

# Academic Success Tips

## Class and Lectures

- Attend all classes.
- Average two hours of quality study time per hour in class.
- Carefully assess your background and preparation for the classes you take.
- Complete assignments before class. Proofread and review your work before handing it in.
- Complete recommended readings before class. You will take better notes knowing more about a topic.
- Exchange e-mail addresses and telephone numbers with at least two or three other students in each class to make contacts.
- Practice presentations before giving them in class.
- Read each course's syllabus and use it for planning the academic term. Keep each syllabus in an easily accessible place for reference.
- Seek out new readings and/or research projects related to your courses. Seek real world experiences to supplement your learning.
- Sit near the front of the classroom and participate in discussions.
- Spend 10 minutes before each class or lecture reviewing your notes from the previous session. Then, take 10 minutes after each class "fixing up" and reviewing the notes just taken.
- Take detailed notes in class and when reading. List questions you have and follow up by consulting with peers, professors, or on your own.
- Try to achieve your very best in each class.
- Volunteer without being called upon.

## Exams

- In studying, recall what you have learned. Organize your notes for revision. Practice responding to potential questions on the exam.
- Learn the exam's format—find out the nature of the exam and what will be covered.
  - How long does the exam last?
  - How many questions need to be answered correctly in order to pass?
  - What is the answer format: essay, short answer, or multiple choice?
  - Will the exam follow the same format as in previous years?
  - Can previous exam copies be obtained to study?
- Make brief outline notes before answering essay questions.
- Pay attention to information in questions that may help in other parts of the exam.
- Pay attention to question wording and to directions, both written and oral. Follow directions explicitly.
- Pause periodically for intensive thinking.
- Rehearse the exam day routine beforehand. Think about what you will wear, what you will eat, and how you will arrive at the exam. Have a plan.
- Reread answers before leaving the examination room to ensure accuracy.
- Review periodically for exams during the term, rather than cram before. Begin test reviews at least one week prior. Plan to review notes intensively several nights before the exam and use the night before to go over concepts remaining fuzzy.
- Skim the entire exam before answering. Plan your time according to the difficulty and value of each item. Answer easy questions first, and then do the more difficult questions.

## General

- Attend a student involvement fair at the beginning of the school year, becoming familiar with the various clubs and activities offered on campus.
- Follow the rules, regulations, policies, and procedures specific to your college.
- Give yourself small rewards for doing well on a test, paper, or presentation. You've earned it!
- Meet with your academic advisor at least once each term to track your scholastic progress.
- Obtain a copy of your unofficial transcript each term and check to see that the information is correct.
- Purchase textbooks early and read the introduction of each to grasp the material at hand.
- Remain on campus on the weekends. If you do not live on campus, go to campus anyway. It is a good way to make friends and become part of the community.
- Set specific academic goals for yourself and write them down. Clearly state your goals to achieve.
- Take care of yourself. Eat well, rest, and exercise. Devote time to maintain physical and mental health.
- Teach and tutor. Ensure you know the material by explaining it to others. Become knowledgeable and share your skills with others.
- Utilize tutoring and learning services. Establish a link to a wealth of academic programming and resources offered by the university.

## Managing Stress

- Boost your confidence level by preparing well for exams.
- Breathe. Ten deep, abdominal breaths will help release tension and enhance your focus when studying or exam-taking.
- Do not waste time agonizing about a project or work; plan the steps needed to complete the task, and just do it.
- Do not cut class unless you are seriously ill. Other student's notes are not sufficient to ensure your understanding of the course material.
- Exercise. It will keep you healthy, increase stamina, and help rid stress and worry.
- Extracurricular and social activities are an important part of the college experience, but not at the expense of your studies. Do everything in moderation.
- Eat nutritiously, avoiding junk food. Eating better helps one feel better. Fruits, vegetables, and vitamins will boost your immune system and help you avoid getting run down and ill.
- Laugh and have a sense of humor. It will help you relax.
- Limit alcohol consumption. Alcohol limits concentration and lessens your likelihood of sleeping well.
- Physical energy management strategies to utilize:
  - Do at least two cardiovascular interval workouts and two strength-training workouts a week.
  - Drink 48 to 64 ounces of water daily.
  - Eat breakfast daily. Eat a balanced, healthy diet.
  - Eat five to six small meals daily.
  - Get some physical activity daily.
  - Go to bed early and wake up early.

- Go to sleep and wake up consistently at the same times.
- Minimize simple sugars.
- Take breaks every 90 minutes during work.
- Think positively.

## Note Taking

- Be thorough. Write down the date and topic of each class or lecture, numbering each page.
- Choose the best paper type for you: bound notebook, A4 loose sheets, plain paper, colored paper, recycled paper, narrow line widths, etc.
- *Emphasize* key words, main points, examples, quotations, book references, and ideas. Use CAPITALIZATION, underlining, and boxes... use **highlighters** and **colored pens**.
- Following the lecture outline, structure your notes. Look for the overview, main points, examples, and conclusion.
- If you are dyslexic, or have visual or hearing difficulties, tell your lecturers. They can provide lecture notes beforehand to study and will accommodate by not blocking your view or talking with their back toward you.
- If you miss dates, words, or overheads in class, speak up. Ask the lecturer to reiterate.
- Keep it brief. Abbreviate and use key words.
- Use class handouts to record notes. Record your immediate thoughts and reactions.

## Professors

- Attend scheduled help sessions. Help sessions are valuable for understanding the material, giving one the opportunity to ask questions and learn from other students.
- Find out about your professors—what else they teach, areas of expertise, and other areas of interest.
- Look for opportunities to develop informal relationships with one or more professors.
- Meet with each of your instructors outside of class, utilizing the office hours listed on the professor's syllabus. Tell them what parts of their lectures you enjoy and ask for assistance on topics or concepts that remain unclear. Seek feedback for your work.
- Try to get clear information about your instructors' goals.
- When you get feedback from professors on exams, papers, or other class work, review their responses to assess your strengths and weaknesses.

## Studying

- Build a list of unfamiliar terms and look up their definitions in the dictionary.
- Maximize your memory potential:
  - Before trying to memorize, assess your level of concentration. If you are unable to focus, you are not likely to retain information. Determine what you must do to refocus (e.g., food, short nap, walk, deep breaths, etc.), and take care of this need.
  - Use flashcards. Write a word or formula on the front of a card and its definition on the back. Go through the cards until you can define each word correctly.
  - Create acronyms. Make up a word or phrase using the first letter of each term you want to remember (e.g., the spectrum of colors in a rainbow can be remembered with Roy G. Biv = red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet).
  - Draw diagrams of concepts that you are trying to remember. Be able to verbally explain the concept and reproduce the diagram.

- Study to the point of recall, not simply recognition. This means that you can define and explain material in your own words.
- Participate in study groups—small discussion groups with students who are equally well prepared. Study groups are a great way to review information and make new friends.
- Read actively:
  - Before you read, preview the material. Read introductions and chapter summaries.
  - Focus on main ideas and supporting information.
  - Have a purpose when you read. Ask yourself questions as you go, learning to articulate the material.
  - Take notes as you read. Make an outline of the main points and supporting details.
  - Write a brief summary when complete.
- Recheck problems to be sure answers are correct.
- Tailor your environment to fit. Remove distractions; tell others you are not to be disturbed. Find a quiet space to study that is well lit, and make studying a well-established habit.

### **Time Management**

- Create a weekly schedule and task list, utilizing the 168 hours within each week.
  - Allow time for sleep, meals, job, fitness, and social activity.
  - Estimate and list the time needed for studying each subject—generally two to three hours per credit per week.
  - Find your periods of peak efficiency and when you are likely to have the best study conditions. Plan to study your most difficult subjects then.
  - List all classes and other fixed activities. Use your class syllabi for planning the academic term.
  - Make effective use of free hours between classes.
  - Plan time for activities you enjoy.
  - Schedule each study period as close to that class’s meeting as possible.
  - Schedule the study of unlike subjects consecutively. For example, it is better to follow the study of a language with the study of a science than to study two languages in a row.
  - Structure your academic schedule as if it were a 40-hour work week.
  - Use a convenient form or planner.
- Allow longer periods in your schedule for term papers and major projects—at least two weeks before they are due.
- Allow time for review and preview. For example, if you have a free hour between classes, it is wise to use the beginning of that hour reviewing the notes from your previous class and the last part of the hour previewing for the next class.
- Allow unscheduled time in your day for special opportunities, thinking time, or emergencies. Always plan time for balance.
- Break down large or overwhelming tasks into smaller manageable tasks.
- Develop a clear mental picture of the completed task. Maintain focus on the end result, not just the process. Remind yourself how good you will feel when you are finished.
- Learn it is okay to say no. Stick to your plan. Keep your short- and long-term priorities in mind.
- Make a “to do” list every day. Prioritize between immediate and less essential tasks by using the A, B, C system.

- Set deadlines for yourself. Tell other people your deadlines and encourage them to check up on you.
- Unpleasant tasks rarely turn out to be as bad as one thinks. Complete these tasks first, and schedule them early in the day.
- Use periods when you are tired or when your environment is noisy for jobs or tasks that do not require much concentration.
- Use spare minutes wisely. Odd periods of time for reviewing or reading, such as time waiting on a bus or in a dentist's office, may prove quite effective.
- Wear a watch to keep track of time.

BVG/s/Academic-1/Residential Life Disk