

HOW TO SUCCEED IN COLLEGE

Success in college is usually a result of mature motivation and the development of good study habits. Although there are many resources available to teach you the “how” of becoming a successful learner, your motivation (the “why”) is an inside job. No one can motivate you but you! The following tips on “how to succeed in college” have been selected from many resources—mostly materials from colleges and universities.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. Try not to schedule back-to-back classes.

You’ll wear yourself out besides missing the best times to study—right before and right after class. Review as soon as possible following each class. This practice will dramatically improve your retention and recall of the information.

Time from First Learning to Relearning	% of Material Forgotten
After 20 minutes	47%
After 1 day	62%
After 2 days	69%
After 15 days	75%
After 31 days	79%

2. Begin the first day of class.

Know what’s expected of you. Take notes from the first day even if it’s routine stuff you think you already know. Also, sit as close to the front as possible—communication breaks down with distance and distraction. The more students there are sitting in front of you, the greater the distractions and the more “diluted” the message from your instructor.

3. Show up! Every class! Every day!

Studies have shown that “A” students miss less than one class per 45, while “C” students miss more than four. (Implication: “C” students lost an average of 3–5 points for each class missed, not to mention the material covered in class!)

Since college graduates earn an average of at least \$700,000 more than high school grads over a lifetime of employment, that translates to about \$1,000 for every day spent in class.

4. Establish a routine time to study for each class.

For every hour you spend in class, you will probably need to study at least two hours outside of class. Develop a **study schedule**. Make a weekly time chart. Fill in the “must do” first: class hours, work hours, meals sleep, travel time, etc. In the blanks that are left, fill in specific study times. For example, if you have an hour open on Mondays from 9:00–10:00 a. m., fill that time with study of mathematics. If you have an opening on Tuesdays between 1:30–3:00 p.m., study English during that time. Try to develop a routine whereby you study each subject at the same time, same place each week.

Effective study includes more than just doing your homework. You will need to go over your notes by class, labeling, editing, highlighting and recopying if necessary, and making sure you understand them. Check your syllabus daily. Prepare for each class as if there will be a pop quiz.

5. Develop effective reading skills.

Do all reading assignments, reading ahead whenever possible. Highlight key material, then reread the highlighted parts as often as possible. This practice will give you a greater return on the time invested in reading. Second readings ensure comprehension and increase retention. If readings are especially complicated, take notes as you read.

6. Always study your hardest subject first.

Attack the toughest subjects when you are fresh. Putting them off until you are tired only compounds the problem.

7. Do as much studying in the daytime as possible.

Your brain becomes fatigued as it processes information throughout the day. What takes you an hour to do during the morning or afternoon may take two hours at night. (The morning hours can be especially effective and efficient study periods.)

8. Get to know at least one faculty member each semester.

Your teachers can be your most helpful contacts on campus. Not only can they become mentors, but as you near graduation they can write excellent job recommendations or references.

9. Get involved in extracurricular activities.

A study done by Harvard professor Richard Light revealed that students who are involved in extracurricular activities tend to be happier and more successful in the classroom than those who avoid participation.

10. Don't work yourself out of an education.

Working your way through college is fine; however, if your part-time job is so consuming that you are unable to take full advantage of the academic opportunities, then it's a bad trade-off. Try to balance your academics and your work. If you must work 30–40 hours per week, then reduce your academic load to the point where you can make the most of your college experience.

If you are a “traditional” 18-year-old freshman, try to keep your job hours to a minimum, at least during your freshman year. After you adjust to college, then you can increase your workload, but only to the extent that it doesn't get in the way of your education.

11. When you run into bad times, go to the “pros.”

If you have problems in a class, meet with your instructor **as soon as possible**. If the challenges are financial, speak to an administrator in the Financial Aid Office. If you get depressed or have problems with relationships, go to the Counseling Office. Colleges and universities are filled with qualified professionals who are dedicated to helping. Never hesitate to go to them when you are in trouble.