



# 10 Steps to College Success

## Step 1 – Attend Every Class

- Though cutting class is sometimes tempting, don't do it if you can help it. Save absences for when you're sick or have a real emergency that you cannot avoid. When you miss class, you miss lectures, notes, explanations of assignments, class discussions, and sometimes quizzes and in-class assignments. Getting copies of a classmate's notes won't always help, and it will never make up for the fact that you missed class.

## Step 2 – Get Organized

- Get a weekly planner and use it religiously.
- Create and maintain a tidy and organized study space, complete with everything that you need when you're working: paper, pens, pencils, stapler, etc.
- Use a separate, appropriately sized 3-ring binder for each class you're taking. It's often helpful if each class is a different color, too.
- Back up all of your computer files on backup drives, disks, flash drives, or by emailing them to yourself. Do it often.
- Keep all papers, quizzes and tests that you get back from your teachers at least until the final grades are submitted. If it's a course related to your major, you may want to keep them until you graduate or after.
- Get phone numbers for your classmates so you can call them for study help, to form a study group, or to ask a question about class.

## Step 3 – Manage Your Time

- Plan ahead. Know when your assignments are due. Break large tasks down into smaller pieces.
- Don't promise more than you can accomplish. Spreading yourself too thin will only make you more tired and less able to function at your highest level.
- Be efficient. Limit yourself to a reasonable amount of TV and socializing time. Use those activities as rewards for getting your work done. Always look for ways to streamline or combine tasks (i.e., study while you're waiting for the bus, doing laundry, riding a stationary bicycle.)

## Step 4 – Use the Classroom to Succeed

- Arrive on time.
- Sit in the front row whenever you can.
- Ask questions and participate every chance you get.
- Talk with your instructors. Meet them during their office hours. Make sure they know your name and that you're committed to learning.
- Learn how to adapt to different types of instructors.
- Join study groups and discussion groups based on the class subject, and be a good group member.

## Step 5 – Take Good Notes

- Find a note taking system that works for you, such as Cornell, mind maps, or outlines.
- Listen actively. Focus on the speaker, think, and try to understand the information that's being presented.
- Learn to recognize the important information by paying attention to verbal and nonverbal clues your instructor gives. If he or she raises their voice, speaks more slowly, writes something down on the board, or repeats it, it's probably important. If the information being discussed also appears in the textbook, it's probably important. Look for the signs.
- Make sure your notes are legible and have plenty of white space.
- Review your notes within 24 hours of taking them.



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## Step 6 – Read Your Textbook Actively

- Try a reading strategy like SQ3R. Look for a handout on this in the Learning Assistance Center.
- Read with a purpose.
- Avoid reading in bed. Sit up straight with your book on a bookstand, or held in front of you instead. Active reading happens more when a body is more active than at rest.

## Step 7 – Study Smart

- Find a good place to study: the library, a quiet area in your house, wherever you can work best. It should be comfortable, well lit, fully stocked, and free of distractions.
- Remember that getting started is often the hardest part. Jump in and it will be easier to keep going.
- Study your difficult or boring subjects first when you have the most energy.
- Know your learning style and use the study tips associated with it.

## Step 8 – Use Test-Taking Strategies

- Arrive early, or at least on time for a test.
- Before you start, figure out how you should best tackle the test. Does it make more sense for you to answer all the easy questions, then move on to the hard ones, or should you answer the hard ones while you're freshest?
- Mark questions you need to return to.
- Always answer True/False and Multiple Choice questions.
- Check your answers before turning it in.
- Be one of the last students out the door. Take your time.

## Step 9 – Reduce Subject-Related Anxiety

- Trace back to when you started having trouble with a particular school subject. What was going on? Who was your teacher? How did you feel? See if there is an answer to why the subject makes you anxious. Sometimes knowing that is the key to overcoming the problem.
- Make sure you know all the background information necessary to understanding the class you're in. If you don't, go back and review. Ask your instructor where the gaps in your learning might be and see if they can recommend some study resources for you.
- Get a tutor if necessary.
- Realize that there are many different types of thinking and learning, and you have the ability to try and succeed at new ways.

## Step 10 – Use the Resources Available to You

- Academic Counselors
- Career Counselors
- Clubs and Groups on Campus
- Computer Labs
- Tutors
- The Learning Assistance Center
- The Library
- Counseling
- DSPS
- Financial Aid