. One day I started lecturing the kids about picking up their clothes and putting toys away. As I did, I began to sound like my own parents. Horrors. When I got home, I immediately cleaned my own room. My mother nearly fainted. By giving someone else good, solid advice, you teach yourself.

### Remember the Tortoise and the Hare.

This is a corny story that you no doubt have heard since you were a child. But it is right on the money. The two, as you recall, were in a race. The hare should have won hands down, no sweat. But he took his talent (aptitude) for granted and underestimated a competitor with great attitude. Attitude beats aptitude every time.

### Avoid making negative comments about the course or the professor.

A philosopher once heard a man speaking poorly about another man in public. The philosopher stopped the speaker and admonished him not to say such damaging things about another. The speaker asked the philosopher if he was trying to protect the man who was subject of the negative comments. "No," said the philosopher calmly, "I was trying to protect you from yourself." Negative comments about people can become self-destructive. Take this to the bank. Making and repeating comments begins to program your thinking for good or bad. When you start down this negative path it's pretty hard to get back. I've seen students develop an "attitude" and then try to defend it long after everyone else has seen that it no longer makes sense. Keep your comments positive-they foster a positive attitude.

## Never Give Up!

### Myth:

"It's better to drop a course rather than to risk a low grade."

"I just can't make it."

"No way I'm going to pass this class."

"This guy's the toughest professor I've ever had."

"She'll never give me a passing grade."

"I'm just not as smart as these brains."

"I don't have the background to survive in this course."

"This one's way over my head."

### Reality:

Never give up on a course.

Oftentimes you think you're being smart to cut your losses. But, if you've followed the other survival tips in this book, then I say never give up. Chances are better than even that if you've done your best, shown the professor you care, and all the rest-you will make it through. But I constantly hear of students wanting to drop courses for various reasons: Fear, self doubt, laziness, poor scheduling, and others.

The Chinese symbol for crisis has two characters: One means danger and the other opportunity. This is precisely where students who want to drop a class stand: on the horns of opposing solutions.

First, let's take danger. Despite your best efforts, you're in a course doing poorly. Things don't look good despite your best efforts. You're going to class, doing the work, but your performance in tests and papers is not meeting your expectations. Your professor is supportive, but no pushover. Looks like piles and piles of work to pull this one out. Danger with a capital "D" lurks about. So you think that maybe it's time to drop one.

Second, let's look at opportunity. Most teachers reward those who persevere. They actually do give (though sometimes invisible) points for effort. Everyone likes the student who keeps plugging away. I once got a "C" in a college German class because the professor called me a hard worker and a morale booster-I was amusing. According to my calculations, I should have gotten a "D," but I studied hard, hung in there, and entertained the class and professor, especially with my imitations of both a deep southerner and a Yankee pronouncing classic German.

Professors almost always curve the grades at the end of the semester, though many will deny it. The fact is that most teachers can't afford to have two-thirds of the class do poorly. It doesn't reflect well on the professor's competence.

So, here's my simple advice: Hang in there. Do your best and follow the other advice in the book. If you do that, you'll survive any course and any professor.

### Survival Tips:

#### Don't be afraid of the professor.

Often upperclass students will tell wild tales about certain professors whose reputations become legendary, even mythical. Before entering into the classroom, students are many times so overwhelmed by this reputation that they convince themselves that they can't possibly score an "A." Despite the stereotypes, most professors are "been there, done that" types. They have all bombed classes, experimented with life and its various detractors, and been in exactly the same position you're in now. Talk to them. Get their advice about whether it's wise for you to drop or not. Mostly, from my experience, I think they'll tell you to hang in there. Listen to them.

#### Believe in yourself.

Most of life's successes depend on confidence. In college, you can underline that. If you think you can-you will. If you think you can't-you won't. The best way to develop self-confidence is to think of the many things you've accomplished in the past that you might have had doubts about when you first began. I've found that discussing with students about the toughest thing they've ever learned, and how they overcame the fear and doubt, works very well. They begin to see how even learning to drive a car was daunting at first, but with practice-even a few accidents-they began to believe in themselves.

#### Check your assumptions.

Sometimes you think, "What's the use? I'm already flunking." Maybe, maybe not. Get to the professor as soon as possible and ask how well you're doing. You may be shocked to find out that you're doing about the same as others in the class even though you think you're about to be shot at dawn. Don't assume anything.

## Benchmark with other students.

Benchmarking is what corporations do all the time to tell how they're doing. They look at the other companies' products and services and compare their own. Sometimes they find that they're better, other times they find they're worse. In either case, it helps to know where you are. Do that with fellow students. You'll often find that you're doing better than you think. Somehow this kind of check always gave me courage to plow ahead.

## Quitters never win, and winners never quit.

I know this sounds like another bumper sticker, but I believe it. Hanging in there is one of life's great lessons. There are a lot of ventures that you'll begin in your life and will want to quit early on, thinking, "I'll never get through this one." Learn to face that self-doubt bogeyman now because he will not go away.

## Learn from Failure

### Myth:

"If you don't succeed, it's not for you."

"I can't do it."

"I got an F on the first test. That's it for me."

"I'm going to join the Army."

"I was not cut out for this."

"I'll never recover from the first semester grades."

"I'm ashamed. That's it. I quit."

"I knew I couldn't do it."

"I never was all that hot on college anyway."

### Reality:

Important lessons are learned from failures.

The most difficult semester for me was my freshman year, first semester. I had been an honor student in high school. Then came college and pre-med classes. I found myself on the lower half of the grade scale and decided to quit school and join the Marines. I even moved my clothes out during winter break to avoid embarrassing myself with my roommates. During the break, I met a US Marine who, to my surprise, discouraged me from joining up until I finished school. He probably was the best college counselor I ever had.

I didn't quit; I learned. I moved my stuff back into the dorm before my roommates returned, finished out the year, changed my major to English, graduated and later went into the US Marine Corps as an officer.

My story is not unique. Ask your parents or older friends who have gone to college, and you'll hear something similar. The message is simple. Hang in there and learn from the inevitable failures in college and in life. It's not the failure that's the big deal; it's how you respond and learn from it. If you keep making the same one over and over again, like the cartoon of the coyote chasing the roadrunner, then you need to think about a new planet to live on. Rather, if you learn and grow, that's the essence of this thing called life.

A conventional piece of wisdom says that most successful business people fail at least three times in their careers. That's because in order to be successful, you have to stretch, work outside your comfort zone, and take risks. Risks are scary but they also provide opportunities. So, if you're to be successful, you'll be taking risks. Some ventures will fail-the nature of the beast. Learn and for goodness sake, don't stop taking risks.

## Survival Tips:

### Learn, don't burn.

When you fail, learn from it by asking yourself why it happened. Was it a scheduling problem or something more fundamental like your writing or reading skills? The worst thing to do is sit in your room stewing about the course, the professor, your roommate, or the stars. Often when faced with a failure, people blame virtually everybody and everything else rather than face up to the fact that they alone are responsible.

## Don't be afraid to change your major.

Don't do this lightly or without consulting people who care, but also don't be afraid to do it if you find a significant mismatch between you and your major. Remember how most majors are picked. It's Saturday night, you meet an attractive person and you ask about his or her major. The rapport is growing. The next day you're an anthropology major-although yesterday you did not know what it was, and you could not even spell it. Given this highly analytical selection process, don't be overly invested in that major. In this case, failure may just be an intelligent redirection.

## Keep a sense of humor.

Above all things in college, as in life, keep your sense of humor and start by laughing at yourself. You'll always have a good laugh and self-deprecation is great humor for others as well. Failure can make us all deadly serious, as if our actions would change the course of generations to come. Get over it. Look at a misstep with humor. Joke about it, as you learn from it. For your own health, learn to laugh. In fact, many studies over the years have conclusively demonstrated that laughter is the best medicine. Rent a bunch of comedies your freshman year. That's the best way I know to get a quick laugh when I'm not feeling great about a recent failure.

## Great people fail.

Great men and women fail. They lose elections, fall from grace. History is chock full of them. My uncle Joe is a great businessman who's had a bunch of successes and failures in his life. I think that's what makes him successful. In fact there's an old saying, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." I believe that to be true in my experience.

## You can't please everyone.

One sure formula for failure is trying to please everyone around you. You have to define life and success for yourself. For some who are physically challenged, success is getting up in the morning and being able to function independently. For great athletes it might mean running a four-minute mile. The definition of failure and success varies, and it's all relative. Keep yourself as the focus when drawing those boundaries.

## Listen to Your Instinct!

### Myth:

"I don't have enough experience to trust myself."

"Hey, I'm only a kid."

"I just graduated from high school."

"I'm allowed to make a certain number of errors."

"In college, I'm supposed to experiment."

"Everybody is doing it."

"They'll think I am a jerk if I don't do it."

"If it doesn't hurt anyone else, what's wrong with it?"

"If I ask, I'll look stupid."

### Reality:

Listen to your instincts. Your instincts and judgment got you this far-to college. They can take you through college as well. There's a tremendous freedom that comes with leaving for college. The release from nagging (and loving) parents, getting to leave your dirty laundry on the floor for weeks at a time, eating what and when you want, and a raft of other new-found freedoms are exhilarating. That's the good news.

But the bad news is that you're now responsible for what you do. Remember, at age 18 you're now not just personally but legally responsible for your actions. This has great implications. You can vote, but you can also be arrested and tried as an adult. You can sign for credit cards, but you can be sued for non-payment. The lists of rights and responsibilities is enormous, and the choices are all yours to make.

In fact, the idea of independence is all about choices-both good and bad. I grew up in a poor neighborhood. Most of us had about the same amount of money (very little) and the same types of choices. Several kids in my old neighborhood went to jail. Others went on to be professionals and became quite successful. What made much of the difference were the choices people made.

Choice is a wide-open proposition, and it is a dilemma for most of us. I once heard a forensic psychiatrist talk about the criminally insane. As a psychiatrist at a major psychiatric hospital who had seen over 5,000 criminally insane patients in his career, he reached the conclusion that doing wrong is a conscious act. Based on thousands of patient interviews, he had unequivocally concluded that doing right or wrong was a choice. I'll never forget the force with which he delivered that point to a group of police officers, and his follow-up message was clear: Don't spend any time feeling sorry for those who make such choices when they get arrested.

College is full of choices-some good, some bad. The choices abound: To study or not; to drink and drive or not; to cheat or not. My message to you is a takeoff on what the psychiatrist said: Don't do something unless you're prepared for the consequences of your actions. Or as police officers say, "Don't do the crime, if you can't do the time."

### Survival tips:

#### Figure out how you make your best decisions.

Most people decide either with their heads or their hearts. "Head" types decide based on the logic and the arguments for and against doing something much like a lawyer might. They weigh both sides of an issue and even internally argue both sides of the issues. Whichever seems the stronger of the two arguments wins. Often the outcome is much like a court case: one side wins and the other loses. "Heart" types tend to use their gut as a basis to react to issues. They rely much more on their basic gut reactions to situations as a barometer. If things feel right, then this type of person can be assured that chances are good they're making the right decision. Both head and heart decision makers are very good at the process if they rely on their distinctive strengths.

#### Test your decision with those who think differently than you.

When you're about to decide on an issue that's important to you, get some counterpoint views from people who don't think like you. It's always better to test your ideas among friends and relatives before you expose your decision to the scrutiny of the world. Much less painful; much more constructive.

#### Use the Red-Face test.

When faced with the many types and sizes of decisions you'll likely have to make in college, I highly recommend the red-face technique. Ask yourself this one basic question: If I did this thing I'm about to do, and it was reported on the front page of my local newspaper or put on the evening news, would I be embarrassed? If the answer is yes...then don't just walk from the situation, run from it. You'll be glad you did.

#### Find a sounding board.

Everyone needs someone to listen to them. I once heard that psychiatrists and psychologists get about a 50% cure rate but that people who have a good friend they can talk to are cured at a rate over 70%. My memory of those numbers might be off a couple of points, but the message that the report sent was clear: A good sounding board is vital to your mental health. Find one.

#### When you make a bad decision, learn from it.

Notice that I said, "When," not "if" you make a bad decision. Bad decisions are as much a part of life as breathing. Most people would "revise" some decisions in their lives, given the opportunity. The key is not that you make a bad decision here or there, but that you learn from it. You should mature from the experience.

## Conclusion

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By now your eyes may be glazed over from all this advice. Make no mistake, I did not always follow my own advice, nor did most of your parents. So, if you toss this book in the trashcan and need one piece of advice to live by, try this. Ask yourself what advice you'd give to younger sisters or brothers if they were in your place. Then listen to that voice...it's the voice of objective experience. Hopefully I was able to give some of that to you. Certainly, your parents have tried to do that as well.

In closing, let me leave you with this simple thumbnail list of Realities:

1. Train early
2. Attend all classes
3. Study the professor

4. Form study groups
5. Establish regular study habits
6. Ask for help
7. Develop a positive attitude
8. Never give up
9. Learn from failure
10. Listen to your instincts

I wish you the best of luck as you find your own path navigating the first year of college.

*By Steve Gladis, PhD*

## Study Techniques

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### Just for freshmen: Tips for Academic Success!

#### Success Takes Time!

Success in college takes more than brains -- it takes time. College work requires a lot of independent learning. You will need to schedule time to go to the library, write up lab reports, meet with professors, and take care of other academic business. Compared to high school, you will be spending few hours in class; 12 to 16 hours a week is typical. However, you will be expected to spend twice that much time preparing for each class. For example, if you are taking 12 credit hours, you should plan to spend 24 hours a week on homework. Twelve hours of class time, plus 24 hours of homework time equals 38 hours devoted to school each week. This is the equivalent of a full-time job!

In college, completing assigned homework is just the start and is often not enough to ensure success. Professors expect you will do whatever is necessary to master course material. This means going above and beyond what's assigned. Use your weekly study time wisely: recopy class notes, make and study flash cards, or create sample test questions. Getting involved in a study group is also a good way to make friends and test your knowledge. Have regular meetings with professors to keep track of your progress. By investing time each week, you can keep grades up and reduce stress at exam time.

So while you are planning time for eating, sleeping, and having fun, be sure to schedule enough time to prepare for class.

### College Motivation

#### College Success is More Than Academics

I used to think that the best way to succeed in school was to study, study and even study some more. I realized the saying that 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy' really holds true at the college level. College success is more than just academics; it's learning how to be an adult for the first time in your life. It's about developing tremendous interpersonal relationships with professors, counselors, and most importantly your peers. It's the whole college experience that enables one to truly succeed. Meeting new people, opening your mind to different ideas and cultures, and most importantly, the enjoyment of the four plus years that you're in school. Years from now, you will look back and consider your time in school as one of if not the best time of your life. That being the case, I strongly recommend that you take time and appreciate each goal that is achieved. If you don't take time to 'pat yourself on the back', more so than not, no one else will. Two things to keep in mind:

1. You are your biggest supporter and your harshest critic.
2. Remember to respect your goals that you are trying to attain and appreciate and reflect on the ones you have reached.

## Ask Questions

Being a freshman is always challenging, as you step into a new world of exciting adventures. Maybe you've heard a lot about Albert Einstein, William Shakespeare, or perhaps Abraham Lincoln, but you never had the chance to read or actually have someone tell you about their works and what they did for society and the entire human race. And so, as you step into college you should be ready to explore what was once a dormant seed in you and erase the fear of college and being a freshman. Life is full of new adventures and being a freshman is no different. Although it may seem a little difficult at first, the key to success is determination and motivation. Always think positive. Ask questions. Remember, no question is a dumb question. You go to school to learn, so take advantage of it and go for it.

## Positive Thinking and Science

Because of past negative experiences, many students are anxious about being in science classes. They're convinced that they can't do any science because they did poorly in these courses in junior high and high school. If you tell yourself that you're going to fail, you will. As difficult as it may seem, you have to adopt a positive attitude. Anything you believe you can do, you can do. I give this advice to all my students. Many come in convinced that they can't do biology and 15 weeks later they express amazement at how well they have done. Listen to me. Adopting a positive attitude has proven effective for many students. It will work for you.

## Setting Goals

Little is done by any of us without motivation and a goal in mind. Motivation is the internal fire which allows each of us to ascend to something we have yet to achieve. For university students, a goal to graduate provides one of the first destinations as we journey down the academic road toward fulfillment of our degree. Remain focused on your goal to graduate. The path leading to a degree will have many options along the way which can entice you to deviate from your goal. Each time you pass one of these deviations you will strengthen your motivation to remain on course. Although we can all be temporarily misled in our journey, if your goal is sound and your motivation to achieve your goal is high, you will be successful. Keep in mind that the education you receive at your university will provide you with the knowledge necessary for the attainment of many future goals.

## Setting Priorities

Approach your college education as a game or competition. Set goals that are reasonable for each of your classes and then establish a game plan to be successful. Establish priorities in your study habits by managing your time correctly. Be prepared for each class every day with a positive attitude. You will only get out of each class what you put forth in effort. We tell our players to not waste time because it's so valuable. One method we teach them is to make flash cards or note cards that they can carry with them at all times, and then if they are waiting for someone or just have some time on their hands they can take their cards out and review them. With flash cards you can also make-up a game or competition of knowledge in each course so that the material becomes more interesting to learn. Finally, never get discouraged and always continue to be persistent toward your goals. If you know your goals, are persistent, and properly prepare for each class you should meet with great success.

## Keeping Things in Perspective

Do you sometimes find yourself confused about things and can't concentrate on your coursework? You do have many decisions to make in the next several years, and some of the answers might come easily to you, and others might not. You may be with other students who have known all their lives what they want to be, or where they want to live, or who they want to marry. You may find that some of your own plans are no longer right for you, or some of the values that you believed in are no longer valid, or that you are no longer certain who you are. These confusions are difficult for any of us to handle, and they can sometimes prevent us from spending enough time on our courses.

My first tip is don't panic. You're not the only one with these kinds of questions. In fact, just about all students go through this during their college years. The right answers will come to you in time, and this process marks you as an adult. It's still a rough experience, but sometimes knowing that most college students go through this CAN help to ease the shock of it happening to you.

My second tip is to remember that you're not alone. There are many offices, people and services at your university that are designed to help you through these times. Know who and where these are, and don't hesitate to use them. So good luck, and remember to keep things in perspective.

## Passing Life's Test

In life people want the best. You got to work harder and rougher than the rest. For if you really want to pass life's test do well in school and you'll get to the next. So while you're in school--you get all that you can. I'm talking school smarts-- you get all that you can. Cause in the real world you want to be the man. So get all that you can. Get all that you can.

## Stress Reduction Tips

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### Using Lists

When the pressure and stress of the semester begins to build and you can't imagine how you can possibly accomplish everything you need to do, make a list. Include everything that needs to be done on the list, including homework, class assignments, grocery shopping, laundry and even partying. Then make a weekly schedule. Fit all of your tasks within the weekly schedule. This will help you to be more organized, less overwhelmed and remember everything you need to do. You will find that there is indeed time to fit everything in. When you have completed one of the tasks on your list, cross it off. Crossing everything off the list is a good feeling of accomplishment. This is also a great way to see how much you actually do during the day and pat yourself on the back for a job well done.

### Fighting Depression

You know that academic success depends on achieving satisfactory grades. Sometimes, however, students who are typically successful find their academic performance begins to slide for personal reasons. Prolonged unhappiness or dissatisfaction with one's self or one's relationships with others can drain a student's energy and become a hindrance to academic effectiveness. Yes, students can get depressed or anxious and find themselves having a hard time shaking it off. It's not an unusual occurrence; but if it goes on for weeks, you should be concerned. When social or emotional issues get in the way in your life, do something about it. The first step is to find someone with whom you can talk about it. This usually makes a world of difference. Don't continue to hold it in. Get a self- help book or audiotape, even consult a counselor. Take care of yourself by eating and sleeping regularly, and get exercise. Make yourself go to class. Fight back and work to regain control of your life. Your emotional health and academic success go hand in hand. Keep a handle on both.

### Overcoming Anxiety

I find that many students have already acquired pretty good study habits. So, unless they have basic skill problems in areas like reading and math, they actually possess the ability to take notes effectively, manage their time, and so on. So, what gets in the way of effective performance in the classroom? I believe that "anxiety" is the culprit. Many students put themselves down by believing that they are "stupid" and "ineffective," especially in comparison with their peers. These feelings of inadequacy can lead to the paralyzing anxiety that "blocks" successful performance in the classroom -- especially on tests. I have personally experienced this gut-wrenching feeling and kicked myself later for making those dumb mistakes that result when anxiety gets in the way. In order to overcome anxiety, I recommend the following:

Gain temporary control of your anxiety by practicing relaxation techniques during especially anxious times. Deep breathing combined with muscular tensing and relaxing can be helpful. Massage and meditation can help too.

Work on feeling better about yourself. Try replacing negative thinking with positive thoughts. Praise yourself once in a while and forgive yourself for mistakes. Read books, such as David Burns' Feeling Good, that suggest ways to improve your feelings of self-worth.

In general, try being your own best friend!

### General Stress Reduction Tips

As classes become more demanding, you need to consider ways to reduce stress. There are certainly a few things not to do, such as procrastinate. If you have a project or paper assigned early in the semester, get started on it right away. In order to do your best job, you need to spend a lot of time on it. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. Also, don't work long hours without rest. Ideally, you should sleep seven to eight hours daily to function properly. One activity that reduces stress is exercise. Whether it be jogging, bicycling, basketball, racquetball, swimming, or a

daily walk, make sure you make time to exercise. Remember, to help reduce stress, don't procrastinate, get plenty of rest, and exercise regularly.

## Visualization and Relaxation

When the pressure seems to be getting to you, don't reach for the aspirin bottle. Try one of these instant stress relievers. Take six deep breaths. Slowly breathe through your nose and out your mouth. Visit the Bahamas or any other pleasant place through your imagination. Visualize the scene in detail. Hug someone. Four hugs every day will do a lot to calm you down. Change your scene. Walk to the window, watch the birds, take a stroll down the hall. Go outside and breathe deeply for two minutes. Exercise and stretching will improve your mind. Jog up the staircase. Find something or someone who will make you laugh. Stress can often come from taking yourself or your task too seriously. Ask yourself what is the worst possible thing that could happen if you made a mistake or missed the deadline. Lastly, change your focus. Think about your out of class life and focus on what you'll do this weekend or this evening.

## Personal Maintenance

We all know the importance of maintaining a car. We can push it to the limit, but sooner or later it starts to run poorly. By setting aside some time for a little maintenance, we can keep it running smoothly and efficiently. Unfortunately, we tend to forget these simple truths when they're applied to college life. We push ourselves to keep up with demands and ignore warning signs such as decreased productivity and a negative attitude. We fail to recognize that some time spent on rest and relaxation may actually save time in the long run. People often notice that their mood improves and they work more effectively after taking a break. Personal maintenance may include very simple and inexpensive activities such as taking a walk in the snow, having dinner with a friend, or listening to some favorite music. So take a little time out today to do something fun and relaxing -- your system just might run a little smoother tomorrow.

## Self-Imposed Barriers

Have you ever thought about the influence of the person you see in the mirror? It takes a mature person to honestly evaluate themselves. It takes a strong person to recognize self-imposed barriers and to do something about them. Some of us have told ourselves or were told by others that we didn't possess the qualities of a good student. It then becomes easy to quit trying and to stay in groups that mock things like good study habits, regular reading in the library, and shooting for the best you can do. This is an understandable coping response, but we have to be willing to reassess ourselves. These are things that influence who we will be in the future, how we feel about ourselves, and the opportunities we will have. Cast aside those behaviors that make school unnecessarily harder and limit your potential. Start today.

## Reaching Out Can Make a Difference

Did you know that college students are considered one of the most depressed and lonely groups when compared to the general population? I know this not only through my studies, but also through personal experiences. Often students try to deal with these problems with parties and drinking. My tip is an exception to that rule. Instead, look to friends, professors, religion, or anything that will have personal meaning to you. The more real time you spend with meaningful people and activities, the more alive you will feel. There are so many worthwhile activities and people at your university just waiting for you to discover them. You will be surprised how many people are looking for the same type of interaction you need. On a campus with thousands of people, if you reach out often enough you will find friends and maybe even a few soulmates. I know this, because I have.

## The Secret to True Success in Life

The pressures of student life, and life in general can be overly stressful and overwhelming, driving many to seek escape, refuge, or relief. We've all heard the many slogans: "Just Say No," "This is your brain on drugs" (the fried-egg commercial), "Don't Drink and Drive" etc. Some sound pretty lame, some sound boring, but yet they're actually true. We've heard them 1,000 times from 1,000 different people. Well, here we go again with one more. TRUE SUCCESS IN LIFE MEANS TO TREAT YOUR BODY RIGHT!

Keep the impurities out and let your life begin. Learn to love yourself--for real. You are who you hang with. Surround yourself with positive people, places and things. If you want to be strong in this world, hang with those who are strong in this world. Take care.

## The 'Golden 20' for Academic Success!

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1. Go to class.
2. Be on time.
3. Sit to the front and center of the classroom.
4. Bring a pen, paper, notebook, and books.
5. Dress like a student (not like an athlete, rap star, rock musician, or surfer).
6. Show respect and enthusiasm to your instructors.
7. Listen, listen, listen--you can't learn while talking to your peers during class.
8. Pay attention--don't doodle, doze, or daydream.
9. Try to contribute once per class period, with a question or contribution to discussion. Participation counts--and helps.
10. Have clearly marked notebooks, with separate sections--or separate notebooks--for each class.
11. Take notes.
12. Use a dictionary. This will increase your vocabulary and teach you correct spelling.
13. Have a partner/"buddy" system for studying. Have parents, friends, dormmates, etc. quiz you. Form study groups.
14. Read, read, read. Read magazines, the newspaper, sports books, science fiction, anything you can get your hands on.
15. Set aside at least three hours a day, six days a week, to study.
16. Get some of your homework done during school. Use free periods, extra time between classes, and the time before sports.
17. Sacrifice and work during times when you know other people aren't working. Work on a Friday night or Saturday afternoon. It will be worth it.
18. Volunteer for extra credit.
19. Get involved in extracurricular activities. Don't merely attend classes and go to practice. Join the Government Club or Cultural Awareness Organization, write for the student newspaper, give tours, etc. Get involved.
20. Work hard and be proud that you are working hard and learning. Realize that education is a key ingredient to many great things that you will accomplish in life.

## Reading and Highlighting Tips

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### Pre-Reading Ideas

Have you ever sat down to read a chapter and realized you either can't follow the chapter's ideas or can't remember what you've read previously? Set yourself up for success by following a few simple pre-reading tips. First, preview the chapter. Skim the text by reading the chapter introductory remarks, subtitles, italicized print, summary and questions. Second, from your preview ask yourself two very important questions:

What is the chapter about?

What do I already know about the subject of the chapter?

Third, jot down any ideas that you remember from your preview and questioning. These could be words, phrases, or sentences. In the five to ten minutes it takes to pre-read a chapter you've familiarized yourself with the text, made an information connection with what you already know about the subject, and set yourself up for success in comprehending a difficult subject.

### Learning Styles and Reading

During my years of teaching, I have found that students who incorporate the use of multiple senses in their study habits have better retention of course material. When you read the assignment in the textbook you see the material -- stimulating the visual sense. Along with this, it is important to recognize your particular learning style. Some students concentrate best in a quiet environment. Others function better with background music. Attending class and listening to a lecture stimulates the hearing sense. Note taking, another important activity in lecture based courses, reinforces what is heard during the lecture. Daily review and even rewriting notes helps clarify ideas. If you are taking a clinical or laboratory course, actually performing a procedure or activity will clarify the mental image of the

procedure and also help you develop skill in the performance area. This stimulates the tactile sense. Remember, the more senses you use in the learning process, the better your retention of course material.

## Understanding Jargon in Text

One study problem I hear students talk about is feeling overwhelmed by the professional jargon in a text. Students give up trying to understand the material and read it passively "just to get it finished." It can be helpful to change your attitude and approach to reading difficult material by viewing yourself as a translator of the material, with your job being to translate the text into your own language. There are many different ways to translate. For example, you can stop after reading every page and in the margin of the text write down your own example or define the terms in your own words. Continue to ask yourself, "How could I express this in everyday language?" If you are unsure, take an educated guess and ask for feedback in class. Getting feedback is important in helping you refine your understanding of the material. Also, viewing your job as a translator instead of a passive reader acknowledges the experiences and strengths you bring to learning the material. In this way new learning is building upon old learning.

## Underlining Key Phrases

Some people love to use their pink or yellow markers to underline everything in their text. I want to suggest to you this is a bad thing. When reading, underline only a keyword or a small phrase. Perhaps one or two items per page. Better yet, don't underline but keep a list of names and ideas you want to remember. Make a note of the page number the idea is on, then when studying you won't be faced with page after page of underlined material that you can't possibly read before the test. A few days before the quiz or test look at your list. Spend an hour or two each night for several nights. When you find something you don't know, which you can't recall, look it up on the page you cited. Study what you don't know. Combined with what you know and remember from a lecture, you should be the most knowledgeable person in the class. This technique is of no value if you're seeing the material for the first time the night before an exam.

## Active Reading Suggestions

One of the most frequent things I say to my students is be an active reader not a passive one. Reading isn't like watching TV. You just can't stare at a page and expect to remember much. Read an assigned chapter quickly -- first for a general overview -- then go back and seek out the details. Keep a pen or a pencil, not a highlighter, in your hand. Underline important passages. Write notes, questions and reactions in the margins. When you read you should be having a conversation with the text. Don't let it do all the talking -- react to it. Your response helps you formulate the meaning of the text. Mark up your book like crazy. I always tell my classes, the more you decrease the resale value of a book, the more you're probably getting out of it. So remember, read actively.

## Novel Reading vs. Textbook Reading

I am always surprised by the fact that many students read their textbook the same way they would read a novel, starting on page one and reading straight through to the end. Try reading your textbooks more like you would read a newspaper or magazine. Start by skimming through a section, reading the subject headings and any definitions that appear in boldface print. Study the pictures and figures carefully -- these are chosen to illustrate and highlight the essential points of the text. Next, read the introduction and summary and finally go back and read the text itself. Start with the material that most interests you, but be careful not to skip a section. Keep some scratch paper handy for jotting down important terms and working out problems. Leave your highlighter pens in the drawer. Most importantly, don't try to digest too much information at once. Read in 30 to 45 minute blocks of time with frequent breaks. This will help you to stay alert and focused.

## Are You Reading Your Textbook?

Read your text book. Now for many students this is stating the obvious, but for some students that is a novel idea. Reading your text should be just that--reading. Sometimes students get so carried away with highlighting that it seems their activity resembles coloring more than reading. Read your text before the professor lectures on the material. You'll find it easier to take lecture notes and ask reasonable questions. You'll be a better prepared student and in turn more successful.

## Successful Textbook Reading Techniques

Most college professors select a text as required reading for their courses. These textbooks aren't always laden with interesting information presented in a fascinating manner. But, they do contain important information that will help

you succeed in each of your courses. To get the most out of your textbook reading consider the following steps. Before you begin to actually read the assigned chapter, preview it. Read the chapter title, the major headings and the subheadings throughout the chapter. Then read the chapter introduction and the summary. Third, take note of any guiding questions which the author might have included in the beginning of the chapter, as well as any vocabulary words presented before the chapter. Then sit back and read the entire chapter's contents. While reading, pause to refer to illustrations, figures, and graphs which the textbook authors have included in the chapter. Reread the summary again after reading the entire chapter. Once you have completed the detailed reading, review the guiding questions presented at the beginning of the chapter and actively answer them, preferably in writing, but at least orally. This technique requires little practice, will reduce the time you need to spend reading your course assignments, and produces greater understanding of your textbook. Easy to use with maximum results... a college student's dream.

## How do Top Students study?

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### Answer 1

I'll speak on behalf of a close friend of mine, who attended an unknown university from where I am from (Lima, Peru), and got accepted for a fully funded PhD to work with the world-leaders (including Nobel Laureates) at Systems Biology and Computational Biology at Harvard, UC San Francisco and Rockefeller.

I'd like to add, that he beat his competitors at interviewing for Grad School from MIT, Harvard, Caltech, Stanford, Yale, and other top institutions. It's one thing to go to get a PhD at MIT because you did your undergrad at Caltech, but its a completely different story if a kid from a developing country who went to a no-mans-land university beats you at grad school and got to work with a Nobel Laureate. This guy was the deal, and he went from zero to hero.

#### His success story:

- 1) **Discipline:** He had no Facebook during his undergraduate years, and probably only went online for doing homework, assignments or coordinating projects. This reduced his distraction span to zero.
- 2) **Emotional Intelligence:** He could control his emotional and sexual impulses. He was very socially intelligent around diverse groups, but he had in mind that having a girlfriend during his undergraduate years would be a major distraction. Both he and I when we were freshman knew that we wanted to go to USA for a PhD, so we were lifelong buddies who always noticed the good and bad things about each other. While I would sometime complain that he didn't go out on weekends (because he never did), he would always complain that I cared too much about appearance, partying and personal marketing. He was not socially handicapped as some people might think a 'nerd' would be, he was actually a very mature person who could talk about anything.
- 3) **Sacrifice:** We came from a place where dogs literally walked inside our classroom, and cockroaches would on occasion crawl in our backpack in class. He didn't let any of this get to him. He actually used the poor infrastructure of our engineering building as a motivation, something like "one day I'm going to get out of this hell hole, and do something great for science". He also had a great sense of patriotism.
- 4) **Stellar passion and motivation:** The first semester, I found out that he had the highest GPA of the whole class, and I immediately called him by the phone. I didn't understand a thing of what he said because the signal was low. However, the next day he seemed very depressed and told me that his grandfather had passed away. His grandfather was like his father to him and he never got the chance to tell him that he achieved first place in his engineering class. Little did we know, after a couple of weeks we realized not only was he the first in class, he was first in the entire campus achieving the highest GPA (grades in Peru are from 0 to 20, and with no curve). He graduated Summa Cum Laude 2 years ago, and got the highest GPA at our university over the last 30 years. The other person previous to him was Barton Zwiebach, a renowned Peruvian string theorist and Professor at MIT.
- 5) **No pain, no gain:** He went overkill sometimes to achieve his goal. I'm talking things like not having lunch to study an extra hour, sleep 4-5 hours a day at least 5 days a week, sleeping on the bus to get extra sleep time, and most dazzling thing of all was that most of the time he didn't go to class. He just stayed studying in the library and was at

least 2 or 3 weeks ahead of the professor. Even if he did go to class, he rarely paid attention, he would go over his books to see what methods other authors would teach. He would buy and download at least 5 different books per subject and read them all to learn and to study for the test. He would go over all the proofs and learn them, study them, do them, sometimes reinvent the proofs or see if he could grasp the concept in anticipation of what the book would reveal.

6) **Selecting friends:** His paradigm for selecting friends (or colleagues) was impressive. He didn't care if it was me (a spoiled rich kid), or the son of a blue-collar family that was a national math Olympiad. He valued people for their ideas and it didn't matter to him where they were from, but where they were going.

7) **Becoming a preacher:** He was never reluctant on teaching. Whenever anyone would ask him something he would go over the concepts and explain it to him. This was really beneficial for our closed group of friends, as we each learned different concepts and he checked with us or we discussed any doubts we had.

8) **Be ambitious:** All of his life, he was the best at everything he did. Before enrolling at our engineering school, he was making around \$3000 a month by only winning Magic the Gathering Card competitions, and he was Peru's #1 player and Ranked in the top 10 worldwide. \*Not bad for a 16 year old, at that time.

9) **He majored in Robotics Engineering:** So yes, he did learn Optimal and Digital Control, Fourier Analysis, Triple integrals, differential equations, etc.. We didn't have computers for our programming tests, they were all done on pen and paper.

10) **He was incredibly humble.**

At his young age (22), he has already surpassed the post-docs at the Ivy League university (name concealed) Lab he is interning at, to the degree that the seminal paper he wrote is on yield because if published now, invalidates the work of the post-docs at his lab.

Source: <http://qr.ae/7BSQjZ>

## Answer 2

I've been at MIT for the past four years in course 6 (Computer Science), and I'm currently studying for my last final exam (!!!). Here are some things that work for me:

1. **Teach it first:** To understand new systems / concepts, stand up in front of a chalkboard and act as if you're teaching it to a class. When you get to a point you don't know how to explain, talk it out. Literally, stand up and talk to yourself; it works.
2. **Diagram / Symbol:** Once you understand something, create a visual diagram / symbol. Draw it on a piece of paper. Close your eyes and think about it in your head. Once you have the diagram / symbol, it will be very easy to remember how it works later on.
3. **Believe everything is easy and simple:** You might not understand certain systems at first look, but if you approach it with a simple mind, you will do better. You won't think too much about the details and you will better understand the high-level picture.
4. **Sleep on it:** Read a paper before you go to sleep and think about it as you doze off. When you wake up, it will be at least 50% easier to understand.
5. **Make sure you get enough sleep:** It makes it incredibly easier to understand new systems when you are thinking clearly. If you're studying and things just aren't making sense, take a nap for 20 minutes. It may be just enough to get the light bulb in your head to flicker.
6. **Discuss it with friends:** Discussions help you gain new perspectives on how others think of systems. It might introduce variables you never thought about.

## What are some Study Hacks Every Student should know?

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You can try one or all of these 9 study hacks to help you work smarter towards your exams:

1. **Create a morning habit to give your energy for the day ahead.**

You can be on top of your game by following a morning routine so that you accomplish more early, which in turn can motivate you to be even more productive throughout the rest of the day. A routine gives you structure and breaks down your morning hours into smaller chunks of work that are easier to do. I recommend listening to a podcast called Achieve Your Goals with Hal Elrod, the author of a book called The Miracle Morning. If you'd like some more tips on creating a morning routine, read more about it here.

2. **Feed your brain right.**

Start your day with a balanced breakfast, for example with a combination of protein, fruits, and healthy fats (such as nuts): it can be oatmeal or yogurt with granola, fresh fruit, walnuts and almonds.

Have an egg! Eggs are a powerful mix of B vitamins (they help nerve cells to burn glucose), antioxidants (they protect neurons against damage), and omega-3 fatty acids (they keep nerve cells functioning at optimal speed).

Did you know that some excellent brain food includes sardines, beets, spinach, and lentils? Try to incorporate these and other foods into your daily meals to boost your brain power.

3. **Do your deep work early.**

Deep work is what your analytical brain does that requires a lot of concentration to perform the most complex tasks (in the case of studying, these can be reading, comprehension, application, repetition). Some scientists call this time of day the brain's peak performance time, and it's roughly 2-4 hours after we wake up. So, for example, if you wake up at 6, your peak times are between 8 and 10 a.m. Be sure to block this time off to cover your most important work, and leave other activities such as checking your Facebook and Instagram updates, your emails, and the news for later in the day.

4. **Become a time management pro.**

When you're ready to start studying, use a timer to divide up your day into manageable increments that will allow your brain to focus in a more targeted and effective way. You can set the timer to 30 or 60 minute blocks, for example. You can also try the Pomodoro technique which consists of 25 minute blocks of time, followed by 5 minute breaks. When you're done with one segment, step away from your desk, and do something completely unrelated to work to give your brain a chance to rest: take a 5 minute walk, stretch your body, grab a cup of coffee or tea.

5. **Take a power nap.**

To boost your concentration and cognitive abilities, take a nap for about 30 minutes in the afternoon; find a comfortable space (a couch, an armchair, your bed). Block away environmental noise with noise-cancelling headphones. If you prefer, you can listen to music that can help you relax (anything that is instrumental; it can be classical music, chillout, sounds of nature).

6. **Take a walk.**

Performing some form of physical exercise, even if it is targeted and short, improves your brain's cognitive performance, problem solving ability, and even boosts long-term memory. Aim for 30-45 minutes. If your neighborhood or college campus is noisy, take your headphones with you and listen to some relaxing instrumental music.

7. **Use your evening for strategic thinking.**

This is typically the time of day when the brain slows down, doesn't go at top speed to adhere to deadlines, so it has space for more creative thinking. Use this time for activities such as:

Setting study goals for the week

Strategizing how to optimize your learning (find new learning tools or apps)

Reviewing your schedule for the next day

Contemplating the big picture with these questions:

Where you would like to be once you've completed your exams?

What are your long term goals?

What is the career you want for yourself?

What are the steps you'll need to take to get started on the next phase of your professional development?

## 8. Train your brain to be calmer.

So much information to absorb, so many details to remember, and all those tough deadlines to adhere to. Studying is hard! You can help your brain by training it with meditation. This practice can help you deal better with the input of information that could lead to feelings of chaos, overwhelm, and stress. Start with just 10 minutes. Download the Headspace app; it makes meditation easy, fun, and great for beginners.

## 9. Use a nighttime routine to unwind faster and get ready to sleep.

This habit will help you ease away from your studies and signal to your body that it's time to slow down and prepare for rest. You can (a) set a bedtime alarm to go off 30 minutes before going to sleep, (b) stay away from electronics (mainly your computer), (c) stretch your legs with a short walk after dinner for about 20-30 minutes to boost digestion and give your brain some extra oxygen, and (d) do something relaxing before bedtime: read a book, listen to music, or just close your eyes and breathe deeply for 10 counts before you brush your teeth and get ready for bed.

- Nela Canovic.

## To-Do List Hacks

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At the end of each workday, write down the six most important things you need to accomplish tomorrow. Do not write down more than six tasks.

Prioritize those six items in order of their true importance.

When you arrive tomorrow, concentrate only on the first task. Work until the first task is finished before moving on to the second task.

Approach the rest of your list in the same fashion. At the end of the day, move any unfinished items to a new list of six tasks for the following day.

Repeat this process every working day.

## How to Study for extended periods of Time?

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I often studied 14-16 hour days for a solid year when doing my final exams in Oxford University. These are the things that kept me sane, happy, and motivated. You can do this. You already have the ability within you because you are asking this question. With these tips you will be unstoppable.

**Exercise** - Every day get your blood flowing. It's cliché for a reason: healthy body, healthy mind. 20 minutes a day is good enough. Go for a walk in the morning whilst listening to something that motivates you (but unrelated to work). When I studied in Oxford, I routinely pulled 14 hour days (often 16 hour days) for a year straight. I lifted weights at the end of every day.

**Sunlight and fresh air** - Don't get cabin fever. Supplement with vitamin D but also make sure you breathe in fresh air and see the sun regularly.

**Diet** - A diet rich in good fats will keep your mind lubricated. Try coconut oil (a teaspoon every day to begin with, then up the dose). Also try MCT-oil. Eat fish, nuts, fruits, vegetables. Limit refined sugars/grains/dairy. Have a dessert but have it at nighttime because the carbohydrates will help you sleep well. Bananas are great to eat before bed because they contain tryptophan which will boost the serotonin in your brain (the chemical that makes you happy and motivated). Eat light during the day. If you can fast in the morning, that will be great for concentration. Digestion slows you down.

**Coffee + Tea** - Get yourself a really good quality coffee and some great green tea. I recommend matcha, genmaicha,

and gyokuro for green tea (you can't go wrong with the Japanese stuff). Have a cup of coffee and a cup of green tea beside you whilst you study and sip them. The coffee has caffeine, which keeps you alert, and the green tea has l-theanine, which keeps you relaxed and happy. This combination is fantastic. The green tea stops you from getting coffee jitters.

**Pomodoro Technique** - Work in bursts. Set a timer for 25 minutes and do nothing but concentrate on work. Then have a 5 minute break where you do whatever you want. Watch something funny on YouTube, walk around, play with your dog. You can sustain long bouts of work by doing this. This will also make sure that you absorb most of what you study. Seriously, after 25 minutes of studying, your brain needs a break or you're going to be ineffective.

**Olympic Athlete Mindset** - Tell yourself that you're training for the academic gold. Keep yourself fit, healthy, happy, and focused. Make this your purpose. There's nothing depressing about living your purpose. You can do this! This is your mission.

**Meditation/Stretching/Yoga/Pranayama** -Learn to quiet the mind. Read *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle and listen to his guided meditations on YouTube. Go for walks and just focus on your breathing, don't indulge your thoughts, and notice things around you. You will be sitting down for long periods of time so make sure you have a good stretching/yoga routine. I followed a 30 day challenge whilst I studied in my final year in Oxford.

**Relax Every Day** - This is important. You have to switch off your mind at the end of the day for your own sanity. Relaxation time is important because that is the time where your mind consolidates all the information you fed it during the day. Protect 'You Time' and give yourself at least 2 hours to relax. Go see friends, talk with your family, watch a movie, read a book, take a hot bath (or contrast shower). Do whatever you need to do to feel normal again. Doing social stuff is a great idea because you don't want to spend too much time in your head.

**Keep a To-Do List and Diary** - Every Sunday, write out what you will do over the week. And every day before bed, write out and review what you will do the next day. Then tick off everything as you do it. This will give you a little burst of motivation and happiness because you will feel a sense of achievement every day. Write on paper. There is something therapeutic about getting away from a computer screen and organising your thoughts.

Good luck to you! You can do it! Focus on the present, look after yourself, do everything you can, and you will be fine!

## Some study hacks every student should know- Nela Canovic

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### **ONE. Create a morning habit to give your energy for the day ahead.**

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### **TWO. Feed your brain right.**

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Have an egg! Eggs are a powerful mix of B vitamins (they help nerve cells to burn glucose), antioxidants (they protect neurons against damage), and omega-3 fatty acids (they keep nerve cells functioning at optimal speed).

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### **THREE. Do your deep work early.**

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### **FIVE. Take a power nap.**

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### **SEVEN. Use your evening for strategic thinking.**

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### **EIGHT. Train your brain to be calmer.**

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