

Tips for Academic Success

The college experience is very different than that of high school. Students often need to adjust the amount of time they study and have a deep understanding of academic strategies while monitoring their own progress and learning process. To develop learning and critical thinking skills, students should attend office hours and utilize resources to support learning in their classes.

General Tips for College Level Coursework

- Everyone needs extra help. If you're having difficulty in a class, seek out the support you need early and seek out support even before you think you need it.
- Get to know your instructors—go to student support hours at least once for each class during the semester for each class.
- Make an appointment to meet your advisor and be prepared for your advising appointment.
- Form study groups. It is helpful to test your understanding of what you know and what you do not know by interacting with others. Working in study groups helps you form a network of support, and you are more likely to have a better understanding of what you need to learn.
- Get involved—balance is key, and one key predictor of success is who you choose to surround yourself with. Try one student organization or campus activity, and surround yourself with those who bring out the best in you.
- Make sure to consider work and outside of school commitments. If you are attending full-time coursework, a full time job may hinder success in school.
- Repeated exposure to the material you are learning is essential to retaining information and storing it into long-term memory. Do not only review to remember and remember to review, but also actively recall and self-test on information by engaging with your lectures, notes, and readings often and through thoughtful reflection.
- Adopt a growth mindset so that when challenges or obstacles arise you **embrace them** as learning opportunities.

Study Techniques

General Tips

- After taking notes in lecture, actively review them by writing key concepts from your notes on the front of a notecard and examples of those concepts on the back of a notecard.
- Annotate – There are many ways to annotate a text. Underline main ideas; circle important words and words you do not know; and write notes in the margin of your textbook that summarizes key points and main ideas. Finally, write questions about the content in the margins. After you annotate, write a summary about what you read and/or try a few practice problems.
- Teach others the concepts to help cement them in your memory. This is great to do with study group.
- After you take an exam, use the post exam review to understand where you missed points. Consider using this as a study tool moving forward, and bring it to office hours to discuss with your professor.
- Learn and review course material in daily blocks of time that are varied and repeated throughout the week through time-spaced learning.
- Review the Lecture Capture if your lecture has one.
- Try concept mapping – a variation on outlining in which you diagram main ideas and supporting details to learn concepts covered in class.

Note Taking

- While taking notes during lecture, expand your understanding by writing questions in your notes to revisit after lecture, and ask the questions during class when time allows.
- Work on your listening skills. Notice when your mind starts to wander and quickly jot down your distractions on a scratch piece of paper. Then, shift your attention back to the instructor. Refocus by leaving a space in your notes with a question mark to fill in as soon after lecture as possible.
- Compare your notes from lecture to the notes you took on your reading.

Reading Assignments

- Stay up-to-date on all reading assignments. Students often say they should have spent more time on the reading assignments for class, and when they start to engage with the readings more proactively, they notice their outcomes improve.
- Preview the chapter before you read the assignment by skimming paragraphs, titles, charts, introductions, and conclusions. Write the learning objectives for the chapter at the top of your page. Then, read the assignment before you go to class, and annotate the text as you go. Take notes on your reading to keep you focused.
- Review your reading notes and compare them to your lecture notes. What connections can you make between the two?

Test Preparation

- In the first week of classes, review all syllabi and record in your planner all the quizzes and exams.
- Utilize as much active practice as possible through practice problems and by applying these critical thinking words to self-test. Remember, do not simply study to remember; study to have a thorough understanding and analysis of the concepts.
- Find practice problems and/or questions in your textbook, from your professors, and through other resources such as open access textbooks for example.
- Prepare for an exam at least one week prior to the exam, and ensure that you quiz yourself daily on the material.