BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE - INDISPENSABLE STUDY SKILLS AND TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES (DILLON)



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Book: Blueprint for Success in College - Indispensable Study Skills and Time Management Strategies (Dillon)

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1.1: Chapter 1: Passion

Dave Dillon

"Ganas. That's all you need. The desire to learn."

– Jaime Escalante

Think about what you are passionate about. It might be family, friends, a significant other, a pet, an upcoming vacation, or what you might have for dinner. Different people are passionate about different things. Ask yourself: Why are you passionate about those things? What makes you passionate about them? Now ask yourself if you are passionate about school.

Author's Story

I can think of many things I would rather do than sit in a classroom listening to a lecture. I'd rather be relaxing at the beach, traveling to a new place, or playing Mario Kart with my family and friends. But when I was in college, my education was extremely important to me. I had a tremendous amount of passion, which allowed me to succeed. I had the attitude that nothing was going to stand in the way of getting my degree. In my first year in college I took an Introduction to Sociology class that genuinely interested me. It was easy to be passionate about it because I really liked the subject matter, my professor, and the textbook. I also took Microeconomics. And while I understood its value and importance, I was not as interested in attending and completing the assignments. However, I always knew I needed to find passion in the course if I wanted to be successful and accomplish my goals. One strategy that worked for me was to find situations where I could apply concepts in those less interesting classes to my personal life. For instance, if the lecture and textbook were explaining a Microeconomics concept like total and marginal utility, I would try to apply this to something I could easily relate to. If utility is the satisfaction of the consumption of a product for a consumer, I would think of an example involving Arby's roast beef sandwiches, and blue raspberry slurpees. Making the material meaningful to me allowed me to be passionate about learning something I otherwise would not have been.

"Brick walls are there for a reason: they let us prove how badly we want things."

– Randy Pausch

There were other activities I enjoyed more than class, but I knew it was important to find a passion for my classes because it was the key to succeeding in them.

It is common to have other things you would like to do more than sitting in class, doing homework and preparing for exams. But you still must have passion for the learning and for the class in order to be successful.

My favorite definition of success is from John Wooden: "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming."

Why Are You Here?

Please note: It is OK to not know what your goal is when you start college. In fact, it is extremely common for students not to know what their goal is or what their major is when they begin college, but there is value in identifying your goal(s) as soon as possible.

More questions to ask yourself: Why are you in college, and why are you taking the courses you're taking? If you can answer these questions with solid logic and understand their purpose and how they fit in to being important to your life, you are off to a great start. However, if you are taking classes at someone else's suggestion and you are not genuinely interested in them, you may want to reconsider. I do not wish it to be misconstrued that I recommend you drop out of college, rather I want you to have a plan and passion to be able to achieve your goals. For many people, higher education is a necessary part of their goals.

I see many students in my counseling office who want to be independent, work a full time job, and/or party (rather than go to college). I also see many students who come back to a few years later with a renewed passion and value for their education.

For college success, you must attend when the time is right for you. How do you know if it's the right time? Ask yourself if it's the right time for the following students to go to college:

- Monica's goal is to go to a university. She was accepted but couldn't afford it. She enrolls at a community college. She is passionate about attending community college and then transferring to earn a bachelor's degree.

- Christina is a high school graduate. She would like to take a year off of school to work and travel. Her parents gave her an ultimatum, saying that if she wanted to continue to live at home, she had to go to college full-time.
- Javier completed one year of college then got married in his early 20s. He and his spouse raised four children and he has been working for 20 years in an uninteresting, low-paying job. He always wanted to finish college and now finally has the time to go back to school.
- Andy is interested in partying and little else. He knows his college education is important but it is a low priority at this point.

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Passion

Sometimes we are motivated by a specific desired outcome of performing a task. Some people play a game because they want to win. In education, some students work hard because they want to receive a good grade or transfer to a prestigious university. Parents of younger children may give a monetary reward for each A the student earns. This is extrinsic motivation.

Interest, desire to learn, and enjoyment of a subject are characteristics of intrinsic motivation, or what we call passion. Passion for your education must come from within. If your educational goals (passing a college course, acquiring new skills or attaining a degree) are important enough to you, your motivation can become intrinsic, allowing you to find passion, which will help you reach your goals. Without passion, you may find yourself struggling, withdrawing from courses, earning poor grades, or dropping out. External rewards of ascending to a certain academic level or acquiring wealth, lose some of their appeal if students do not find the work to get there personally rewarding. These students, who truly embrace their work, are intrinsically motivated – passionate while those who are focused mainly on rewards for high achievement and punishment for poor performance are extrinsically motivated. Trophies, medals, money, new clothes or a new car are examples of extrinsic motivators. One could argue, "the end justifies the means"—that it doesn't matter if a students' passion comes internally or externally, as long as they accomplish their goals. However, when the reward is learning itself, the student is on road to long-term success!

"Only passions, great passions, can elevate the soul to great things."

– Denis Diderot

The Choice Is Yours

I believe one of the best decisions you can make is to attend college if you are passionate about it and it is the right time for you. On the other hand it is better to postpone attending college if you are not passionate about it or feel the time is not right. Please do not misunderstand – I am not discouraging anyone from going to college nor am I encouraging anyone to drop out of college. And I do not expect you to be passionate about every aspect of college. There were some classes and some requirements that I disliked during my own college experience. My concern, however, is students who start college and are not passionate about it. After a few years and a poor transcript, they meet with a counselor saying they weren't in college for the right reasons, weren't serious about their education, didn't know what they were doing, or… "my parents made me go." There are some suggestions in this book that can assist a passionate student to succeed. But all of the suggestions in the world will not help a student lacking passion. In the end, I want you to be successful and I want you to enjoy college, but I believe these are nearly impossible without passion.

"Nothing great in the world has ever been accomplished without passion."

– Hebbel

There is a scene from the movie Serendipity where Dean's character says, "You know the Greeks didn't write obituaries. They only asked one question after a man died: 'Did he have passion?'" I will leave it up to you to decide if this is true or if it is Hollywood taking a liberty, but either way that quote has stayed with me. You can be successful in college. This textbook is a journey in figuring out how you are going to get there.

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1.2: Chapter 2: What's College For?

Alise Lamoreaux, Dave Dillon

"Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere."

– Chinese Proverb

What's college for? That's a little question with a big answer! A college education comes in many shapes and sizes. In 2014, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, there were over 4,700 different post-secondary degree- granting institutions in the United States.[1]

These schools may be public, private, religious, small, large, for-profit, community colleges, junior colleges. Considering the variety of college options, there is no single answer to the question, "What is college for?" Brenda Hellyer, Chancellor of San Jacinto College in Houston and Pasadena, Texas, wrote in the Chronicle of Higher Education that students "are seeking more than an education—they are seeking options, opportunities, and guidance."

How do you view college?
What will define college success for you?

People go to college for a variety of reasons. The type of college you select will help set parameters and expectations for your experiences. Before jumping into the details of going to college, it's important to stop and think about the purpose college has in your life. Traditionally, college was a place young adults went after high school to explore courses and majors before settling into a job path. According to a 2015 UCLA survey, most people currently go to college for one or more of 7 main reasons:[2]

1) To be able to get a better job 2) To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas 3) To become a more cultured person 4) To be able to make more money 5) To learn more about things that interest me 6) To get training for a specific career 7) To prepare for graduate or professional school

Video: *Don't Just Follow Your Passion: A Talk for Generation Y,* Eunice Hii at TEDxTerryTalks 2012



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://press.rebus.community/blueprint1/?p=39

What impression does this TED Talk leave you with? Which generation are you?

An article from 2015 in the Washington Post, *What's the purpose of college: A job or an education?* says that students entering college today list getting a better job as the most important reason to attend college. In the past, learning about things that interested them was listed as the top reason to attend college. When did the change in priority occur? Dan Berrett says the change in priority can be linked to Ronald Reagan, when he was Governor of California.[3]

Economic times were tough in 1967 for California. Everyone needed to "tighten their belts." At that time, California was known for its excellent higher educational system. In a speech Reagan gave on Feb. 28, 1967, a month into his term as Governor, Reagan assured people that he wouldn't do anything to harm the quality of their public education system. "But," he added, "We do believe that there are certain intellectual luxuries that perhaps we could do without." Taxpayers should not be "subsidizing intellectual curiosity," he said. By the time Reagan won the presidency, in 1980, practical degrees had become the popular choice. In the 1930s,

around the time Reagan went to college, about 8% of students majored in "business and commerce." When he was elected Governor, that share was 12%. By the time he moved into the White House, more students majored in business than anything else. Business, as a major, has held that top spot ever since.

What frames your value of education?
What kind of return on your investment do you expect from college?

Deciding to go to college has an "***opportunity cost***." An opportunity cost is based on the economic principle that there are limited resources available and choices must be made. Examples of resources would be things like time and money. If you are spending time doing something, you must give up doing something else you want to do. That is the opportunity cost of your choice. Going to college will have an opportunity cost in your life. An important question to ask in the beginning of your college venture is: what are you willing to trade off for going to college?

Opportunity costs are tied to the idea of return on investment. Once you make an investment of your time and money in college, what investment are you hoping to get in return? How you define success in relationship to your college experience impacts how you see the concept of return on investment. Some ways to gauge return on investment include: job opportunities after college, immediate financial benefit to earned wages, social network/connections made while attending college, development of communication and other "soft skills," and personal enrichment and/or happiness.

Short-term rewards compared to long-term rewards are another way to look at return on investment. For example, it takes much longer to become a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of a company than it does to get a well-paid job at the same company. Different skills would be required from the CEO and it may require more investment to acquire those skills. Frances Bronet, the Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Oregon, conducted a survey of former engineering graduates when she taught at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She asked former graduates what they felt they had missed in their education. The results were very different depending on how recent their graduation was. Students who had graduated 1 year ago felt that they needed more technical skills. People who had graduated 5 years ago felt that they needed more management skills, and people who had graduated 10-20 years ago felt that they needed more cultural literacy because their work now involved more working with other cultures.

Deciding to go to college is a big decision and choosing a course of study can seem overwhelming to many students. Considering the changing world we live in, knowing what direction to go is not easy. According to Richard Riley, secretary of education under Bill Clinton, "We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't exist using technology that haven't been invented in order to solve problems that we don't even know."

Video: *Do Schools Kill Creativity?* Ken Robinson at TED 2006



A TED element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://press.rebus.community/blueprint1/?p=39

Personal Inventory Questions:

1. Why are you here?
2. Why college, why now?
3. How do you define college?
4. What do you imagine college life to be like?
5. How do you know when you are ready for college?
6. What have you done to prepare for college?
7. What do you think college expects from students?

8. What does going to college mean for your future?
9. Using the list of 5 reasons students attend college provided in this chapter, rank your reasons for going to college.
10. In your opinion, is it a good idea for academic counselors to steer high school kids towards either a 4-year degree or vocational training?
11. Should students be steered towards careers that would be a good "fit" for them?
12. Opportunity Cost Analysis: Create a pie chart identifying how you currently spend your time (daily/weekly).

Suggested Readings:

Scott Carlson, "How to Assess the Real Pay Off of a College Degree," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2013.

Jeffery J. Selingo, "What's The Purpose of College: A Job or An Education?," *The Washington Post*, 2015.

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Adaptions: Reformatted. Added learning objectives. Modified reasons for going to college. Updated sources.

Ken Robinson: Do Schools Kill Creativity? Authored by TED.com
Located at: https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity

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1. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2015* (National Center for Education Statistics 2016-014), Table 105.50. ↵
2. Kevin Eagan et al., *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2015* (Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA, 2015). ↵
3. Dan Barrett, "The Day the Purpose of College Changed," Chronicle of Higher Education, accessed April 26, 2018, www.chronicle.com/article/Th...College/151359. ↵

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1.3: Chapter 3: Words of Wisdom: The Student Experience

Kristen Mruk

Kristen Mruk

When thinking about college, what comes to mind? Perhaps stereotypical images or misconceptions of college life, a friend or sibling's story, or scenes from popular movies?



"The Student Experience" by Kristen Mruk

In popular culture, some movies depict college life as a party atmosphere in which students binge drink and waste their parents' money to have a good time without consequence. Films including *National Lampoon's Animal House* and *Van Wilder* as well as *Accepted*, to name a few, portray the student experience as a blatant disregard for education coupled with excessive drunken buffoonery. However, my *party* experience illustrates a side to college that is not generally in the limelight.

During my first weeks in college, I felt disconnected from the campus and feared that I would not make friends or find my niche. I was commuting from my family's home and wanted to do more on campus than just go to and from class. I was enrolled in a First-Year Experience (FYE) course that was intended to provide a framework for a successful undergraduate career and beyond. In the class, we learned about student support services on campus (tutoring, personal wellness, academic advisement, etc.) as well as personal success skills (time and financial management, values exploration, etc.).

Being a new student, and a commuter, I was overwhelmed by the amount of new information, new territory, campus culture, and unfamiliar processes. I asked my FYE instructor after class one day if there was something I could do to feel more connected to campus. She opened my eyes to a side of college that I was missing—this was my invitation to the *party*.

My FYE instructor promptly led me to her office, introduced me to the staff, and explained the variety of involvement opportunities available through her office. I was amazed that there was so much to do on campus! Because of that meeting, I decided to apply for a job in the Student Union working at the information desk. This position was a catalyst for all of the additional *parties* I would be invited to throughout my time as an undergraduate student. With so many possibilities, I had to be diligent in prioritizing my time and energy.

What My Friends Think I Do

Friends knew me to be much like the girl in the meme above. I was juggling extracurricular activities and two jobs all while maintaining a full course load. I had to be proactive and diligent to coordinate activities and assignments and make sure I had the time to do it all. Finding a system was a trial and error process, but ultimately I found a method that worked for me. I was an undergraduate student when apps didn't exist and Facebook was just becoming popular, so my organizational system included a planner, a pen, and a lot of highlighters. Whatever that organizational system looks like for you does not matter as long as you use it.

There are a variety of organizational methods and tools you can use to stay on track with all aspects of your life as a student. Some of those are featured in the State University of New York (SUNY) blog: http://blog.suny.edu/tag/apps

What My Parents Think I Do

It may be difficult to discuss your studies and educational experience with a parent or someone that has a significant interest in your academic achievement. This was the case for me; I was the first kid in my house to enroll in college, and my parents were under the impression that grades would be sent home like they were in high school. During the New Student Orientation program, my Mom learned about FERPA (Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and what that meant for my grades. "FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's

education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level." In essence, parents cannot access grades or other restricted academic information unless you provide it to them (www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/f...ex.html?src=ft).

I was fortunate enough to have my parents' financial support toward tuition, so they felt entitled to reviewing my grades at the end of each semester. I did not want to give them direct access to my grade report by filing a FERPA waiver, so after much deliberation, I agreed to share my grades once released at the semester's end. If their standards were not met, there would have to be a conversation about repercussions.

In the fall of my sophomore year I took my first online course—Introduction to Computers and Statistics. All of the lectures and assignments were available online at anytime and exams were administered in a computer lab on campus. I thought having the ability to view lectures on my own time would be more conducive to my schedule as I was becoming more involved on campus. For the first few weeks of classes I watched the lectures regularly and did the assignments on time. Slowly but surely I found myself prioritizing my time differently, ultimately putting my online class on the back burner, because (I told myself) the work could be done anytime! By the end of the semester I realized that I was going to fail the class. No amount of extra credit, crying, or pleading could save my grade; I had earned an F.

Seeing a failing grade on my transcript taught me two valuable lessons. First, I discovered that I needed the routine and accountability of an in-person class to ensure my participation in the material. Second, I was responsible for the grades I received. I probably could have come up with a million excuses for why I didn't watch the lectures or do the assignments, but the reality was I just didn't do it. I did not seek my professor's help during their office hours when I started to fall behind, I did not go to the tutoring center on campus to get extra help, and I did not reach out to my classmates to form study groups.

Although the F that I received will never disappear from my transcript, it is an important reminder of the gruesome conversation I had with my parents and the feeling of failure in the pit of my stomach. Needless to say, that was the only online course I took during my collegiate career, but it was absolutely worth the lessons learned.

What My Professors Hope I Do

Professors do care about how you are doing in their class; they genuinely want you to succeed, but they will give you the grade you earn. There are people and resources on campus for you to utilize so you can earn the grade you want.

Your professors are one of those resources, and are perhaps the most important. Go see them during office hours, ask them questions about the material and get extra help if you need it. The caveat here is that you cannot wait until the last week of the semester to visit your professors to get help. Tears and pleading will not help you at the eleventh hour.

Another resource to utilize can be found in the campus learning center. I frequented my campus' writing center for assistance with papers and research projects. Initially, I was scared to be critiqued, thinking my work would be perceived as inadequate. The first time I took a paper there, I recall standing outside the door for about ten minutes thinking of an excuse not to go in. Thankfully I saw a classmate walk in and I followed suit. The experience was less dramatic than I imagined it to be; no one ripped my paper to shreds and told me that I would never graduate. Instead I sat with an upper-class student who coached me through some pointers and suggestions for improvement. Thanks to that first visit, I received an A- on the paper!

What I Would Like to Do

I thought I knew exactly what I wanted to do when I started college, but that changed three times by the time I graduated. Initially I started as an International Business major but ended up receiving a degree in Communication and continued on to graduate school. My greatest advice to you is to embrace feelings of uncertainty (if you have them) with regard to your academic, career, or life goals. Stop into the Career Services office on your campus to identify what it is that you really want to do when you graduate or to confirm your affinity to a career path. Make an appointment to see a counselor if you need to vent or get a new perspective. Do an internship in your field; this can give you a first-hand impression of what your life might look like in that role.

When I chose International Business, I did not do so as an informed student. I enjoyed and excelled in my business courses in high school and I had hopes of traveling the world, so International Business seemed to fit the bill. Little did I know, the major required a lot of accounting and economics which, as it turned out, were not my forte. Thinking this is what I wanted, I wasted time pursuing a major I didn't enjoy and academic courses I struggled through.

So I took a different approach. I began speaking to the professionals around me that had jobs that appealed to me: Student Unions/Activities, Leadership, Orientation, Alumni, etc. I found out I could have a similar career, and I would enjoy the required studies along the way. Making that discovery provided direction and purpose in my major and extracurricular activities. I felt like everything was falling into place.

What I Actually Do

I would like to pause for a moment and ask you to consider why you are in college? Why did you choose your institution? Have you declared a major yet? Why or why not? What are your plans post-graduation? By frequently reflecting in this way, you can assess whether or not your behaviors, affiliations, and activities align with your goals.

What you actually do with your student experience is completely up to you. You are the only person who can dictate your collegiate fate. Remind yourself of the reasons why you are in college and make sure your time is spent on achieving your goals. There are resources and people on your campus available to help you. You have the control—use it wisely.

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1.4: Chapter 4: Words of Wisdom: Practice, Practice, Practice

Dr. Kristine Duffy

Dr. Kristine Duffy

Life in college will be like no other time in your life—I can guarantee you that! This is your time to explore who you are, who you want to become, and how you wish to play a part in this world. Don't squander this unique time in your life. I hope to share some thoughts that might help you avoid regrets when reflecting on your college years.

I want to be clear—there are many paths through college and we know that no one path is right for all. You may be starting at a community college, taking courses part-time, starting college again after an unsuccessful start, or returning to education after many years away, but no matter who you are or what path you've chosen, make the most of it.

I took the fairly traditional path. I graduated from high school and went directly to college (which was three hours away from home). Because I wasn't really sure what else I should do, I chose to be a business major by default. My parents thought it was a good route to take and would lead me to a *good job* (mainly to ensure I made some money and didn't live with them forever).

There are three things I learned quickly in college:

1. I had lived a very nice life, but in a very homogeneous environment.
2. There were people different from me.
3. Although I was a decent student, I had a ways to go to be a good student!

Learning to appreciate what you have is just as important as earning As on exams and papers. I share this because part of college is preparing for life, not just a job. Ask yourself some questions:

- What's important to me and why?
- What do I know about other people's lives, beliefs, and passions?
- Am I confident in my abilities to study, listen and learn, take notes, and be a learner?

What's Important to Me and Why?

Is it only to make money to buy things? If so, do you truly believe that money makes everything better? Don't be fooled by that. Yes, money certainly makes life more comfortable, but it absolutely doesn't buy happiness. I had friends in college that came from a significant amount of money and they would have traded it all to have a family they can depend upon and love in their homes. Consider this very carefully as you dream of the life ahead of you.

What Do You Know about Other People's Lives, Beliefs, and Passions?

You are not the center of the world. You should be confident and proud of who you are, but be humble and be open to others' experiences and worldviews. Take classes that stretch you, maybe even make you uncomfortable. In the end, these types of classes will test your assumptions, beliefs, and make you a more well-rounded and interesting person. The roommate or classmate who is different from you can teach you about yourself. Be open to this.

Are You Confident in Your Abilities to Study, Listen and Learn, Take Notes, and Be a Learner?

Remember, if college were easy, everyone would do it! You have full control and responsibility for your learning. Yes, your professors have the responsibility of teaching well and helping you learn, but they cannot and should not do the work for you. Part of college is learning to learn: learning to study, listen better, take notes, and most importantly asking for help when you need it.

In my own research I have learned that students are confronted with a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, students in high school are warned that college will be hard—the professors won't care if you do the work or not, and you need to do it on your own. However in reality, college professors and support professionals do care and will tell you to come and see them if you need help.

So what is a student to do? You may feel bad in class if you just aren't getting it and are embarrassed to ask for help. Stop that thought in its tracks! Colleges offer many opportunities for help and in almost all cases, for free! Professors hold office hours specifically to address students' questions and tutoring is available to help you do better, not to punish you for not getting it. Remember you are paying a substantial amount of money for your tuition; find out what resources you have and take advantage of them. Be a mature learner, take advantage of everything your college offers, and hold your head high for doing so. There is no

shame in asking for help. I always compare it to a job. When you start out on any job there is usually some type of training to teach you how to do that job. College is no different. We are teaching you how to be a student—you've been practicing since Kindergarten, and doesn't end when you get to college.

Finally, here are some words of advice based on some of my regrets when I reflect on my college experience:

1. I didn't study abroad during my four years of college.
2. I didn't do any type of internship.
3. I didn't get involved with many clubs or organizations.
4. I didn't get involved with any type of research opportunities until graduate school.

Study Abroad

Whether it is a short-term experience (some are as short as three weeks) or a semester to a year—do it! This goes back to my point about understanding people different than you. The United States is a great nation, but we are not the only nation and our world is filled with amazing stories to share. One of my favorite quotes by Neale Walsch is: "Life begins at the end of your comfort zone."[1] You will not miss much being gone from your college for a short period of time, and you will return from your adventure a changed person. How do I know this if I didn't study abroad myself? I know many who have and the end result is the same for all—no regrets, life changing moments, and better appreciation for the world we live in.

Internships

Going to college in the 1980's was different from today. The job market was relatively strong and the push for an internship or co-op was not as strong. But if I had gotten some hands on experience and discovered my likes, dislikes, strengths, and weaknesses, I would have had more direction for my career when I graduated. In addition, there is nothing more frustrating for a college graduate than to go on job interviews only to be told that you can't be hired because you have no *real* experience. So talk to your professors, academic advisors, counselors, and mentors about getting some internship experience while in school or during the summer. There are many companies that welcome interns, and you may find the direction you are seeking.

Clubs and Organizations

For years, employers have been surveyed by colleges to ask them what type of skills they are seeking in college graduates. Although having discipline specific skills is important (in other words, the courses you take in your major), employers are very consistent in seeking out employees with what they call "soft skills," such as writing well, public speaking, getting along with others, and having leadership abilities. You'll develop these skills in your courses, but you can really hone and apply them by joining a club or organization on campus, where you will have opportunities to work with others, lead efforts, and have something to show for it—a campaign you ran, funds you raised, or an event you organized. Colleges offer many types of clubs to attract students in areas of interest. For example, if you are a business major, you could join the business club. More than likely the activities the club offers will allow you to meet business leaders, go on field trips to learn more about the business world, and meet people who have similar interests as yourself. I was a college athlete so my time was limited, and while I support athletics in college as an opportunity to continue your passion and to grow and learn, try to make time to join a special interest group. Take a leadership role in a group, and later, when you go on that job interview, talk about your leadership experience. The employer will be impressed and it may help you get the job.

Research

Finally, develop your research skills. You may think that research is most important in the sciences and medicine. But research occurs in all fields of study, and much of what you do in college is research in some form. If you are a music major you may need to research how other musicians developed their talent, the history of genres, or new ways music is applied in our world. Problem solving through effective research and knowing how to test your ideas and hypotheses will make you a valuable employee and citizen of your community. If your professor offers a chance to work on a special research project—sign up.

Question everything, and don't take the answers at face value. Question how people come to their conclusions, develop your own set of research questions, and be willing to dig to find the answers. This is not only important as a student but also as an employee. Strive to be an engaged citizen in our world and don't believe what everyone tells you. An adult needs to make informed decisions to buy products, pay taxes, and vote for government leaders. Don't be complacent and put your life in the hands of others without fully researching the pros and cons—draw your own conclusions.

In conclusion, come to the classroom with an open mind and a willingness to exercise your right to take full advantage of all a college offers. Done correctly, college will be challenging and frustrating, and will test every part of you. Life will be the same way so use this time to practice, practice, practice.

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Adaptions: Reformatted reference for consistency with footnotes.

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1. Neale Donald Walsch, *Neale Donald Walsch's Little Book of Life: A User's Manual* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads, 2010). ↵

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1.5: Chapter 5: Speaking The Language of College

Alise Lamoreaux

"Language is the dress of thought"

– Samuel Johnson

Getting started in college can seem like an uphill battle. One of the first challenges a student can encounter is navigating the college's website. In the attempt to get as much information as possible into the hands of current and future students, college websites are crammed full of information and language that may be new to the first-time college student. Trying to figure out how to get started can be confusing, even when the website says, "Steps To Enroll." Registration, admission, enrollment… are they all the same thing? If you are registered, are you admitted and enrolled? Is enrollment in the college the same thing as enrollment in classes? And that's just the beginning of the potential for confusion! How can a student know the answers to these questions?

Learning to speak the "language of college" can seem even harder than learning a foreign language because as a new student, you have no idea what words you need to learn. If you travel to a foreign country, there are core vocabulary words you will find most helpful – resources that will allow you to order the food you like and services you need. Basic needs like bread and water can be correlated among different languages. A dog is a dog all over the world and not confused with a cat. The vocabulary of college is not so straightforward.

One of the first decisions a student may need to make is whether to attend college as a credit or non-credit seeking student. Even more confusing, non-credit students can also be referred to as "continuing education" students. For example, a student wants to take a drawing class. One of the first questions that may be asked is whether the student wants to take the class for credit or non-credit? Both types of students can take drawing classes. If a student doesn't know what a credit is or what one is worth, it's hard to answer the basic question in order to register for the drawing class, and the registration process is very different depending on the answer to the question of credit or non-credit. How can a student know whether he/she wants to be a "credit student" or not?

Learning to speak the language of the college is part of learning the school's culture. It is important to remember that not all colleges use the same words in the same way.

Commonly Used Academic Vocabulary

Below is a list of commonly used terminology. Without using the Internet or college catalog, see how many words you know the meaning of. Write the meaning in the space adjacent to the term.

Academic Year	
Registration	
Enrollment	
Admission	
Student Number	
Probation	
Credit Hour/Unit	
Term	
Tuition	
General Education/Gen Ed	
Elective	
Degree	
Certificate	
Career pathway	

Financial Aid	
FAFSA	
Stafford Loan	
Scholarship	
Grant	
Federal Work Study	
Transcript	
Non-Credit/Continuing Education	
Audit	
Grade Options	
Course Number	
College Level Course	
Pre-College Level Course	
Lower Division Course	
Upper Division Course	
Prerequisite	
Co-requisite	
Learning Community	
Major	

As a college student, you will need to come up with a strategy for learning lots of information, like the specific language of your school. Tim Ferris has a TED Talk about mastering skills by deconstructing them**.** When you deconstruct something, it means to take something large, and break it down into smaller parts. It also means to identify why you might fail before you start and make a plan to stop failure before it happens.

Video: *Smash Fear, Learn Anything*, Tim Ferriss at TED 2008



A TED element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://press.rebus.community/blueprint1/?p=43

Based on the ideas of simplifying and deconstructing a task in order to learn it, think of how those ideas could be applied to mastering the language of college.

- Can you see any ways to simplify the task of learning 30 words?
- Are there any connections between the words that you can see?
- Will you need all the words all the time?

- Will you need some words more frequently than others?
- When and where might you need each of the works?
- Can you think of any words not included in this list that would be helpful to know in relationship to your college vocabulary?

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Adaptions: Reformatted, some content removed to fit a broader audience.

Time Ferriss: Smash Fear, Learn Anything. Authored by TED.com

Located at: https://www.ted.com/talks/tim_ferriss_smash_fear_learn_anything#t-19570

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1.6: Chapter 6: Words of Wisdom: Why So Many Questions?

Fatima Rodriguez Johnson

Fatima Rodriguez Johnson

I chose to attend a small liberal arts college. The campus was predominately white and was nestled in a wealthy suburb among beautiful trees and landscaped lawns. My stepfather and I pulled into the parking lot and followed the path to my residence hall. The looks we received from most of the families made me feel like everyone knew we didn't belong. However, he and I greeted all we encountered, smiling and saying, "Hello." Once I was unpacked and settled into my residence hall, he gave me a hug and said, "Good luck." I wasn't sure if he meant good luck with classes or good luck with meeting new friends, but I heard a weight in his voice. He was worried. Had he and my mother prepared me for what was ahead?

With excitement, I greeted my roommate who I had already met through the summer Higher Educational Opportunity Program (HEOP). She and I were very happy to see each other. After decorating and organizing our room, we set out to meet new people. We went to every room introducing ourselves. We were pretty sure no one would forget us; it would be hard to miss the only Black and Latina girls whose room was next to the pay phone (yes, in my day each floor shared one pay phone).

Everyone on our floor was nice and we often hung out in each other's rooms. And like some of you, we answered some of those annoying questions:

- Why does your perm make your hair straight when ours makes our hair curly?
- How did your hair grow so long (whenever we had weave braids)?
- Why don't you wash your hair every day (the most intriguing question of all)?

We were also asked questions that made us angry:

- Did you grow up with your father?
- Aren't you scared to take public transportation?
- Have you ever seen anyone get shot (because we both lived in the inner city)?

It was those questions that, depending on the day and what kind of mood we were in, made a fellow student either walk away with a better understanding of who we were as Black and Latina women or made a fellow student walk away red and confused. I guess that's why my stepfather said, "Good luck." He knew that I was living in a community where I would stand out—where I would have to explain who I was. Some days I was really good at answering those questions and some days I was not. I learned the questions were not the problem; it was not asking that was troubling.

My roommate and I put forth a lot of effort to fit in with the community—we spent time hanging out with our peers, we ate together almost every evening in the dining hall, and we participated in student organizations. We were invited to join the German Club, and were the only students of color there. In doing all these things we made ourselves approachable. Our peers became comfortable around us and trusted us.

Although my peers and I all had similar college stresses (tests, papers, projects, etc.) my roommate and I also had become a student resource for diversity. Not because we wanted to, but because we had to. There were very few students of color on campus, and I think students really wanted to learn about people different from themselves. It was a responsibility that we had accepted. The director of HEOP would often remind us that for many students, college was the first opportunity they had to ask these types of questions. He said we would learn to discern when people were really interested in learning about our differences or insulting us. If someone was interested in insulting us, there was no need to respond at all.

Although I transferred to another college at the end of my sophomore year, during those two years I learned a great deal about having honest conversations. Taking part in honest conversations challenged my notions of the world and how I viewed people from all walks of life (race, class, sexual orientation, ability, etc.). Those late nights studying or walks to the student center were when many of us listened to each other's stories.

My advice is to take time to examine your attitudes and perceptions of people different from yourself, put yourself in situations that will challenge your assumptions, and lastly, when you make a mistake do not get discouraged. Keep trying. It's easy to stay where we are comfortable. College is such a wonderful experience. Take it all in, and I am sure you will enjoy it!

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1.7: Chapter 7: Planning A College Schedule

Alise Lamoreaux

"A journey of a thousand sites begins with a single click."

– Author Unknown

Planning a class schedule is an opportunity for students to take the lead in their educational experience. For some students it will be the first time planning a college schedule. The amount of freedom to choose classes can be exciting and frightening all at the same time!

Before beginning, there are some key factors to consider:

1. Have you met with an academic advisor or counselor?
2. Will you be going to school full-time or part-time?
3. Have you taken college placement tests?
4. Are there specific courses you are required to take?
5. How many days a week do you want to be on campus? Will you be taking online classes?
6. Do any of the classes you want to take have prerequisites or co-requisites?
7. Do any of the classes have additional requirements such as labs or other components?
8. How much time will you have to devote to school-related activities during the term?
9. Are you a morning person or a night person?
10. Have you balanced required classes with less intensive electives?
11. Do you need any special accommodations for the classes you have selected?
12. Do you have alternative courses in mind in case the classes you want are not available?

Balancing College, Work, and Life

Attending classes, studying, working, and finding time for family, friends, and yourself can be a challenging schedule for college students to balance. How a student organizes their class load can affect their overall success when starting college. Class names may remind students of high school classes and how classes were scheduled in those years. College classes may only meet once a week or as many as 5 times a week. Not all classes are worth the same amount of credit or have the same attendance requirements. Some classes like Biology or Spanish will probably have additional lab requirements, which means a student will need to spend additional time on campus for those labs. Writing classes will require time outside of class preparing, editing, and revising papers. Many teachers require electronic submission of papers/projects. Students may need to build in extra time for meeting submission deadlines.

As a new college student, it is a good idea to take fewer classes in the beginning as you learn what college classes will mean to your daily life. Students who work full-time might want to start with 1 or 2 classes. You may find that you can handle more as you learn to manage your class time and work time. A counselor or advisor can help you with this decision. Be sure to include classes that interest you as well as required classes.

Something to think about: The table below illustrates the recommended number of hours a student should study per week based on the number of units they are taking.

Hourly Recommendations (per week)

Work	Units	Study Time	Total
40	6	12	58
30	9	18	57
20	12	24	56

Where is class information located?

The college *catalog* will have descriptions of specific classes and the college *schedule* for each term will be the place to find what modality (in person, hybrid, or online), days, times, and locations for classes. Not all classes are offered every term and some must be taken in sequence.

How to read the course numbering system

Courses are identified by a subject and a number. To search for courses when planning your class schedule, you will generally use the subject and section number to identify the course rather than the course title.

WR	115	Introduction to College Writing
↑	↑	↑
Subject	Number	Course Title

Many colleges utilize section numbers that identify specific sections of the class being offered. Section numbers are often used by students to register for their classes.

If you have selected a specific program of study, consult the college catalog for directions on the sequence of courses to take and/or look up the courses required for your program of study to see if they have prerequisites or co-requisites.

Know key dates and deadlines!

Organization is an important part of being a successful college student. One important aspect of organization is knowing the important dates for your classes and the college in general. Academic deadlines matter! Deadlines in college may **not** be flexible. They can have consequences for financial aid and grading that cannot be undone. A student needs to be aware of key dates throughout the term. The responsibility for knowing important dates lies with the student. The course syllabus that you get for each class you take will have important dates for that specific class. The college will put important dates to know on an academic calendar for the school.

Examples of key dates to know for a college:

- When does the term/semester start and end?
- Are there holidays or campus closures during the term?
- When is the last day to drop a class with a complete refund?
- When is the last day to make changes to your schedule?
- When is the last day to drop a class?
- When is the last day to change grading options?
- When is finals week and what is the schedule like during that week?

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1.8: Chapter 8: Words of Wisdom: These Are the Best Years of Your Life

Sara Vacin

Sara Vacin

These are the best years of your life. I hope you've been told this a ridiculous amount of times and that you are finding this to be true! College provides an amazing opportunity to expand your mind, meet unique people you can deeply connect with, and discover new aspects of yourself. Being aware of this energy and taking full advantage of these opportunities can be life changing.

You learn a lot about yourself when living on your own for the first time or studying topics that are completely taboo at your home's kitchen table. When I transferred to a four-year institution, I found the strength to come out. Realizing I was gay led me to question where I belonged in the religion I was raised in and an enlightening journey ensued of exploring Buddhism, Native American beliefs, and even New Age mysticism. This process of questioning what I believed helped me to create a spiritual foundation that makes sense to me. I kept the best of what I was raised in and upgraded the rest!

I also discovered that the college I attended had amazing tools to help me be as healthy as possible. I used the free gym and knew the counseling center was there if anything became too tough. I also chose incredible electives (including Mountaineering and Modern Dance) that stretched my physical capabilities. Additionally, I made deep connections with my professors, many of whom remain friends. These smart, caring people validated my journey and were my safety net as I grew out of my old, comfortable self.

Another incredible lesson learned was the importance of balance. I couldn't party every night and neglect my schoolwork without consequences. I figured out the hard way that I really did need sleep and I couldn't nourish my body on coffee and pizza alone. In a moment of brilliance, I also figured out that if I used time with my friends as a reward for finishing my work, I would study and complete assignments more efficiently. Fun can be a great motivator—try this; it works!

In college, the emphasis is often on the mind. Do yourself a favor and remember to also nourish your spirit and take care of your body. Leave college brighter, healthier, and with a new understanding of yourself. Try that yoga or nutrition class. Join that new club. Trade in that soda for water. Jump into that drum circle or improvisation group. Who knows what you will discover—it just may be greatness!

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1.9: Chapter 9: Words of Wisdom: With a Little Help from My Friends

Paulo Fernandes

Paulo Fernandes

We often hear about the importance of relationships: a necessary aspect of integration in society. Unfortunately, we rarely follow that advice. Perhaps we live an excessively busy life or we already have a close group of friends and do not feel compelled to meet new people. I have come to learn through my time in college that neglecting to cultivate new relationships is detrimental to living a happy and successful life. I would like to offer this piece of advice: *no matter how difficult it seems at first, always try to make new friends*. College is not always easy. However, having friends makes it much easier. Friends are a vital part of your life that can expose you to new subjects, cultures, and experiences while giving you the opportunity to do the same for them.

At my college, there was a small space that the students called “the bat cave.” It was by no means a first-class lounge, but it was a place where friends could help others better understand their course material. We gave it this peculiar nickname because it was our place to get together and conquer villains one after another. These were not your everyday super villains, however. Sometimes they were complicated homework assignments and other times they were difficult exams. No matter the challenge, someone was always willing to help. I went to the bat cave several times and every visit I learned something new. Professors and teaching assistants could not relate to us like our friends could. That made a difference, because nothing was better than being taught by a friend.

Friends are not only an essential support for your time in school, but also can be integral in helping realize post-college aspirations. During a visit to New York City, I visited the offices of the company Spotify. After touring their facilities I had the opportunity to talk to some of the employees. One man I talked with was a senior employee who worked at Microsoft prior to joining Spotify’s team. Our conversation stuck in my head because he gave a very striking piece of advice: make friends. It never truly occurred to me that the friends you make in college could impact your future in the workforce. They could be partners in potential business ventures or help you land your dream job. In any case, having strong connections with friends can undoubtedly make a major difference in your career.

The best part of making new friends, however, is trading life experiences, skills, and interests with them. For a year and a half before my final semester of college, I studied abroad in the United States. My family was concerned because typically, students search for first jobs prior to graduation. I, on the other hand, had no trepidation about going because I knew that I would have countless, exciting learning experiences. I can say today, without a doubt, that my trip was a great decision. I met incredible people, and through knowing them, I grew and changed. I also know that I was a positive feature in the lives of my new friends. The greatest thing that I learned was that meeting different people with different backgrounds, histories, perspectives, or even different musical tastes, inevitably changes you and lets you see the world in an entirely different way. You no longer see the world as simply a big, blue sphere with freezing winters or sizzling summers (although that certainly seems to be the case up North!), but as a place in which people like you live, learn, and love.

Going to college may seem hard, but it does not need to be. I have learned that the way I perceive my life as a student completely relies upon my relationships with my friends. They are not only the people that I like to spend time with, but also are essential in my growth and development as a human being. The pages in this book include insights from others just like you and me. They want to help you get through the common struggles of college with confidence and perseverance. Consider them your most recent new friends. I truly hope that this inspires you in your quest for a great future.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Unit 2: Time, Tools, and Study Environment

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2.3: Chapter 12: Time Management Reality
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2.1: Chapter 10: Time Management Theory

Dave Dillon

"Time is the only commodity that matters."

– Randy Pausch

My favorite aspect of time is its equality. Regardless of our race, religion, or age, all of us have the same amount of time in a day, week, month and year. Wealthy people cannot buy more time and poor people do not receive less time. A minute for a tall person is the same amount of time for a short person. An hour for a woman is the same amount of time for a man. Regardless of how many languages someone speaks, their sexual orientation, ethnicity, educational background, income or experience, we all have 365 days in a year. Some people will live longer than others, but when comparatively measuring how much time humans have with each other, we all have the same amount.

Time is a popular philosophical concept. You may have heard some of the following sayings:

- Time flies when you are having fun
- That is a waste of time
- Time is money
- We have all the time in the world
- That was an untimely death
- The time is right
- I'm having the time of my life
- Time heals all wounds
- We have some time to kill

What do the sayings mean to you?

Time is also how we keep track of when we're supposed to be and where we're supposed to be (work, home, class, meeting friends and family, etc.). Think about how many measures of time you have in your home (clocks, watches, cell phones, TVs, DVRs, computers, microwaves, ovens, thermostats, etc.). It is obvious time is important to us.

Time: A Limited and Precious Commodity

We cannot go back in time. If I used my time poorly last Wednesday, I can do nothing to get it back. Other commodities may allow for accumulating more or starting over, but time does not. We cannot "save" time nor earn more time.

"If you had a bank that credited your account each morning with $86,400, but carried no balance from day to day and allowed you to keep no cash in your account, and every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during the day, what would you do? Draw out every cent, of course! Well, you have such a bank, and its name is time. Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off as lost whatever of these you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries no balance; it allows no overdrafts. Each day it opens a new account with you. Each night it burns the record of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposit, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against the morrow. You must live in the present – on today's deposit. Invest it so as to get the utmost in health and happiness and success."

– Anonymous

Technically, time cannot be managed, but we label it time management when we talk about how people use their time. We often bring up efficiency and effectiveness when discussing how people spend their time, but we cannot literally manage time because time cannot be managed. What we can do though, is find better ways to spend our time, allowing us to accomplish our most important tasks and spend time with the people most important to us.

Human babies do not come with instruction manuals. There is nothing to follow to know how we are supposed to spend our time. Most of us spend our time doing a combination of what interests us, what is important to us and what we feel we "have" to do.

What is your relationship with time? Are you usually early, right on time or late? Do you find yourself often saying, "I wish I had more time?" Are you satisfied with your relationship with time or would you like to change it?

The Value of Time

It is also important to determine how much your time is worth to you. If someone were to negotiate for an hour of your time, how much would that be worth to you? We often equate time with money. Many of us work in positions where we are paid by the hour; this gives us some gauge of what we are worth to our employers. Some items we purchase because we think they are of good value for their price. Others we pass on. Are some hours of your day more important or more valuable than others? Why? Are you more productive in the morning or in the evening? Once people realize how valuable time is, they often go to great lengths to protect it because they understand its importance. How much would you pay for an additional hour in a day? What would you do with that time? Why?

What is the value of your time? How much is an hour of your time worth? If someone were to pay you $10 to do a job, how much time would that be worth? $20? $50?

How Do I Allocate My Time?

"Lack of direction, not lack of time is the problem. We all have 24 hour days."

– Zig Ziglar

Most of us know there are 24 hours in a day, but when I ask students how many hours are in a week, many do not know the answer. There are 168 hours in a week (24 hours multiplied by seven days). I don't believe that it is imperative that students know how many hours are in a week, but it helps when we start to look at how much time we have in a week, how we want to spend our time and how we actually spend our time.

One challenge for many students is the transition from the structure of high school to the structure of college. In high school, students spend a large portion of their time in class (approximately 30 hours in class per week), while full-time college students may spend only one-third of that time in class (approximately 12 hours in class per week). Further, college students are assigned much more homework than high school students. Think about how many times one of your high school teachers gave you something to read during class. In college, students are given more material to read with the expectation that it is done outside of class.

This can create challenges for students who are unable to set aside proper study time for each of their courses. Keep in mind for full-time students: your college educational day should not be shorter than your high school day.

Hourly Recommendations (per Week)

Work	Units	Study Time	Total
40	6	12	58
30	9	18	57
20	12	24	56

I use this table frequently in counseling appointments, classes and orientations. It's a guide for students that provides an idea of how much time students spend with work and school, and what experts recommend for a specific amount of work hours that correlates with a specific number of units. I like to ask students how they spend their week. Students always know their work hours and their class times. These are easy to place in a schedule or on a calendar because they are predetermined. But study time is the one area that consistently is left out of a student's schedule. It takes initiative to include it in a student's busy week and self-discipline to stick to it. Here's a tip: Write your study time into your schedule or calendar. It's important to do this because it's easy to skip a study session or say to yourself, "I'll do it later." While there would likely be an immediate consequence if you do not show up for work, there is not one if you fail to study on Tuesday from 3pm-4pm. That consequence may take place later, if the studying is not made up.

It is widely suggested that students need to study approximately two hours for every hour that they spend in class in order to be successful.[1] Thus, if I am taking a class that meets on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4pm-5:30pm (three hours per week), I would want to study outside of class six hours per week. This is designed as a guide and is not an exact science. You might need to spend more time than what is recommended if you are taking a subject you find challenging, have fallen behind in or if you are taking short-term classes. This would certainly be true if I were to take a physics class. Since I find learning physics difficult, I might have to spend three or four hours of study time for each hour of class instruction. You also might need to study more than

what is recommended if you are looking to achieve better grades. Conversely, you might need to spend less time if the subject comes easy to you (such as sociology does for me) or if there is not a lot of assigned homework.

Keep in mind that 20 hours of work per week is the maximum recommended for full-time students taking 12 semester units in a term. For students working full-time (40 hours a week), no more than six units is recommended. The total is also a very important category. Students often start to see difficulty when their total number of hours between work and school exceeds 60 per week. The amount of sleep decreases, stress increases, grades suffer, job performance decreases and students are often unhappy.

How do you spend your 168 hours in a week?

- Child Care
- Class
- Community Service / Volunteer
- Commuting / Transportation
- Eating / Food Preparation
- Exercise
- Family
- Friends
- Household / Child Care Duties
- Internet / Social Media / Phone / Texting
- Party
- Recreation / Leisure
- Relationship
- Sleeping
- Spirituality / Prayer / Meditation
- Study
- Video Games
- Watching TV or Movies, Netflix, Youtube
- Work / Career

There is also the time it takes for college students to adjust to college culture, college terminology, and college policies. Students may need to learn or relearn how to learn and some students may need to learn what they need to know. What a student in their first college semester needs to know may be different than what a student in their last college semester needs to know. First semester students may be learning where classrooms are, building hours and locations for college resources, and expectations of college students. Students in their last semester may be learning about applying for their degree, how to confirm they have all of their requirements completed for their goal, and commencement information. Whatever it is students may need to learn, it takes time.

Fixed Time vs. Free Time

Sometimes it helps to take a look at your time and divide it into two areas: fixed time and free time. Fixed time is time that you have committed to a certain area. It might be school, work, religion, recreation or family. There is no right or wrong to fixed time and everyone's is different. Some people will naturally have more fixed time than others. Free time is just that—it is free. It can be used however you want to use it; it's time you have available for activities you enjoy. Someone might work 9am-2pm, then have class 3pm-4:30pm, then have dinner with family 5pm-6pm, study 6pm-7pm and then have free time from 7pm-9pm. Take a look at a typical week for yourself. How much fixed time do you have? How much free time? How much fixed and free time would you like to have?

Identifying, Organizing and Prioritizing Goals

The universal challenge of time is that there are more things that we want to do and not enough time to do them.

I talk to students frequently who have aspirations, dreams, goals and things they want to accomplish. Similarly, I ask students to list their interests at the beginning of each of my classes and there is never a shortage of items. But I often talk to students who are discouraged by the length of time it is taking them to complete a goal (completing their education, reaching their career goal, buying a home, getting married, etc.). And every semester there are students that drop classes because they have taken on too much or they are unable to keep up with their class work because they have other commitments and interests. There is nothing wrong with other commitments or interests. On the contrary, they may bring joy and fulfillment, but do they get in the way of your educational goal(s)? For instance, if you were to drop a class because you required surgery, needed to take care of a sick family

member or your boss increased your work hours, those may be important and valid reasons to do so. If you were to drop a class because you wanted to binge watch Grey's Anatomy, play more Minecraft, or spend more time on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, you may have more difficulty justifying that decision, but it is still your decision to make. Sometimes students do not realize the power they have over the decisions they make and how those decisions can affect their ability to accomplish the goals they set for themselves.

I am no exception. I have a long list of things that I want to accomplish today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year and in my lifetime. I have many more things on my list to complete than the time that I will be alive.

Identifying Goals

Recently, there has been a lot of attention given to the importance of college students identifying their educational objective and their major as soon as possible. Some high schools are working with students to identify these goals earlier. If you are interested in career identification, you may wish to look into a career decision making course offered by your college. You may also wish to make an appointment with a counselor, and/or visit your college's Career Center and/or find a career advice book such as *What Color is Your Parachute?* by Richard N. Bolles.

Goal identification is a way to allow us to keep track of what we would like to accomplish as well as a mechanism to measure how successful we are at achieving our goals. This video gives modern practical advice about the future career market.

Video: *Success in the New Economy*, Kevin Fleming and Brian Y. Marsh, Citrus College:



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Educational Planning

There has also been focused attention on the importance of educational planning.

Education plans developed with a counselor help students determine and explore a program of study and have proven to facilitate student success.[2]

Students can follow educational plans like a road map so they can see how to complete required classes in the most efficient and logical order based on their educational goals.

Educational planning may appear to be simple: identifying the program of study and then figuring out which courses are required to complete it.

Transfer to a Four-Year?
Graphics courtesy of Greg Stoup, Rob Johnstone, and Priyadarshini Chaplot of The RP Group

However, it can often be extremely complex. Many students have multiple goals. One student might be interested in more than one of these goals: earn multiple degrees, transfer to a four-year college or university, prepare for graduate school, start a minor, or complete requirements for several transfer schools.

Students also have different strengths. Some might be strong in English. Some students excel in Math. Others might be strong in Science, Arts and Humanities, or Social Sciences. Educational planning takes these strengths (and weaknesses) into consideration. Students are encouraged to take English and Math early[3], as statistics show that those students will be more successful. But the order of courses taken for students with different strengths could vary even if the students have the same goal. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution.

Educational planning may be further complicated by availability of courses a college or university offers, the process in which a student may be able to register for those courses and which sections fit into students' schedules. Transcript evaluations (if students have attended previous colleges or universities), assessment of appropriate English or Math levels and prerequisite clearance procedures may also contribute to the challenge of efficient educational planning.

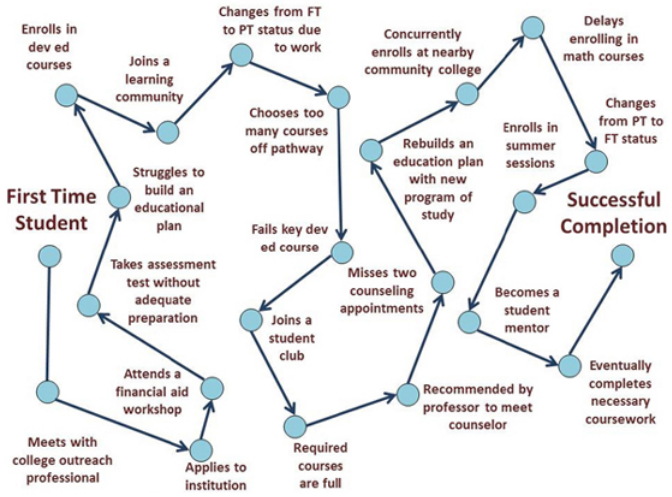
Further, students have different priorities. Some students want to complete their goals in a certain amount of time. Other students may have to work full-time and take fewer units each semester. Educational planning might also consider student interests, skills, values, personality, or student support referrals. Grade point average requirements for a student's degree, transfer or specific programs are also considered in educational planning.[4]

While some students may know what they want to do for their career, and have known since they were five years old, many students are unsure of what they want to do. Often, students aren't sure how to choose their major. A major is an area of concentration in which students will specialize at a college or university. Completing a major requires passing courses in the chosen concentration and degrees are awarded that correlate with students' majors. For instance, my bachelor's degree in Sociology means that my major was Sociology.

It is OK to not know what major you want to pursue when you start college, but I suggest careful research to look into options and narrow them down to a short list of two or three. Talking with a counselor, visiting your college's Career Center, or taking a college success class may help with your decisions.

Seventy percent of students change their major at least once while in college and most will change their major at least three times. It is important for students to find the best major for them, but these changes may make previous educational plans obsolete.

The simple concept and road map often ends up looking more like this:



Graphics courtesy of Greg Stoup, Rob Johnstone, and Priyadarshini Chaplot of The RP Group

Due to the complicated nature of educational planning, a counselor can provide great value for students with assistance in creating an educational plan, specifically for each individual student. If you have not done so already, I highly recommend you meet with a counselor and continue to do so on a frequent basis (once per semester if possible).

How To Start Reaching Your Goals

Without goals, we aren't sure what we are trying to accomplish, and there is little way of knowing if we are accomplishing anything. If you already have a goal-setting plan that works well for you, keep it. If you don't have goals, or have difficulty working towards them, I encourage you to try this.

Make a list of all the things you want to accomplish for the next day. Here is a sample to do list:

- Go to grocery store
- Go to class
- Pay bills
- Exercise
- Social media
- Study
- Eat lunch with friend
- Work

- Watch TV
- Text friends

Your list may be similar to this one or it may be completely different. It is yours, so you can make it however you want. Do not be concerned about the length of your list or the number of items on it.

"Obstacles are things a person sees when he takes his eyes off his goal."

– E. Joseph Cossman

You now have the framework for what you want to accomplish the next day. Hang on to that list. We will use it again.

Now take a look at the upcoming week, the next month and the next year. Make a list of what you would like to accomplish in each of those time frames. If you want to go jet skiing, travel to Europe or get a bachelor's degree: Write it down. Pay attention to detail. The more detail within your goals the better. Ask yourself: what is necessary to complete your goals?

With those lists completed, take into consideration how the best goals are created. Commonly called "SMART" goals, it is often helpful to apply criteria to your goals. SMART is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely. Perform a web search on the Internet to find out more about "SMART" goals. Are your goals SMART goals? For example, a general goal would be, "Achieve an 'A' in my anatomy class." But a specific goal would say, "I will schedule and study for one hour each day at the library from 2pm-3pm for my anatomy class in order to achieve an 'A' and help me gain admission to nursing school."

Now revise your lists for the things you want to accomplish in the next week, month and year by applying the SMART goal techniques. The best goals are usually created over time and through the process of more than one attempt, so spend some time completing this. Do not expect to have "perfect" goals on your first attempt. Also, keep in mind that your goals do not have to be set in stone. They can change. And since over time things will change around you, your goals should also change.

Another important aspect of goal setting is accountability. Someone could have great intentions and set up SMART goals for all of the things they want to accomplish. But if they don't work towards those goals and complete them, they likely won't be successful. It is easy to see if we are accountable in short-term goals. Take the daily to-do list for example. How many of the things that you set out to accomplish, did you accomplish? How many were the most important things on that list? Were you satisfied? Were you successful? Did you learn anything for future planning or time management? Would you do anything differently? The answers to these questions help determine accountability.

Long-term goals are more difficult to create and it is more challenging for us to stay accountable. Think of New Year's Resolutions. Gyms are packed and mass dieting begins in January. By March, many gyms are empty and diets have failed. Why? Because it is easier to crash diet and exercise regularly for short periods of time than it is to make long-term lifestyle and habitual changes.

Randy Pausch was known for his lecture called "The Last Lecture," now a bestselling book. Diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer, Pausch passes along some of his ideas for best strategies for uses of time in his lesser known lecture on time management. I don't believe there is someone better suited to teach about time management than someone trying to maximize their last year, months, weeks and days of their life.

Video: *Time Management*, Randy Pausch.



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Organizing Goals

Place all of your goals, plans, projects and ideas in one place. Why? It prevents confusion. We often have more than one thing going on at a time and it may be easy to become distracted and lose sight of one or more of our goals if we cannot easily access them. Create a goal notebook, goal poster, goal computer file—organize it any way you want—just make sure it is organized and that your goals stay in one place.

Author's Story

I learned this lesson the hard way. Some years ago, I used sticky notes all the time. I think they are a great invention and believe they help me stay organized. But one day when I was looking for a phone number I realized that I had sticky notes at work, sticky notes at home and sticky notes in my car. I had so many sticky notes in multiple places that I couldn't easily find the information I needed. Everyone has a preference of how clean or messy his or her work area is, but if you're spending time looking for things, it is not the best use of your time. I now keep all of my sticky notes in one place. Further, I always use one and only one point of entry for anything that goes on my calendar. I have also found many advances in technology to assist with organization of information. But I still use physical sticky notes.

Use Technology to your Advantage

Software and apps are now available to help with organization and productivity. Check out Evernote, One Note, or Stickies.

Break Goals into Small Steps

I ask this question of students in my classes: If we decided today that our goal was to run a marathon and then went out tomorrow and tried to run one, what would happen? Students respond with: (jokingly) "I would die," or "I couldn't do it." How come? Because we might need training, running shoes, support, knowledge, experience and confidence—often this cannot be done overnight. But instead of giving up and thinking it's impossible because the task is too big for which to prepare, it's important to develop smaller steps or tasks that can be started and worked on immediately. Once all of the small steps are completed, you'll be on your way to accomplishing your big goals.

What steps would you need to complete the following big goals?

- Buying a house
- Getting married
- Attaining a bachelor's degree
- Destroying the Death Star
- Losing weight

Prioritizing Goals

Why is it important to prioritize? Let's look back at the sample list. If I spent all my time completing the first seven things on the list, but the last three were the most important, then I would not have prioritized very well.

It would have been better to prioritize the list after creating it and then work on the items that are most important first. You might be surprised at how many students fail to prioritize.

After prioritizing, the sample list now looks like this:

- Go to class
- Work
- Study
- Pay bills
- Exercise
- Eat lunch with friend
- Go to grocery store
- Text friends
- Social media
- Watch TV

One way to prioritize is to give each task a value. A = Task related to goals; B = Important—Have to do; C = Could postpone. Then, map out your day so that with the time available to you, work on your A goals first. You'll now see below our list has the

ABC labels. You will also notice a few items have changed positions based on their label. Keep in mind that different people will label things different ways because we all have different goals and different things that are important to us. There is no right or wrong here, but it is paramount to know what is important to you, and to know how you will spend the majority of your time with the things that are the most important to you.

A Go to class

A Study

A Exercise

B Work

B Pay bills

B Go to grocery store

C Eat lunch with friend

C Text friends

C Social media

C Watch TV

Do the Most Important Things First

You do not have to be a scientist to realize that spending your time on "C" tasks instead of "A" tasks won't allow you to complete your goals. The easiest things to do and the ones that take the least amount of time are often what people do first. Checking Facebook or texting might only take a few minutes but doing it prior to studying means we're spending time with a "C" activity before an "A" activity.

People like to check things off that they have done. It feels good. But don't confuse productivity with accomplishment of tasks that aren't important. You could have a long list of things that you completed, but if they aren't important to you, it probably wasn't the best use of your time.

Perform an internet search for "Time Management Matrix images." The matrix (also referred to in the Randy Pausch video), shows how to categorize your tasks and will help prioritize your goals, tasks, and assignments. Take a look at the matrix and quadrants and identify which quadrant your activities would fall into.

Quadrant I (The quadrant of necessity): Important and Urgent

Only crisis activities should be here. If you have included exams and papers here, you are probably not allowing yourself enough time to fully prepare. If you continue at this pace you could burn out!

Quadrant II (The quadrant of quality and personal leadership): Important and Not Urgent

This is where you define your priorities. What's important in your life? What will keep you balanced? For example, you may know that good nutrition, sleep, recreation and maintaining healthy social relationships are important but do you consciously make time for them in your daily or weekly routine? Quadrant II includes your "A" goals. Managing your life and the lifestyle will help you manage your time.

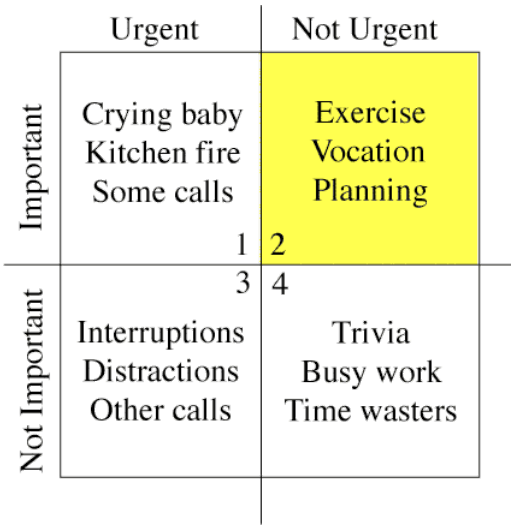
Quadrant III (The quadrant of deception): Not Important and Urgent

While you may feel that activities, such as texting, need your attention right away, too much time spent on Quadrant III activities can seriously reduce valuable study time. This may leave you feeling pulled in too many directions at once.

Quadrant IV (The quadrant of waste): Not Important and Not Urgent

Quadrants three and four include your "C" goals. If you're spending many hours on Quadrant IV activities, you're either having a great deal of fun or spending a lot of time procrastinating! Remember, the objective is balance. You may notice I placed social media and texting into this category. You could make a case that social media, texting, Netflix, and Youtube are important, but how often are they urgent? Ultimately, it is up to you to decide what is important and urgent for yourself, but for the context of this textbook, your classes, assignments, preparation, and studying should almost universally be more urgent and important than social media and texting.

Here is an adapted version of the matrix, with an emphasis on quadrant II.



By Rorybowman – Own work, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/inde...?curid=2135450

Conclusion

Managing time well comes down to two things. One is identifying (and then prioritizing) goals and the other is having the discipline to be able to work towards accomplishing them. We all have the same amount of time in a day, week, month and year, yet some people are able to accomplish more than others. Why is this? Often, it is because they are able to set goals, prioritize them and then work on them relentlessly and effectively until they are complete.

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2.2: Chapter 11: Words of Wisdom: Time Is on Your Side

Christopher L. Hockey

Christopher L. Hockey

There I was, having just eaten dinner and realizing that I had less than twenty-four hours to go before my capstone paper was due for my History of Africa class. This paper was the only grade for the class and all I had done was some research. I still had thirty pages that needed to be written! How was I going to get this paper done?

I came to the realization that I was going to have to skip some classes and work through the night. I kept my roommate up with the click clack of the keyboard and worked through the night with breaks only to replenish the caffeine in my system. Morning came and I still had work to do.

I contacted my other professors letting them know that something came up and I wouldn't be in class. Thankfully, I was in good standing in my other classes and could afford to miss one class. I snuck in a twenty minute nap and kept working. I finally finished about thirty minutes before the deadline. Exhausted and not terribly proud of myself, I trudged my way to class to drop off the paper and committed to never working like this again. After all, there was a small likelihood that I would get a decent grade; I was hoping for just a C to keep my GPA respectable. I went back to my room and slept for a long time. Imagine my amazement when I received my grade for the paper (and ultimately the class) and there was an A- staring me back in the face! How could this be possible?

My experience illustrates a very important lesson. Best practices do not always yield the best results. Logic would tell us that to manage a thirty-page paper would require the student to spread out all the tasks over the semester and do a little bit of work over a long period of time as opposed to a lot of work over a short period of time. The problem is that time management is a personal thing. Everyone works differently and excels under different circumstances.

The important thing to remember about time management is that there is not one method. Everyone must find what works best for her or him. There are some strategies that have been used for years and others that are new. While there are multiple perspectives on how best to set personal and professional goals, there are three general themes that influence the development of personal time management plans: identifying priorities, managing time, and managing energy.

The concept of time management is actually personal management. Where you are going or what you are trying to accomplish is more important than how fast you get there. Personal management demands organizing and executing around priorities. One thing to watch out for on your college journey is something called *time famine*. Time famine is the feeling of having too much to do and not enough time to do it. This happens often to college students and without warning. This was certainly the case with my paper. I certainly felt overwhelmed with thirty pages to write and not a lot of time available to write it in. However, there's one really helpful aspect of time—you always know how much you have in a day. You know that in any given day, you have twenty-four hours to accomplish everything you need to do for that day. With that knowledge in hand it becomes an easy task to make smart choices when planning both the schedule for the day, as well as the energy needed to complete the tasks.

The objective of successful time management is to increase and optimize controllable time. Once you have a schedule made, don't change it unless something of some serious urgency comes up. However, while managing time is challenging enough, there's another concept out there about the management of your energy. Think of energy as money and time as what you'd like to buy. If you're too tired (or energy broke) to be productive, it's hard to accomplish (buy) everything on your schedule. Luckily, at the age of twenty-two, I had lots of energy and stamina to pull an all-nighter and finish the paper. If I tried to do that today at thirty-five, I would be asleep on my keyboard after a few hours. In order to always have enough of time currency, it's important that you are physically energized, emotionally connected, and mentally focused on your purpose.

While an understanding of these general principles is essential for the development of sound time and energy management strategies, it is also important to focus on practical strategies that can be implemented to improve the college experience. The first recommendation is to know who you are and how you work. In this step, you need to examine all aspects of your current time management skills. Take a look at personal practices such as where you work, how you organize information and course materials, how current and future assignments and projects are prioritized, how commitments are balanced, and lastly, how you prevent burnout. Once you have taken stock in your current practices, you'll have a better idea of what you need to do to improve.

Even today, I try to space out large projects and assignments and find that I am not as focused or motivated. I struggle to complete the task and when I do, it never feels like I did it well. However, when I revert back to that practice of waiting until the last minute,

I am focused, energized, and motivated and the results have been very positive. In my own doctoral program, I have begun assignments a little too close to the deadlines but they ultimately get completed and I continue to be amazed at the high marks I get back. What does that tell me? It tells me I thrive in high-pressure situations where I have to focus intensely on one thing and stay focused for a long period of time. Is that method for everyone? Certainly not, but it works for some and it may or may not work for you. You must examine your own work habits and practices and look back at times that you have done well and times you have done poorly and identify habits that led to those results.

The next strategy is to create a personal time management method to help prioritize projects and activities. Try to identify and eliminate activities that may detract from effectively balancing your roles and responsibilities. In any given day, what are the most important things that need to be completed? What can be eliminated from your schedule that provides you the time you need to be successful? I like to think of this as the "five-year-old plan." My five-year-old loves to play in the morning as her Mom and I are getting ready for work. The problem is that we need her to get ready for school, too. We put a plan in place that allows her to play in the morning, only after she is completely ready for school. You need time to play, have fun, and socialize, but it should not come at the expense of higher priority tasks.

The next recommendation is to focus on the process of energy management. Create goals focused on physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional renewal. These goals can include, but are not limited to: getting seven to eight hours of sleep a night, taking small breaks during work sessions, eating healthy, exercising regularly, drinking lots of water, having a positive attitude, and practicing positive self-talk. Anytime I know I have a big work task or school task to complete, I am in the mindset of energy conversation—my energy. I make sure to get a good night sleep, eat my Wheaties, and think good vibes. These habits allow me to complete projects in a way that works for me.

Lastly, set up a reward system. One of the great things about creating prioritized lists of things that need to be done is the sense of accomplishment when you cross that item off the list. Once you've identified your major goals and tasks, identify a reward for each of these goals that provides an even greater sense of accomplishment. The reward should be personal and should encourage you to continue your good habits. What are the things you love to do? Write them down next to the major tasks and learn to practice delayed gratification by only doing those things once you've crossed the item off.

In conclusion, practical and tangible strategies for time and energy management can be the key to success for any undertaking. While each concept related to time and energy management is unique and provides a starting point for you to begin to develop strong personal management skills, these methods and ideas are not one-size-fits-all, and you need to explore the strategies and discover which components of each best fit your lifestyle and circumstances. Through this exercise, you can develop a personal management plan that is best suited to your needs and goals.

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2.3: Chapter 12: Time Management Reality

Dave Dillon

"You cannot hoot with the owls and then soar with the eagles."

– Hubert Humphrey

There is a difference between a goal and a wish. A goal is something that requires action to complete. A wish is something we simply hope will happen without doing anything to achieve it. Students often confuse goals with wishes due to the expected probability of the outcome. For example, a student might say that owning a Ferrari or becoming a movie star were wishes, not goals, because the chance of them happening is slim. We could debate about realistic goals for a long time, but for the purpose of this lesson, the probability of a goal is irrelevant. Think of it like this: the chances of winning the lottery may in fact be slim, but we have no chance to win the lottery if we do not purchase a ticket. Purchasing a ticket requires action, and that distinguishes a difference between a goal and a wish.

When we apply this to education, there are many areas that require action in order to be successful. If I wish for good grades, but spend my time at parties instead of studying, I may not get my wish. But if my goal is to attain good grades, and I take action to achieve them by studying, reviewing, being prepared, etc., then I am much more likely to accomplish my goal.

"Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen."

– Michael Jordan

Author's Story

I had a friend in college who wanted to be a professional athlete. He would talk about it all the time and say that it was his goal. He was a student-athlete but he loved Carl's Jr. and ate there frequently. He rarely worked out. Over time, I started to think—if he really wanted to be a professional athlete, in order to give himself the best opportunity to make it, he should exercise more and eat a more nutritional diet. It occurred to me years later that he said it was his goal but in reality, it was a wish. He hoped that he would just magically become a professional athlete one day but was unwilling to take the action necessary to help him achieve his goal.

One of the challenges many students face is being over committed. Some are working full-time, going to school full-time, and have other responsibilities as well. Students may additionally be taking care of children, siblings, parents or have other commitments. It can be difficult to take action to complete goals when there are so many areas competing for our time. And sometimes we cannot "do it all." Sometimes we need to prioritize, let something go, adjust and reevaluate what the most important things are to us.

Other students may struggle because college does not have as much structure as what they may have been used to in high school. Why should I start a homework assignment now when I don't have anything I have to do for the next three days? This mindset usually leads to the student waiting until the last minute to start the assignment and as a result, the quality of work is not high.

Procrastination

"Do or do not – there is no try."

– Yoda

Either a homework assignment gets done on time or it doesn't. Over the years I have seen a lot of excuses from students who didn't complete their assignment on time. Think about this: If someone were to give you $500 to complete the assignment on time, would you complete it sooner than you ordinarily would have? What level is your internal motivation? How important is the assignment to you? How important is your grade? How important is your class?

Procrastination is the act of putting something off. It's doing something that's a low priority instead of doing something that is a high priority. We all procrastinate sometimes. But when we procrastinate on an assignment or studying for an exam until there is little or no time left, our grades suffer and it can be stressful. Learning about why we procrastinate can help us overcome.

Reasons We Procrastinate

I don't feel like it. I would rather play a video game, watch TV, hang out with friends, sleep, etc. than start my assignment. (The problem is – you might never feel like starting it.)

Perfectionism. I want to do it perfectly and there is not enough time to do it perfectly so I am not going to do it at all.

Fear of success. If I study my tail off and I earn an A on an exam, people will start to expect that I will get A's all of the time.

Fear of failure. Without confidence, I can't do the assignment well, no matter how much time or effort I put into it.

"If we are not prepared to fail, we will never create anything original."

– Sir Ken Robinson

These reasons have been keeping some students from completing assignments and studying for exams. Do you procrastinate? Why?

Whatever the reason may be, procrastination is not a good idea. It often leads to stress. It can be stressful in trying to complete something if we have left it to the last minute. It can be stressful to know that we didn't submit work that was our best. And stress can take a toll on the health of our bodies.

There are many examples of how American society realizes that people procrastinate. FedEx is built on the fact that people need something immediately and in many cases, they have procrastinated past when regular mail would have gotten it there on time. Post offices stay open later on Tax Day because they know people procrastinated getting their taxes done. Stores offer sales days before Christmas because they know people have procrastinated their Christmas shopping.

So how do we avoid procrastination?

Tell yourself to do your best all of the time. Ask yourself what is important NOW. Other peoples' expectations of you shouldn't matter. Be confident in yourself and in your abilities. Do the best you can and be satisfied with your effort. Realize that we're not perfect. Make your goal to do your best and understand you don't need to be perfect. Also, realize that you may never "feel like" doing an assignment or studying for an exam.

Get Started. It is the hardest part to do and will have the biggest effect on defeating procrastination. It can be simple: skim the chapter you have to read, think of a title for your paper or schedule an hour for when you will study. The rest of it will be easier once you get started.

Establish and rely on a process. Figure out what works best for you. Take some time to make a plan, list, or outline that allows you to see what you will do and when to complete your assignment or goal. It might be setting aside time early in the morning or waiting to watch a movie until after you've finished an assignment. Set your priorities and stick to them.

Set Imaginary Deadlines. If the paper is due in six days, tell yourself it is due in two days. Knock it out early and then enjoy not having it over your head. Fake deadlines are less stressful. And if you do end up needing more time, you have a cushion.

Don't Break the Chain. Jerry Seinfeld developed a system to help prevent procrastination. He wanted to be a better comedian and believed that writing better jokes would help. To write better jokes, he thought he should write every day. His system, called Don't Break the Chain was used to motivate himself to write every day. He started with a big wall calendar with a whole year on a page and a red marker. For each day he wrote, he would place a big red X on that day of the calendar. After a few consecutive days, he had a chain. And then the task became not breaking the chain.

Although originally skeptical, I tried it (with exercise), and found it to work. I liked marking the big red X and I liked seeing a long string of big red X's after a few weeks. I still use this strategy and find myself much more motivated to not break the chain than to go for a run, swim, or to the gym. If there is something you want to practice every day, try it.

"If you eat a frog first thing in the morning, the rest of your day will be wonderful."

– Mark Twain

I don't suggest that you go out and eat a frog, but the point Twain makes is paramount to overcoming procrastination. He meant if you have to do something you don't want to, the best thing to do is do it right away: get it over with as soon as possible then move on to enjoy the things you want to do.

This might be true of going to the dentist, making a phone call you don't want to make, or doing your homework.

Tim Urban's Ted Talk shines a light on procrastination.

Video: *Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator,* Tim Urban TED Talk



A TED element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://press.rebus.community/blueprint1/?p=54

Estimating Task Time

One of the biggest challenges I see college students have is accurately estimating how much time it will take to complete a task. We might think we're going to be able to read an assigned chapter in an hour. But what if it takes three hours to read and understand the chapter? Having the skill to know how long a homework assignment will take is something that can be developed. But until we can anticipate it accurately, it is best to leave some time in our schedule in case it takes longer than we had anticipated.

We have a limited amount of time. Most of us cannot complete everything we wish to complete—either in a day or in a lifetime. We hear people say, "I wish there was more time" or "If there was more time, I would have done this." We have enough time to do many of the things we wish to do. People run into difficulty when they spend time on things that are not the most important things for them.

"There's never enough time to do all the nothing you want."

– Bill Watterson

Author's Story

I used to say to myself that I would do this or finish that as soon as I got caught up. "Caught up" might apply to my e-mail inbox, keeping current with my twitter timeline, or watching the latest episode of The Walking Dead. But I found that sometimes I was never going to be caught up. So, it was important for me to realize that I was inadvertently placing quadrant III and IV activities ahead of quadrant I and II activities. Worse, I was justifying them by telling myself I would do the I and II activities once the III and IV activities were finished. I corrected this by refocusing on quadrant I and II and constantly reminding myself not to concentrate too much time on the things that are neither urgent nor important.

Time Management Strategies

Laura Vanderkam's TED Talk helps with perspective on free time.

Video: *How to Gain Control of Your Free Time*, Laura Vanderkam TED Talk



A TED element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://press.rebus.community/blueprint1/?p=54

You must make time for the things that are most important to you. In order to make time, you may need to decide you will not do something else.

The ability to say “no” cannot be underestimated. It isn’t easy to say “no,” especially to family, friends and people that like you and whom you like. Most of us don’t want to say “no,” especially when we want to help. But if we always do what others want, we won’t accomplish the things that we want—the things that are most important to us.

Ask yourself:

What am I doing that doesn’t need to be done?

What can I do more efficiently?

Have you ever ordered an appetizer, salad, beverage or bread, then felt full halfway through your entree? In situations like this many people claim, “my eyes were bigger than my stomach.” This is also true with planning and goal setting. It may be that your plan is bigger than the day. Experiment with with what you want to accomplish and what is realistic. The better you can accurately predict what you can and will accomplish and how long it will take, the better you can plan, and the more successful you will be.

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2.4: Chapter 13: World View and Self-Efficacy

Phyllis Nissila

World View



The world in eye (memo) by colorlight4 CC BY NC ND

The term procrastination comes from Middle French and Latin and, of course, means putting something off until later.

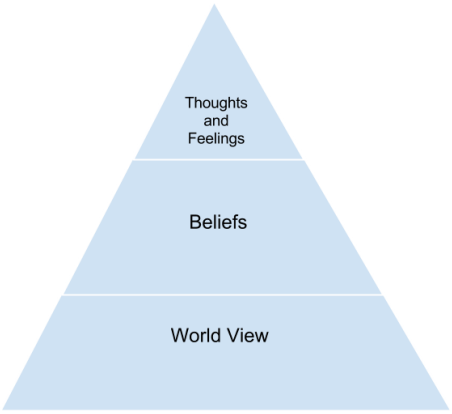
It is hardly necessary to define this common problem at school–and everywhere else–in *any* language, however. We all know what it is. We all do it, and we've all suffered to some extent because of it (missed deadlines tend to make instructors–and bosses–crabby).

But here is a problem: some people procrastinate more than others. And NOT just because they are lazy, disorganized, unmotivated, or confused about what to do. Those might be the surface assumptions and sometimes true, but at other times, or perhaps beneath what appear to be the behaviors listed above, defeating habits like procrastination have to do with deeper issues, maybe beliefs and thought patterns such as:

- "What's the use if I get this done, or not?"
- "I do better under stress, so leaving things until the last minute actually helps me."
- "I'm just naturally disorganized."
- "I never manage to do anything on time. I've always been that way!"

This is why this chapter begins with "foundational issues," perspectives, and beliefs about ourselves such as our world view that operates at the bottom of our pile of motivations, and our sense of self-efficacy (or lack thereof) that generates thoughts that either work for or against us when it comes to successfully managing time, tools, and environments of learning. Self-efficacy is one's sense of being able to achieve goals.

First, here is a look at world view, a concept some experts put at the foundational level of how we think and perceive the world. On top of our world view, so to speak, and as a result of it, are our beliefs. And on top of beliefs lay our conscious-level feelings and thoughts.



Our world view, as researcher F. Heylighen defines it, is "a framework that ties everything together, that allows us to understand society, the world, and our place in it, and that could help us to make the critical decisions which will shape our future." In his article, What is a world view? Heylighen, citing the work of Belgian philosopher Leo Apostel, lists seven basic components of a person's world view:

1. A model of the world (how the world functions/how it is structured)
2. Explanation (of the model)
3. Futurology (where are we going?)
4. Values (good/evil)
5. Action (plans of action based on our values)

6. Knowledge (true and false)
7. Building Blocks (what fragments of others' world views helped us shape ours)

These components cover the fundamental questions about existence that human beings find themselves mulling over in time, questions that ultimately guide beliefs, thoughts, and feelings.

The exercise below is based on Heylighen's article. Whereas this exercise is not a "personal inventory" per se, it has value in guiding the learner to discovering, perhaps, some foundational issues that can hinder a successful approach to overcoming non-productive actions and habits such as procrastination.

For example, if a person has a world view that is post-modern, he/she views the world with a heavy dose of skepticism and distrust of ideologies, rationality, and absolute truth. Therefore, it might be easy to subscribe to a "What's the use?" thought and feeling when it comes to academic and work-world norms such as being on time and getting one's work done.

Note: It is not necessary, however, to know precisely which world view one has been influenced by to complete the exercise. Indeed, most people more or less absorb their world views from parents, institutions, and the culture in which they grew up. The value in knowing such information about oneself is in understanding how to deal with certain attitudes and beliefs that work against successful learning, and success in life in general. It is also valuable to know what has contributed to successful attitudes and beliefs so that these can be affirmed and reinforced for future success.

EXERCISE 13-1

1. Read the article by Heylighen, linked above, for a more detailed explanation of world view and the seven components he cites.
2. Briefly respond to your thoughts on each of the seven components. If you have not given much thought to some of them as of yet, take time to consider them now. Three to five sentences will likely be sufficient **for each component**, for a total of approximately 21-35 sentences. It would be helpful to number the components. This does not have to be completed as an essay.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, or one's sense of being able to achieve goals, is an essential ingredient in a learner's ability to succeed. Thoughts and feelings on this topic, which stem from one's beliefs (remember the pyramid illustration) contribute to more, or less, success.

A key element of self-efficacy is the concept of locus of control. As the definition indicates, the locus, or place, of control is usually either internal or external, but sometimes it is both.

Obviously if a person believes that he/she is in control of situations and outcomes (an internal locus) achieving goals is more likely. If a person believes he/she is controlled by external forces, achieving goals is less likely. But everyone experiences both internal and external forces for various reasons. For example, choosing to do the right thing on the job is based on the external control of workplace rules. Yet, one might apply for the job based on one's internal belief that he/she can succeed. And both internal and external loci of control are in operation when one chooses to do the right thing at any time based on one's religious beliefs.

For a more detailed explanation and the relationship of self-efficacy to locus of control, complete this exercise.

EXERCISE 13-2

After reading the definition of this concept in the article cited above, answer the following questions:

1. List three attitudes and/or perspectives that a person with a primarily internal locus of control might have that will help him/her succeed in life, and why.
2. List three attitudes and/or perspectives that a person with a primarily external locus of control might have that might hinder his/her success, and why.
3. List three instances where both internal and external loci of control help a person, and why.

A chart might help you organize your response.

INTERNAL EXTERNAL BOTH

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Adaptions: Changed world view image, removed one exercise, edited language to match unit and chapter.

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2.5: Chapter 14: Procrastination

Phyllis Nissila

Following the introduction to procrastination in the Time Management Reality chapter, this chapter provides a deeper dive into understanding procrastination and finding solutions for it.



"Do it now" by Maklay62 is in the Public Domain, CC0

Complete the exercise below to help you solve what is arguably the number one detriment to effective learning at school, home, and/or on the job (aka procrastination).

This personal inventory is a bit different from others you may have taken. It incorporates very little about the usual bad habit suspects when it comes to the "P" word and includes more on the other reasons for such a habit, as suggested in the previous chapter as well as one or two other procrastination-inducers which have cropped up in our now social-media-saturated lives. Perhaps there is, in fact, more to your challenges with procrastination than the assumptions about laziness, disorganization, etc. See what you think. More importantly, see what you can do about it.

EXERCISE 14-1

For each item, circle one. And feel free to add any comments you wish. Sometimes quick-answer exercises like this just don't have enough of YOUR personal response options, but try not to overthink things. This is, after all, a simple snapshot of where your beliefs and feelings are at this moment in time.

1. I admit it. Just like everyone else, I feel that I am lazy when it comes to getting my assignments and/or work done.

- usually
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

2. I am disorganized when it comes to getting my assignments and/or work done.

- usually
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

3. I get confused about what I am supposed to do for the assignment or task.

- usually
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

4. I have a hard time saying "no" to others which puts me behind in my work/studies.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

5. I have this sinking feeling that I will succumb to the usual reasons for procrastinating, no matter what they are.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

6. I just don't think I have the organizational abilities to be able to stop at least some of my procrastinating.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

7. When I was in high school it wasn't a problem studying for most tests the night before.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

8. I work best under pressure, so I think that procrastinating is really good for me.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

9. When what I have to study or accomplish is just not that important to me, I find it more tempting to procrastinate.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

10. I have a hard time talking myself into maintaining a better attitude about *not* procrastinating.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

11. I think I have more time to finish something than I usually do.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

12. It annoys me that some instructors assign so much homework when I have a life outside of school, too! So, I believe that it can be their fault that I have to procrastinate on certain things.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

13. I am very social and spending time with my friends sometimes gets in the way of doing my work.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

14. I can't seem to stay away from social media.

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

15. Here is something (or perhaps more than one) not on this list that also causes me to procrastinate. (Possible issues might include a disability or some kind of learning challenge, homelessness or some other kind of living situation challenge, pregnancy, work hours and responsibilities, and/or personal life stress.)

_____

- most of the time
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

NOTE: This exercise is not graded on responses. The answer key to this personal inventory is to get right into helping the learner start solving some of these causes of procrastination.

As promised above, let's get started with some immediate solutions as well as some perspectives that might, in time, help you adjust your thoughts and feelings regarding procrastination.

EXERCISE 14-2

Instructions:

1. From your responses to the exercise above, select your top five challenges when it comes to procrastinating. Create a chart, such as this, but leave yourself ample space to fill in solutions you find:

CHALLENGE	Solution
1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	

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Adaptions: Removed one exercise, modified an exercise, removed information specific to Lane Community College, opinion article, and some hyperlinks for broader audience purpose.
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2.6: Chapter 15: Words of Wisdom: Can You Listen to Yourself?

Yuki Sasao

Yuki Sasao

It is almost impossible to find time away from information sources like TV, phone, advertisements, or even your friends and family in this modern society. Can you put yourself in a place that has no information at all—you alone, just yourself? If not, you should try—finding this quiet mental space will let you to practice listening to yourself. It is a wonderful way to find out who you truly are. Our society has become so loud that it is very difficult to listen to your own voice and extremely easy to lose it.

I am an international student from a very small town in Japan, and I am the first one among my family members to study abroad. When I told people that I decided to come to the United States to study, every single one of them was shocked and gave me their advice. Some said Americans are very bossy and tend to look down on people. Some said I would not be able to find any jobs there.

It does not matter who you are and what type of circumstances you are in. You will get some comments and advice no matter what you do.

Was the advice people gave me accurate? I'm sorry, but mostly, no. People I met in the United States were nice, and the advice I received really depended on whether or not the person looked down on others. Am I struggling with finding a job? No. My major in accounting provides me more opportunities than I can take. Looking back on the comments from my friends and family, I am very grateful that I was able to see what I truly wanted and stick with my decision.

The reason I could tune out those negative voices was not because I am lucky or intelligent. It is because I listened to myself—my own voice. However, this doesn't mean that I didn't listen to others. I considered what people said to me and I understood them. I just didn't agree with them, which was the most difficult part. In the process of building my own decisions, many pieces of advice actually helped me and I made some changes based on the advice from others combined with my own thoughts.

Why was I able to stick to my decision so tight and live the life I wanted? It's because I talked to myself and asked myself millions of questions.

"What do I want in my future?"

"Do I really need it or just want it?"

"Am I where I wanted to be? Yes? No? Why?"

"Where am I going?"

"What am I doing?"

"What would happen if I do this?"

"Why am I doing it?"

It is difficult, frustrating, and time-consuming to find your raw voice in this very noisy society, but in doing so you will get through life with minimal regret and confidence in who you are and what you are doing. Pull yourself away from the massive amount of information, talk to some people, understand them (never ignore them), and then talk with yourself. This is your life, and you cannot run away from yourself forever. You'd better learn how to listen to yourself and be able to stick with your own thoughts even after accepting what other say.

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2.7: Chapter 16: The Basics of Study Skills

Dave Dillon, Phyllis Nissila

"If you study to remember, you will forget, but, if you study to understand, you will remember."

– Unknown

I often start this section of my class with a question: Why do some students earn good grades and others do not? Answers vary. Students with poor grades have said students with good grades are born book smart. Students with good grades answer that studying and hard work got them there. What do you think?

Everyone likes to earn an A grade. Despite the stigma of being a "nerd," it feels good to receive good grades. Take pride in your preparation, take pride in your studying, and take pride in your accomplishments.

I have also noticed over the years with my classes that students know many things they need to do in order to achieve good grades – they just don't always perform them.

Be Prepared for Each Class

Complete your assigned reading ahead of the deadline. Follow the syllabus so that you'll have familiarity with what the instructor is speaking about. Bring your course syllabus, textbook, notebook and any handouts or other important information for each particular class along with a pen and a positive attitude. Become interested in what the instructor has to say. Be eager to learn. Sleep adequately the night before class and ensure you do not arrive to class on an empty stomach. Many courses, both in person and online, use digital platforms called Learning Management Systems (LMS). Examples of these are Canvas, Blackboard, and Moodle. It is important for students to check their e-mail regularly as well as Announcements or notifications from their instructor through the LMS.

Attend Every Class

Attending each and every class requires a lot of self-discipline and motivation. Doing so will help you remain engaged and involved in course topics, provide insight into what your instructor deems most important, allow you to submit work and receive your graded assignments and give you the opportunity to take quizzes or exams that cannot be made up.

Missing class is a major factor in students dropping courses or receiving poor grades. In addition, students attempting to make up the work from missing class often find it overwhelming. It's challenging to catch up if we get behind.

Sit Front and Center

Author's Story

Full disclosure: I loved to sit in the back of the classroom when I was in college. I felt more comfortable back there. I didn't want to make eye contact with my instructor. I didn't want to be called on. But I learned that if I wanted to give myself the best opportunity to see, hear, understand and learn, then I needed to sit in the front and center. And in order to make sure I sat in the front and center, I needed to arrive to my classes early.

I instruct my students to "Sit wherever you want — sit where you are most comfortable." But I also ask them that if they were to attend a concert for their favorite artist, where would they like to be? It's always right in front of the stage, because the best experience is closest to the band. That's why front-and-center tickets are the most expensive. There are some reasons sitting in the back works for some students. But you run the risk of sitting behind someone you cannot see over. And if you're sitting in the back so that you can send text messages without being seen, work on something else or so that you can disengage (not pay attention without the instructor noticing), then you're sitting in the back for the wrong reasons. Rather than hiding, you want to create the best learning environment, from seeing and hearing perspectives.

Take Notes in Class

Hermann Ebbinghaus, a German psychologist, scientifically studied how people forget in the late 1800's. He is known for his experiments using himself as a subject and tested his memory learning nonsense syllables. One of his famous results, known as the forgetting curve, shows how much information is forgotten quickly after it is learned. Without reviewing, we will forget. Since we forget 42% of the information we take in after only 20 minutes (without review), it is imperative to take notes to remember.

Take Notes When You Are Reading

For the same reason as above, it is helpful to take notes while you are reading to maximize memorization. Sometimes called Active Reading, the goal is to stay focused on the material and to be able to refer back to notes made while reading to improve retention and study efficiency. Don't make the mistake of expecting to remember everything you are reading. Taking notes when reading requires effort and energy. Be willing to do it and you'll reap the benefits later.

Know What the Campus Resources Are and Where They Are, and Use Them

There are many campus resources at your college or university and it's likely that they are underutilized because students don't know they exist, where they are or that most of them are free. Find out what is available to you by checking your school's website for campus resources or student services, or talk to a counselor about what resources may be helpful for you. Check to see where your campus has resources for Counseling, Tutoring, Writing assistance, a Library, Admissions and Records (or Registrar's), Financial Aid, Health Center, Career Center, Disability Support Services, and other support services.

Read and Retain Your Syllabus

In addition to acting as a contract between the instructor and you, the syllabus is also often the source of information for faculty contact information, textbook information, classroom behavior expectations, attendance policy and course objectives. Some students make the mistake of stuffing the syllabus in their backpack when they receive it on the first day of class and never take a look at it again. Those who clearly read it, keep it for reference and review it frequently find themselves more prepared for class. If there is something in the syllabus you don't understand, ask your instructor about it before class, after class or during their office hours.

Place Your Assignments on Your Master Calendar and Create Plans for Completing Them Before They Are Due

Remember the story about the sticky notes? Place all of your assignments for all of your classes with their due dates in your calendar, planner, smart phone or whatever you use for organization. Successful students will also schedule when to start those assignments and have an idea of how long it will take to complete them.

Complete All of Your Assignments

There will be things that you are more interested in doing than your assignments and unexpected life happenings that will come up. Students who earn good grades have the motivation and discipline to complete all of their assignments.

Have Someone Read Your Papers Before You Submit Them

You might be surprised to learn how many students turn in papers with spelling, grammar and punctuation errors that could have been easily corrected by using a spellchecker program or having someone read your paper. Many schools offer writing centers or tutors who will read your paper and give feedback, make suggestions, and help shape ideas. Take advantage of these services if they are offered. Another strategy is to read your paper aloud to yourself. You may catch errors when you read aloud that you might not catch when reading your writing. Remember that it is always the students' responsibility to have papers proofread, not someone else's.

Ask Questions

Many students feel like they are the only one that has a question or the only one that doesn't understand something in class. I encourage you to ask questions during class, especially if your instructor encourages them. If not, make the effort to ask your questions before or after class or during your instructors' office hours.

If you take a class offered online, I suggest asking a lot of questions via the preferred method your instructor recommends. Since the delivery method is different to what most students are used to, I believe it is natural for students in online courses to have more questions. Online students may ask questions to understand the material and to be able to successfully navigate through the course content.

Inside information: I expect students to ask questions for both in person and online courses I teach.

Complete All Assigned Reading at The Time It Is Assigned

College courses have much more assigned reading than what most high school students are accustomed to, and it can take a while to become comfortable with the workload. Some students fall behind early in keeping up with the reading requirements and others fail to read it at all. You will be most prepared for your class and for learning if you complete the reading assigned before your

class. Staying on top of your syllabus and class calendar will help you be aware of your reading assignment deadlines. There is a difference in assigned reading between high school and college. In high school, if a teacher gave a handout to read in class, students would often read it during class to prepare to participate in a class discussion. In college, more reading is assigned with the expectation it will be done outside of the classroom. It is a big adjustment students need to make in order to be successful.

Study Groups

It has been my observation that one of the recent generational differences is that students study less in groups than they used to. My advice for you is to study in the environment that works best for you, but ensure that you try a study group, especially if you are taking a class in a subject in which you are not strong. Study groups can allow for shared resources, new perspectives, answers for questions, faster learning, increased confidence, and increased motivation.

EXERCISE 16-1

PART A: Study Area–Help Tran

Create a plan for Tran, on how to organize a study area in her busy home where she lives with six members of her family.

Tran is a first year college student from Vietnam. She has been in the U.S. with her family for three years and recently passed the English Language Learner classes at the topmost level, so now she looks forward to pursuing her degree in Business Management.

She lives with six other family members, her mother, father, grandmother, and three younger siblings aged 14, 12, and 9. Their home is located right next door to the family restaurant. This makes it convenient for Tran and her parents to work their regular shifts and to fill in if one or the other is ill. Tran is also responsible at times to help her younger siblings with their homework and/or take them to school and other activities if her parents are busy. This usually occurs at peak times for customers in the restaurant. Her grandmother helps out when she can but arthritis flare-ups prevent her from working as much as she would like.

Tran does have a small bedroom to herself, but it also sometimes serves as a storage room for restaurant supplies, mostly paper goods, so it can get crowded.

She is anticipating setting up an effective homework/study area for what she knows will soon become more of an intensive course load.

EXERCISE 16-2

PART B: Study Group–Help The Athletes

Jeb, Andrew, and Nelson are first year students at the university on sports scholarships: Jeb for basketball, Andrew for tennis, and Nelson for track and field. They share an apartment near the college sports complex. They are all taking Math 95 this term and realize that forming a study group as their instructor encouraged everyone to do would really help them, too.

One of the problems in getting a group going is that they are all big fans of ESPN and each one favors a different sport, so the television tends to be on long–and loud.

They also enjoy trying out all the restaurants in this southern city which is famous for having the best barbecue joints in the nation. They have calculated that there are at least seven restaurants nearby they want to get to know.

And then there are those campus parties on Friday and Saturday nights…

Although the men are highly motivated to eventually finish their degrees in business, culinary arts, and economics, they could use some advice on how to form a useful study group–and how to stick with it, particularly before their sports programs kick into high gear.

Review for Exams

Preparation for an exam should begin on the first day of class, not when the exam is announced nor the night before an exam. Review your notes frequently to keep material fresh in your head.

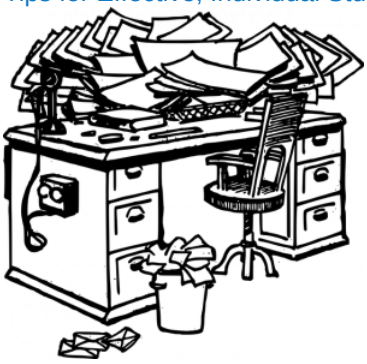
Schedule Time for Studying

It's easy to put off studying if it's not something we schedule. Block specific times and days for studying. Put the times on your calendar. Stick to the schedule.

Study In a Location and At a Time That Is Best for You

Some students study best in the morning and some at night. Some excel at a coffee shop, and others at the library. The place and time in which students often study is usually the most convenient for them. Students often find these convenient places and times may also be full of distractions and thus are not good choices for them to study. It's worth the effort to study at the time and place that will be most productive for you. For most students, it is best to turn off the cell phone and TV and to keep off the Internet (and social media) unless it directly relates to your work.

Tips for Effective, Individual Study Spaces



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Most students more or less take what they can get when it comes to study areas. Schools usually offer a variety of nooks and crannies for students to hunker down and get their assignments done. The school library is a good (and quiet) place. Many common areas elsewhere on campus have tables, chairs, couches, and lounges to accommodate learners. But most students end up doing the majority of their out-of-class work at home.

Home environments may be limited in terms of providing all of the recommended aspects of a good study space, but many of the recommendations can be either implemented or adapted from what a student has on hand or what can be improvised no matter what environment he or she is living in. Elements conducive to a more effective study/homework experience include such things as good lighting, ample supplies, comfortable seating, adequate space, and personalizing the study area to add a touch of inspiration and motivation.

EXERCISE 16-3

PART A

Describe your current study area at home–the good, the bad, the ugly. Be thorough.

PART B

List as many ways you think you can realistically improve, change, (or start over…) your study area. Remember, you might not have the advantage of a whole room, or even a corner of a room, but there are still some changes you can make to create a more effective study environment.

Author's Story

I did most of my studying in college in my dorm room, at my house, outside if it was a nice day or at a coffee shop. However, if there was something I knew I absolutely had to get done – read a chapter, finish a paper or complete my preparation for an exam, I would head to one place: McHenry library. It was what I call my go-to place. I was able to concentrate at a higher level there. I was able to block out all other distractions and just focus on the task at hand. You may be thinking: why didn't he study there all the time? Sometimes it wasn't convenient. And sometimes it wasn't necessary. I was able to become an expert on how well I needed to know something, and how much I could get done if I was at McHenry for a couple of hours. Note that I didn't procrastinate and then try to cram everything in at McHenry. Rather I would place the finishing touches on what had already been studied or worked on.

Don't Do Anything Academically "Half-assed"

Half-assed is defined as poorly or incompetently done.

Think of it this way: You've made the decision to come to college. You're investing time, energy and money into your commitment. Why would you want to half-ass it? Students who miss class, turn in work late or wait until the last minute are half-assing it. Make college a priority and do your best in all of your college work and preparation.

Apply these basic principles and you will be giving yourself the best opportunity to achieve success. And I'll let you in on a little secret: apply this to all aspects not just academics and you'll find success in life!

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Adaptions: Exercises for Study Groups and Tips for Effective, Individual Study Areas added from Lesson 2.5 Study Areas and Study Groups.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Unit 3: College Level Critical Thinking and Reading

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3.1: Chapter 17: Words of Wisdom: Thinking Critically and Creatively

Dr. Andrew Robert Baker

Critical and creative thinking skills are perhaps the most fundamental skills involved in making judgments and solving problems. They are some of the most important skills I have ever developed. I use them everyday and continue to work to improve them both.

The ability to think critically about a matter—to analyze a question, situation, or problem down to its most basic parts—is what helps us evaluate the accuracy and truthfulness of statements, claims, and information we read and hear. It is the sharp knife that, when honed, separates fact from fiction, honesty from lies, and the accurate from the misleading. We all use this skill to one degree or another almost every day. For example, we use critical thinking every day as we consider the latest consumer products and why one particular product is the best among its peers. Is it a quality product because a celebrity endorses it? Because a lot of other people may have used it? Because it is made by one company versus another? Or perhaps because it is made in one country or another? These are questions representative of critical thinking.

The academic setting demands more of us in terms of critical thinking than everyday life. It demands that we evaluate information and analyze a myriad of issues. It is the environment where our critical thinking skills can be the difference between success and failure. In this environment we must consider information in an analytical, critical manner. We must ask questions—What is the source of this information? Is this source an expert one and what makes it so? Are there multiple perspectives to consider on an issue? Do multiple sources agree or disagree on an issue? Does quality research substantiate information or opinion? Do I have *any* personal biases that may affect my consideration of this information? It is only through purposeful, frequent, intentional questioning such as this that we can sharpen our critical thinking skills and improve as students, learners, and researchers. Developing my critical thinking skills over a twenty year period as a student in higher education enabled me to complete a quantitative dissertation, including analyzing research and completing statistical analysis, and earning my Ph.D. in 2014.

While critical thinking analyzes information and roots out the true nature and facets of problems, it is *creative* thinking that drives progress forward when it comes to solving these problems. Exceptional creative thinkers are people that invent new solutions to existing problems that do not rely on past or current solutions. They are the ones who invent solution C when everyone else is still arguing between A and B. Creative thinking skills involve using strategies to clear the mind so that our thoughts and ideas can transcend the current limitations of a problem and allow us to see beyond barriers that prevent new solutions from being found.

Brainstorming is the simplest example of intentional creative thinking that most people have tried at least once. With the quick generation of many ideas at once we can block-out our brain's natural tendency to limit our solution-generating abilities so we can access and combine many possible solutions/thoughts and invent new ones. It is sort of like sprinting through a race's finish line only to find there is new track on the other side and we can keep going, if we choose. As with critical thinking, higher education both demands creative thinking from us and is the perfect place to practice and develop the skill. Everything from word problems in a math class, to opinion or persuasive speeches and papers, call upon our creative thinking skills to generate new solutions and perspectives in response to our professor's demands. Creative thinking skills ask questions such as—What if? Why not? What else is out there? Can I combine perspectives/solutions? What is something no one else has brought-up? What is being forgotten/ignored? What about _____? It is the opening of doors and options that follows problem-identification.

Consider an assignment that required you to compare two different authors on the topic of education and select and defend one as better. Now add to this scenario that your professor clearly prefers one author over the other. While critical thinking can get you as far as identifying the similarities and differences between these authors and evaluating their merits, it is creative thinking that you must use if you wish to challenge your professor's opinion and invent new perspectives on the authors that have not previously been considered.

So, what can we do to develop our critical and creative thinking skills? Although many students may dislike it, group work is an excellent way to develop our thinking skills. Many times I have heard from students their disdain for working in groups based on scheduling, varied levels of commitment to the group or project, and personality conflicts too, of course. True—it's not always easy, but that is why it is so effective. When we work collaboratively on a project or problem we bring many brains to bear on a subject. These different brains will naturally develop varied ways of solving or explaining problems and examining information. To the observant individual we see that this places us in a constant state of back and forth critical/creative thinking modes.

For example, in group work we are simultaneously analyzing information and generating solutions on our own, while challenging other's analyses/ideas and responding to challenges to our own analyses/ideas. This is part of why students tend to avoid group work—it challenges us as thinkers and forces us to analyze others while defending ourselves, which is not something we are used

to or comfortable with as most of our educational experiences involve solo work. Your professors know this—that's why we assign it—to help you grow as students, learners, and thinkers!

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3.2: Chapter 18: Comprehending College Level Reading by Using the Reading Apprenticeship Approach

Phyllis Nissila



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Most students entering college have not yet dealt with the level of difficulty involved in reading–and comprehending–scholarly textbooks and articles. The challenge may even surprise some who have pretty good reading and comprehension skills so far. Other students for whom reading has mostly consisted of social media, texts, forum chat rooms, and emails, find they are intimidated by the sheer *amount* of reading there is in college classes.

Reading Comprehension Definition

Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message. Comprehension is a "creative, multifaceted process" dependent upon four language skills: phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Proficient reading depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. It is also determined by an individual's cognitive development, which is "the construction of thought processes." Some people learn through education or instruction and others through direct experiences.

There are specific traits that determine how successfully an individual will comprehend text, including prior knowledge about the subject, well-developed language, and the ability to make inferences. Having the skill to monitor comprehension is a factor: "Why is this important?" and "Do I need to read the entire text?" are examples. Another trait is the ability to be self-correcting, which allows for solutions to comprehension challenges.

Reading Comprehension Levels

Reading comprehension involves two levels of processing, shallow (low-level) processing and deep (high-level) processing. Deep processing involves semantic processing, which happens when we encode the meaning of a word and relate it to similar words. Shallow processing involves structural and phonemic recognition, the processing of sentence and word structure and their associated sounds. This theory was first identified by Fergus I. M. Craik and Robert S. Lockhart.

Brain Region Activation

Comprehension levels can now be observed through the use of a fMRI, functional magnetic resonance imaging. fMRIs' are used to determine the specific neural pathways of activation across two conditions, narrative-level comprehension and sentence-level comprehension. Images showed that there was less brain region activation during sentence-level comprehension, suggesting a shared reliance with comprehension pathways. The scans also showed an enhanced temporal activation during narrative levels tests indicating this approach activates situation and spatial processing.

History

Initially most comprehension teaching was based on imparting selected techniques that when taken together would allow students to be strategic readers. However, in 40 years of testing these methods never seemed to win support in empirical research. One such strategy for improving reading comprehension is the technique called SQ3R: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review, that was introduced by Francis Pleasant Robinson in his 1946 book *Effective Study*.

Between 1969 and to about 2000 a number of "strategies" were devised for teaching students to employ self-guided methods for improving reading comprehension. In 1969 Anthony Manzo designed and found empirical support for the ReQuest, or Reciprocal

Questioning Procedure, it was the first method to convert emerging theories of social and imitation learning into teaching methods through the use of a talk rotation between students and teacher called cognitive modeling.

Since the turn of the 21st century, comprehension lessons usually consist of students answering teachers' questions, writing responses to questions on their own, or both. The whole group version of this practice also often included "Round-robin reading", wherein teachers called on individual students to read a portion of the text. In the last quarter of the 20th century, evidence accumulated that the read-test methods were more successful assessing rather than teaching comprehension. Instead of using the prior read-test method, research studies have concluded that there are much more effective ways to teach comprehension. Much work has been done in the area of teaching novice readers a bank of "reading strategies," or tools to interpret and analyze text.

Instruction in comprehension strategy use often involves the gradual release of responsibility, wherein teachers initially explain and model strategies. Over time, they give students more and more responsibility for using the strategies until they can use them independently. This technique is generally associated with the idea of self-regulation and reflects social cognitive theory, originally conceptualized by Albert Bandura.

Vocabulary

Reading comprehension and vocabulary are inextricably linked. The ability to decode or identify and pronounce words is self-evidently important, but knowing what the words mean has a major and direct effect on knowing what any specific passage means. Students with a smaller vocabulary than other students comprehend less of what they read and it has been suggested that the most impactful way to improve comprehension is to improve vocabulary.

Most words are learned gradually through a wide variety of environments: television, books, and conversations. Some words are more complex and difficult to learn, such as homonyms, words that have multiple meanings and those with figurative meanings, like idioms, similes, and metaphors.

Three Tier Vocabulary Words

Several theories of vocabulary instruction exist, namely, one focused on intensive instruction of a few high value words, one focused on broad instruction of many useful words, and a third focused on strategies for learning low frequency, context specific vocabulary.

Broad Vocabulary Approach

The method of focusing of broad instruction on many words was developed by Andrew Biemiller who argued that more words would benefit students more, even if the instruction was short and teacher-directed. He suggested that teachers teach a large number of words before reading a book to students, by merely giving short definitions, such as synonyms, and then pointing out the words and their meaning while reading the book to students. The method contrasts with the approach by emphasizing quantity versus quality. There is no evidence to suggest the primacy of either approach.

Morphemic Instruction

Another vocabulary technique, strategies for learning new words, can be further subdivided into instruction on using context and instruction on using morphemes, or meaningful units within words to learn their meaning. Morphemic instruction has been shown to produce positive outcomes for students reading and vocabulary knowledge, but context has proved unreliable as a strategy and it is no longer considered a useful strategy to teach students. This conclusion does not disqualify the value in "learning" morphemic analysis – prefixes, suffixes and roots – but rather suggests that it be imparted incidentally and in context. Accordingly, there are methods designed to achieve this, such as Incidental Morpheme Analysis.

Reciprocal Teaching

In the 1980s Annemarie Sullivan Palincsar and Ann L. Brown developed a technique called reciprocal teaching that taught students to predict, summarize, clarify, and ask questions for sections of a text. The use of strategies like summarizing after each paragraph have come to be seen as effective strategies for building students' comprehension. The idea is that students will develop stronger reading comprehension skills on their own if the teacher gives them explicit mental tools for unpacking text.

Instructional Conversations

"Instructional conversations", or comprehension through discussion, create higher-level thinking opportunities for students by promoting critical and aesthetic thinking about the text. There are several types of questions that a teacher should focus on: remembering; testing understanding; application or solving; invite synthesis or creating; and evaluation and judging. Teachers

should model these types of questions through “think-alouds” before, during, and after reading a text. When a student can relate a passage to an experience, another book, or other facts about the world, they are “making a connection.” Making connections help students understand the author’s purpose and fiction or non-fiction story.

Text Factors

There are factors, that once discerned, make it easier for the reader to understand the written text. One is the genre, like folktales, historical fiction, biographies or poetry. Each genre has its own characteristics for text structure, that once understood help the reader comprehend it. A story is composed of a plot, characters, setting, point of view, and theme. Informational books provide real world knowledge for students and have unique features such as: headings, maps, vocabulary, and an index. Poems are written in different forms and the most commonly used are: rhymed verse, haiku, free verse, and narratives. Poetry uses devices such as: alliteration, repetition, rhyme, metaphors, and similes. “When children are familiar with genres, organizational patterns, and text features in books they’re reading, they’re better able to create those text factors in their own writing.”

The Reading Apprenticeship (RA) Approach to Comprehension

Now to some strategies to help you with some typical college-level comprehension challenges as well as some of your specific challenges identified in the previous exercise.

This lesson focuses on a method called Reading Apprenticeship. It is based on the premise that people who have become expert readers can assist learners by modeling what they have learned to do. As explained in the text, *Reading for Understanding*, *How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms*, “One literacy educator describes the idea of the cognitive apprenticeship in reading by comparing the process of learning to read with that of learning to ride a bike. In both cases, a more proficient other is present to support the beginner, engaging the beginner in the activity and calling attention to often overlooked or hidden strategies.”

This is a strategy that takes a metacognitive approach to comprehension, utilizing various strategies readers may already know they know how to do, then adding more. For example, most readers have learned to make predictions, ask questions concerning meanings (“I wonder about…”), visualize a scene being described, associate the material being read to some other material, and, at the end, summarize the material.

I like to call these our “hard drive” skills. Like a computer hard drive always humming in the background doing its thing behind the scenes, our metacognitive skills have already been assisting us as readers. We just don’t usually talk about what we are doing, for example, “Well, by golly, now I’m predicting what Godzilla will do to the poor villagers in about two scenes from now,” we just automatically predict, especially if we are familiar with characters and plot lines. For another example, “I am now going to visualize this scene in graveyard when Hamlet comes across the deceased court jester’s skull in Act V, Scene 1.” We just *see* it in our mind’s eye.

Now review and affirm important comprehension skills you already possess and complete the exercise below.

Exercise

Go back through the excerpt, above, on reading comprehension and THIS time, write marginal notes where you used any of the comprehension tools listed below:

- predicting
- asking questions of the material such as, “I wonder about,” “Could this mean?”
- visualizing
- connecting this material to something else you have learned
- noting where you think you might need to read something over again for comprehension
- summarizing

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Adaptions: Changed formatting, removed one exercise, removed some hyperlinks, removed two class discussion sentences and related footnotes. “Books” image by Hermann is in the Public Domain, CC0

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3.3: Chapter 19: Getting the Most Out of Your Textbooks

Phyllis Nissila

Reading Textbooks: Front and Back Matter



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Before diving into every line of text in a textbook reading assignment, it is helpful–and saves time–to find out, first, what resources the entire book has to offer you. Then, as those chapter readings are assigned, it helps to first skim read them for the big picture meaning.

The first exercise in this chapter will help you find all the resources in your textbook–and some textbooks have a lot more help in the front matter and back matter of the text than you may realize. I always think of one student who, when given this exercise to use on any textbook he had with him, picked his math book. He was at that time re-taking that math class because he had failed it the term before. As he did the exercise, he realized the back matter of the book included an answer key for half of the problems for every exercise. "Had I known this last term," he said, "I would have passed!" See if you, too, find something useful in your textbook that perhaps you didn't know was there, either.

The Exercises in this chapter cover strategies for skim reading specific chapters and a strategy for getting the most out of graphics included in textbooks.

Exercise

Here is a list of several kinds of resources typically in the front of a textbook, known as "front matter," and a list of typical "back matter" resources. For one of your textbooks, put a check mark next to the front and back matter features it includes, then answer the two questions, below.

Textbook title_____

FRONT MATTER

___Table of Contents

___Preface

___Introduction

___To the Teacher

___To the Student

___Other (list, here): _____

BACK MATTER

___Glossary of Terms

___Index of subjects

___Answer Keys

___Additional Exercises

___Additional Readings

___Tables, graphs, charts

___Maps

___Other (list, here): _____

Answer the following questions:

1. Were there any surprises for you?
2. How can you use the front and back matter in your text to help you with your studies? (3 or 4 sentences)

Skim Reading Textbook Chapters

Before doing a detailed reading of a textbook chapter, get the big picture by following these steps:

- Similar to reading the Table of Contents for the entire book, read the Introduction or Chapter Overview, whichever the textbook features, for the main ideas and how they are divided.
- Read the headings and sub-headings.
- Note the graphics (charts, tables, illustrations, etc.).
- Read the first one or two sentences in the paragraphs (the paragraph topic is sometimes covered in more than one sentence).
- Read the last sentence in each paragraph which might be a paragraph summary.
- Read the summary of the entire chapter, if given.
- Read any sentence with boldface or italicized words or word groups in it (usually either key ideas or technical terms).
- Stop when needed if you come across a complicated idea or topic and take a little more time to skim it until you understand it.
- Skim the study questions, too. They will help you focus on key points.

Exercise

Using the recommendations on how to skim through textbook chapters, do so with a textbook chapter of your choice. When you are finished, close the book and write about the following: write down as many of the main ideas of this chapter as you can remember by skim reading it. Try not to look back. When finished, check your work to make sure you have transcribed the information correctly.

Reading Graphics



"Statistic" by JuralMin is in the Public Domain, CC0

Listed below are various types of data found on most graphics, whether a pie chart, bar graph, line chart, or other type.

The key to comprehending graphics and using them to get more meaning from a textbook chapter or an article, or to answer study questions, is to pay close attention to the typical elements of the graphic. Not every graphic includes all of the elements listed.

1. Title
2. Captions
3. Legend
4. Axis information (vertical information, or "Y" data, and horizontal information, or "X" data)
5. Publication date (important for the most current information)

6. Publisher (important for credibility)
7. Labels
8. Color (used to differentiate and compare data)
9. Size (also used to represent comparisons)
10. Spatial positions (helps for comparing and contrasting)
11. Patterns represented by the content, itself, and
12. Trends that appear more evident when viewing the visual representation of the data.

It is easy to overlook all of the information present in a graphic, so give yourself enough time to note all the elements and their meanings before answering questions about them. This exercise offers some practice.

Exercise

This exercise uses Thematic Maps of the United States Census Bureau.

1. Choose a theme of the many listed that include, for example, Agricultural, Business, Income and Poverty, and Natural Disasters. There are many categories to choose from.
2. Click through to the actual graphic for the information on that theme. For example, click on Natural Disasters, then Hurricane Katrina Resource Maps, then to more options listed from there.
3. Write down the title of the thematic graphic you choose, and list all of the elements of the graphic from the list, above. Not all may be present on the specific type of graphic you choose.
4. Summarize three things you learned about the information presented in this graphic form.

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Adaptions: Changed formatting.

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“Statistic” image by JuralMin is in the Public Domain, CC0

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3.4: Chapter 20: Reading Textbooks

Dave Dillon

"There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island."

– Walt Disney

Practice

If you want to be a better swimmer, you practice. If you want to be a better magician, you practice. If you want to be a better reader, you practice. I encourage you to read. Read, read, read. Read newspapers. Read magazines. Read books. Use your library card (get one if you don't have one). Read blogs. Read tweets. Read Wikipedia articles. Read about history, politics, world leaders, current events, sports, art, music—whatever interests you. Why? Because the more you read, the better reader you become. And because the more you read, the more knowledge you will have. That is an important piece in learning and understanding. When we are learning new information, it's easier to learn if we have some kind of background knowledge about it.

Background Knowledge

In their book, *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning Across the Curriculum*, Vacca and Vacca postulate that a student's prior knowledge is "the single most important resource in learning with texts."[1]

Reading and learning are processes that work together. Students draw on prior knowledge and experiences to make sense of new information. "Research shows that if learners have advanced knowledge of how the information they're about to learn is organized — if they see how the parts relate to the whole before they attempt to start learning the specifics — they're better able to comprehend and retain the material."[2]

For example, you are studying astronomy and the lecture is about Mars. Students with knowledge of what Mars looks like, or how it compares in size to other planets or any information about Mars will help students digest new information and connect it to prior knowledge. The more you read, the more background knowledge you have, and the better you will be able to connect information and learn. "Content overlap between text and knowledge appears to be a necessary condition for learning from text."[3]

There are a lot of recent advances in technology that have made information more accessible to us. Use this resource! If you are going to read a chemistry textbook, experiment with listening or watching a podcast or a YouTube video on the subject you are studying. Ask your instructor if they recommend specific websites for further understanding.

"The greatest gift is a passion for reading. It is cheap, it consoles, it distracts, it excites, it gives you the knowledge of the world and experience of a wide kind. It is a moral illumination."

– Elizabeth Hardwick

The Seven Reading Principles

Read the assigned material. I know this sounds like a no-brainer, but you might be surprised to learn how many students don't read the assigned material. Often, it takes longer to read the material than had been anticipated. Sometimes it is not interesting material to us and we procrastinate reading it. Sometimes we're busy and it is just not a priority. It makes it difficult to learn the information your instructor wants you to learn if you do not read about it before coming to class.

Read it when assigned. This is almost as big of a problem for students as the first principle. You will benefit exponentially from reading assignments when they are assigned (which usually means reading them before the instructor lectures on them). If there is a date for a reading on your syllabus, finish reading it before that date. The background knowledge you will attain from reading the information will help you learn and connect information when your instructor lectures on it, and it will leave you better prepared for class discussions. Further, if your instructor assigns you 70 pages to read by next week, don't wait until the night before to read it all. Break it down into chunks. Try scheduling time each day to read 10 or so pages. It takes discipline and self-control but doing it this way will make understanding and remembering what you read much easier.

Take notes when you read. You may recall Hermann Ebbinghaus' research from a previous chapter. He determined that 42% of information we take in is lost after only 20 minutes without review. For the same reasons that it's important to take notes during lectures, it's important to take notes when you are reading. Your notes will help you concentrate, remember and review.

Relate the information to you. We remember information that we deem is important. The strategy then is to make what you are studying important to you. Find a way to directly relate what you are studying to something in your life. Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is not. But if your attitude is "I will never use this information" and "it's not important," chances are good that you will not remember it.

Read with a dictionary or use an online dictionary. Especially with information that is new to us, we may not always recognize all the words in a textbook or their meanings. If you read without a dictionary and you don't know what a word means, you probably still won't know what it means when you finish reading. Students who read with a dictionary (or who look the word up online) expand their vocabulary and have a better understanding of the text. Take the time to look up words you do not know. Another strategy is to try to determine definitions of unknown words by context, thus eliminating the interruption to look up words.

Ask a classmate or instructor when you have questions or if there are concepts you do not understand. Visiting an instructor's office hours is one of the most underutilized college resources. I think some students are shy about going, and I understand that, but ultimately, it's your experience, and it's up to you if you want to make the most of it. If you go, you will get answers to your questions; at the same time, you'll demonstrate to your instructor that their course is important to you. Find out when your professor's office hours are (they are often listed in the syllabus), ask before or after class or e-mail your professor to find out. Be polite and respectful.

Read it again. Some students will benefit from reading the material a second or third time as it allows them to better understand the material. The students who understand the material the best usually score the highest on exams. It may be especially helpful to reread the chapter just after the instructor has lectured on it.

Strategies To Think About When You Open Your Textbook

Preview: Look at what you are reading and how it is connected with other areas of the class. How does it connect with the lecture? How does it connect with the course description? How does it connect with the syllabus or with a specific assignment? What piece of the puzzle are you looking at and how does it fit into the whole picture? If your textbook has a chapter summary, reading it first may help you preview and understand what you are going to be reading.

Headings and designated words: Pay close attention to section headings and subheadings, and boldface, underlined or italicized words and sentences. There is a reason why these are different than regular text. The author feels they are more important and so should you.

Highlighting: Highlighting is not recommended because there is not evidence supporting it helps students with reading comprehension or higher test scores.[4]

Pace: One of the biggest challenges I see students have with reading is accurately assessing how long it will take to read what is assigned. In many cases, it's important to break the information up in chunks rather than to try and read it all at once. If you procrastinate and leave it until the day before it needs to be read, and then find out it will take you longer than you anticipate, it causes problems. One strategy that works well for many students is to break the information up equally per day and adjust accordingly if it takes longer than you had thought. Accurately estimating how much time it will take to practice the seven reading principles applied to your reading assignments is a skill that takes practice.

"Drink Deeply from Good Books"

– John Wooden

It's Not All Equal

Keep in mind that the best students develop reading skills that are different for different subjects. The main question you want to ask yourself is: Who are you reading for? And what are the questions that drive the discipline? We read different things for different purposes. Reading texts, blogs, leisure books and textbooks are all different experiences, and we read them with different mindsets and different strategies. The same is true for textbooks in different areas. Reading a mathematics textbook is going to be different than reading a history textbook, a psychology textbook, a Spanish textbook or a criminal justice textbook. Further, students may be assigned to read scientific journals or academic articles often housed in college libraries' online databases. Scholarly articles require a different kind of reading and librarians are a resource for how to find and read this kind of information. Applying the principles in this chapter will help with your reading comprehension, but it's important to remember that you will need to develop specific reading skills most helpful to the particular subject you are studying.

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1. Richard T. Vacca and Jo Anne L. Vacca, *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum*, 6th ed. (Menlo Park, CA: Longman, 1999). ↵
2. Joe Cuseo, Viki Fecas and Aaron Thompson, *Thriving in College AND Beyond: Research-Based Strategies for Academic Success and Personal Development*, (Dubuque, IA: Kendal Hunt Publishing, 2010), 115. ↵
3. W. Kintsch, "Text Comprehension, Memory, and Learning," *American Psychologist* 49 no. 4 (1994): 294-303, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.49.4.294. ↵
4. Lucy Cui, "MythBusters: Highlighting Helps Me Study," Psychology in Action, accessed April 27, 2018, https://www.psychologyinaction.org/psychology-in-action-1/2018/1/8/mythbusters-highlighting-helps-me-study. ↵

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3.5: Chapter 21: Context Clues and Close Reading for Literature

Phyllis Nissila

Context Clues

Besides clues to help you determine the pattern or genre of a reading selection, there are clues to help you figure out the meaning of specific words that are unfamiliar to you. Here are the five most common:

1. **Definition/Explanation Clues**: sometimes the meaning of a word or phrase is given right after its use.
   Example: Taxidermy, the art of preparing, stuffing, and mounting the skins of animals (especially vertebrates) for display or for other sources of study, is popular among museum curators.
2. **Restatement/Synonym Clues**: sometimes a word is presented in a simpler way.
   Example: Stuffing dead animals has been a dream of Stedman Nimblebody, author of *Taxidermy Through the Ages*, ever since his pet snake died when Steddie was six years old. He still misses Mr. Scaly Face.
3. **Contrast/Antonym Clues**: sometimes the meaning of a word is clarified by presenting a word or phrase opposite of its meaning.
   Example: Little Steddie wanted to visit the Taxidermy Museum but the rest of the family preferred a trip to the Zoo to see live animals.
4. **Inference/General Context Clues**: sometimes the meaning of a word or phrase is in the surrounding sentences, or must be inferred or implied by the general meaning of a selection.
   Example: When Steddie finally got the chance to visit the Taxidermy Museum, he was very excited. He even found a stuffed snake that looked exactly like Mr. Scaly Face! “Just think,” he exclaimed to his parents, “If Mr. Scaly Face was stuffed, I could still tease the cat and the dog with him!”
5. **Punctuation**: the correct use of punctuation helps a reader get the meaning of a term, phrase, or thought. Likewise, incorrectly placed or missing punctuation sometimes gives an entirely different and incorrect meaning across.
   Example:
   Missing punctuation: Is it time to eat Grandma?
   Corrected: Is it time to eat, Grandma?

Exercise

There are many examples online of punctuation errors in signs that change the meaning. Create a chart such as the one below for 5 of the signs that you really like.

WHAT THE SIGN SAYS WHAT THE SIGN REALLY MEANS

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Close Reading



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In addition to using reading comprehension skills such as predicting, visualizing, “talking to the text,” skimming a textbook before reading, and noting context clues, another strategy called “close reading” is helpful. This is popular with literature professors; however, the skills involved in close reading are applicable to any complex reading assignment.

Since this kind of comprehension starts with knowing nothing about the elements of a story, novel, poem, or essay, I stand with my arms spread wide.

I then discuss, briefly, each element of a work starting with the title as a place to begin comprehension, while slowly moving my arms toward one another, a few inches per element.

Titles, for starters, particularly of non-fiction works, usually tell you precisely what the main idea, or thesis, is. For example, a book about “The History of the Roman Empire” usually gives you just that–the history of the Roman Empire.

This is not usually true, however, for works of fiction, for which inference is the key to comprehension. For example, “Story of an Hour,” by Kate Chopin, while it might seem to be something about time, also suggests it is about something other than a clock ticking away seconds and minutes, and indeed it is.

I next add the author, as this might aid comprehension. For example, most students are familiar with Stephen King, who writes in the horror genre. Knowing this element brings the arms in a bit closer as the reader will know to anticipate (and predict) a horror story with a lot of plot twists and turns in some horrible ways. Prediction has begun.

Next, I briefly discuss how knowing about the remaining elements – plot, characters, and setting – help the reader close in on meaning enough to be able to discuss the theme or themes of the work with reasonable evidence to support one’s conclusion.

This visual of the arms getting closer together can continue through a discussion of close reading of small passages, individual sentences, and even specific words. Each level of careful attention and thought helps a reader “read between the lines” when meaning is not overtly stated, when themes are inferred rather than explained outright.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Unit 4: Listening and Note-Taking

4.1: Chapter 22: Preparation for Note-Taking
4.2: Chapter 23: Taking Notes in Class

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4.1: Chapter 22: Preparation for Note-Taking

Phyllis Nissila

Non-Verbal Communication

When we think about listening we think about, well, hearing sounds via the ears. However, when it comes to listening in order to pick up key points for note-taking, it takes more than just hearing. In this case, it takes a "critical ear," that is, absorbing key points by noticing not only the words spoken, but also by noting tones, volume, and even the body language that goes along. Additionally, being an active listener increases a note-taker's chances of getting the information needed. Exercise 1 illustrates common non-verbal communication.

Exercise

Part A

List as many non-verbal, emotional cues as you can by studying the faces in the pictures below.



"Universal Emotions" by Icerko Lýdia is licensed under CC BY 3.0

Part B

The image below illustrates non-verbal body language. Describe a few poses or body movements one or more of your teachers now, or from the past, takes or has taken that communicates: pay closer attention. It might be from these examples, or something quite different. For example, an instructor might move close to the front row and fold his/her arms to indicate that what he or she will be saying is of a more serious nature. For another example, if he or she moves toward the white board to write something, it's probably key information.



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Active Listening

In previous units, we covered ways that students can actively engage in the learning process in order to get the most out of their education. There are ways to actively listen as well, in order to get the most out of lectures and, more importantly, take all of the notes that might be required. The video in the next exercise covers several active listening strategies along with why we sometimes have difficulty listening.

Exercise

Part A

Watch the TED talk below and answer the following questions:

Video: *5 Ways to Listen Better*, Julian Treasure at TED Global 2011



1. What 3 types of listening does the speaker discuss?
2. How and why have we been “losing our ability to listen,” as the speaker suggests? He cites 5 ways.
3. What are the 5 tools we can use to listen better?

Part B

Taking into consideration all of the activities in the exercises above, write a one-page (250-300 words) reflection on how you can use the information on non-verbal and listening skills to enhance both your ability to pay attention to lectures and to take better notes on them.

Perhaps the most useful learning tools of all are notes taken from both lectures and course materials. By annotating for key information, then condensing it, students create personalized summaries helpful for studying.

Often, students are unsure about what constitutes "key information." Here is a list of items to highlight or annotate for in textbooks and a list of items to listen for in lectures.

Key Information in Textbooks

The following elements of a textbook chapter are especially important in helping you discern key information:

- Introductions
- Summaries
- Study questions
- Topic sentences (as the speaker in the video on "Skim Reading," exercise 3.2, also in Lesson 3.2 notes: sometimes the reader has to read the first two or even three sentences of a paragraph or section to get the entire main topic).
- Anything that is bolded, or in some other way set off from the default print size and style. Sub-topic titles are good examples of this.
- "Side bars," which are boxes of related information. These might include statistics, brief biographies of authors or persons of note related to the chapter content, price points on brochures for businesses, charts, graphs, photographs, and/or illustrations. They are typically a different color or in some other way set off for attention but not as the focal point of the text. Pay attention to the captions or legends that might accompany graphics. In this e-text, the exercises are set apart in side bars.
- Glossary terms that may be incorporated in the margins or otherwise set apart.
- Some textbooks include outlines of each chapter's main points in the introductory section.

Key Information in Lectures

As the lecturer, live or video, presents the material, there are two types of key information cues to be aware of.

NONVERBAL CUES

A speaker will often have unique facial and body nonverbal cues that alert you to several things, as you learn to "read" your professor:

- Stances or movements that alert you to when he/she will shift to a different topic or subtopic.
- Other cues that alert you to when the information is of special significance (including verbal clues, below).

VERBAL CLUES

- Pay attention to when the speaker uses any of the transition clues used in reading comprehension.
- Many speakers also announce when they are adding information or changing topics in various other ways.

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Adaptions: Changed formatting, removed emoticon image, embedded Ted Talk video, slight edits for consistency, combined Lessons 4.1 and 4.2, retitled chapter.

Julian Treasure: 5 Ways to Listen Better. Authored by TED.com Located at: https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_listen_better?language=en#t-440931
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4.2: Chapter 23: Taking Notes in Class

Dave Dillon

"He listens well who takes notes."

– Dante Alighieri

Take Notes To Remember

If for no other reason, you should take notes during class so that you do not forget valuable and important information. Despite living with incredible search engines on computers and smart phones that give us a plethora of information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, students do not have the ability to access those during exams. Instructors want to know what you know not what Google knows. We've become accustomed to searching for information on demand to find what we need when we need it. The consequence is that we don't often commit information to memory because we know it will be there tomorrow if we wish to search for it again. This causes challenges with preparation for exams as what we're tested on is in our brain rather than information we can search for. Thus, there is an importance of taking notes. "Note-taking facilitates both recall of factual material and the synthesis and application of new knowledge, particularly when notes are reviewed prior to exams."[1]

As you may recall from The Basics of Study Skills Chapter, Hermann Ebbinghaus studied the rate of forgetting and formulated his "forgetting curve" theory. Perform a web search for "Ebbinghaus forgetting curve."

The curve shows that after one month, only 20 percent of information is retained after initial memorization. Without review, 47 percent of learned information is lost after only 20 minutes. After one day, 62 percent of learned information is lost without review.

In order to try to retain information long term, we must move it from our short-term memory to our long-term memory. One of the best ways to do that is through repetition. The more we review information, and the sooner we review once we initially learn it, the more reinforced that information is in our long-term memory.

The first step in being able to review is to take notes when you are originally learning the information. Students who do not take notes in class in the first place will not be able to recall all of the information covered in order to best review.

Taking notes during lectures is a skill, just like riding a bike. If you have never taken notes while someone else is speaking before, it's important to know that you will not be an expert at it right away. It is challenging to listen to someone speak and then make a note about what they said, while at the same time continuing to listen to their next thought.

When learning to ride a bike, everyone is going to fall. With practice and concentration, we gain confidence and improve our skill. The more we practice, the better we get. In his book Outliers, Malcolm Gladwell refers to the "10,000-hour rule." Based on research by Anders Ericsson, the rule states that 10,000 hours of dedicated practice in your particular field will allow for the greatest potential of mastery. I do not expect you to practice taking notes for 10,000 hours, but the point is that practice, just like many things, is necessary to become more skilled[2].

Some instructors will give you cues to let you know something is important. If you hear or see one of these cues, it's something you should write down. This might include an instructor saying, "this is important," or "this will be covered on the exam." If you notice an instructor giving multiple examples, repeating information or spending a lot of time with one idea, these may be cues. Writing on the board or presenting a handout or visual information may also be a cue.

There are many different ways to take notes during lectures and I encourage you to find the way that works best for you. Different systems work best for different people. Experiment in different ways to find the most success.

Tips for Taking Notes During the Lecture

Arrive early and find a good seat. Seats in the front and center are best for being able to see and hear information. A seat at the 50-yard line for the Super Bowl is more expensive for a reason: it gives the spectator the greatest experience.

Do not try to write down everything the instructor talks about. It's impossible and inefficient. Instead, try to distinguish between the most important topics and ideas and write those down. This is also a skill that students can improve upon. You may wish to ask your instructor during office hours if you have identified the main topics in your notes, or compare your notes to one of your classmates.

Use shorthand and/or abbreviations. So long as you will be able to decipher what you are writing, the least amount of pen or pencil strokes, the better. It will free you up so you can pay more attention to the lecture and help you be able to determine what is most important.

Write down what your instructor writes. Anything on a dry erase board, chalkboard, overhead projector and in some cases in presentations; these are cues for important information.

Leave space to add information to your notes. You can use this space during or after lectures to elaborate on ideas.

Do not write in complete sentences. Do not worry about spelling or punctuation. Getting the important information, concepts and main ideas is much more important. You can always revise your notes later and correct spelling.

Often, the most important information is delivered at the beginning and/or the end of a lecture. Many students arrive late or pack up their belongings and mentally check out a few minutes before the lecture ends. They are missing out on the opportunity to write down valuable information. Keep taking notes until the lecture is complete.

The Cornell System

One way of taking notes in class is using the Cornell System. Created in the 1950s by Walter Pauk at Cornell University, the Cornell System is still widely used today. Perform a web search for “Cornell note taking method.”

The note-taking area is for you to use to record notes during lectures.

Students use the column on the left to create questions after the lecture has ended. The questions are based on the material covered. Think of it as a way to quiz yourself. The notes you took should answer the questions you create.

Tips for after the lecture

Consolidate notes as soon as possible after the lecture has ended. Identify the main ideas and underline or highlight them.

Test yourself by looking only at the questions on the left. If you can provide most of the information on the notes side without looking at it, you’re in good shape. If you cannot, keep studying until you improve your retention. Review periodically as needed to keep the information fresh in your mind.

Students use the bottom area for summarizing information. Practice summarizing information — it’s a great study skill. It allows you to determine how information fits together. It should be written in your own words (don’t use the chapter summary in the textbook to write your summary, but check the chapter summary after you write yours for accuracy).

The Outline Method

Another way to take notes is the outline method. Students use an outline to show the relationship between ideas in the lecture. Outlines can help students separate main ideas from supporting details and show how one topic connects to another.

Perform a web search for “outline note taking method” to see what they look like.

Mind Maps

Visual learners may want to experiment with mind maps (also called clustering). Invented by Tony Buzan in the 1960s, it’s another way of organizing information during lectures. Start with a central idea in the center of the paper (landscape is recommended). Using branches (like a tree), supporting ideas can supplement the main idea. Recall everything you can as the lecture is happening. Reorganization can be done later. Perform a web search for mind maps for note-taking.

Review

The most important aspect of reviewing your lecture notes is when your review takes place in relation to when your notes were taken. For maximum efficiency and retention of memory, it’s best to review within 20 minutes of when the lecture ends. For this reason, I do not advise students to take back-to-back classes without 30 minutes in between. It is important to have adequate review time and to give your brain a break. Reviewing shortly after the lecture will allow you to best highlight or underline main points as well as fill in any missing portions of your notes. Students who take lecture notes on a Monday and then review them for the first time a week later often have challenges recalling information that help make the notes coherent.

If you wish to go “above and beyond,” you may consider discussing your notes in a study group with your classmates, which can give you a different perspective on main points and deepen your understanding of the material. You may also want to make flashcards for yourself with vocabulary terms, formulas, important dates, people, places, etc.

The Big Picture

Keep in mind that students who know what their instructor is going to lecture on before the lecture are at an advantage. Why? Because the more they understand about what the instructor will be talking about, the easier it is to take notes. How? Take a look at the syllabus before the lecture. It won't take much time but it can make a world of difference. You will also be more prepared and be able to see important connections if you read your assigned reading before the lecture. It's not easy to do, but students that do it will be rewarded. If I have read information assigned before the lecture and know what the lecture will be about, I have best prepared myself for taking notes during the lecture and given myself the greatest potential for understanding relationships between the reading material and the lecture. Online flash cards are another option. Students can make them for free and test themselves online or on their phone.

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1. Deborah DeZure, Matthew Kaplan, and Martha A. Deerman, "Research on Student Notetaking: Implications for Faculty and Graduate Student Instructors," 2001, http://www.math.lsa.umich.edu/~krasny/math156_crlt.pdf. ↵
2. Anders Ericsson et al., "The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance," *Psychological Review*, (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1993), 393-394. ↵

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Unit 5: Memory Principles and Techniques

5.1: Chapter 24: Memory

5.2: Chapter 25: Concentration and Distraction

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5.1: Chapter 24: Memory

Phyllis Nissila and Dave Dillon

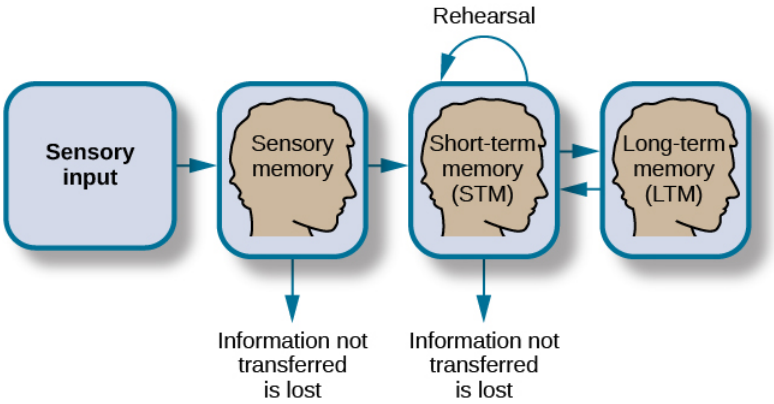
"If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my ax."

– Abraham Lincoln

An Information Processing Model

Once information has been encoded, we have to retain it. Our brains take the encoded information and place it in storage. Storage is the creation of a permanent record of information.

In order for a memory to go into storage (i.e., long-term memory), it has to pass through three distinct stages: Sensory Memory, Short-Term Memory, and finally Long-Term Memory. These stages were first proposed by Richard Atkinson and Richard Shiffrin (1968). Their model of human memory is based on the belief that we process memories in the same way that a computer processes information.



"Atkinson-Shiffrin model of memory" by OpenStax is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Learning, Remembering, and Retrieving Information Is Important for Academic Success

The first thing our brains do is to take in information from our senses (what we see, hear, taste, touch and smell). In many classroom and homework settings, we primarily use hearing for lectures and seeing for reading textbooks. Information we perceive from our senses is stored in what we call the short-term memory.

It is useful to then be able to do multiple things with information in the short-term memory. We want to: 1) decide if that information is important; 2) for the information that is important, be able to save the information in our brain on a longer-term basis —this storage is called the long-term memory; 3) retrieve that information when we need to. Exams often measure how effectively the student can retrieve "important information."

In some classes and with some textbooks it is easy to determine information important to memorize. In other courses with other textbooks, that process may be more difficult. Your instructor can be a valuable resource to assist with determining the information that needs to be memorized. Once the important information is identified, it is helpful to organize it in a way that will help you best understand.

Author's Story

I do not have a great memory. I write a lot of things down to help me remember. And I have always had to work hard to memorize and study for exams.

In my high school and college years I spent a lot of time cramming the night before the exam. In retrospect, I believe this was partly due to procrastination, partly due to lack of interest in the material, and partly—subconsciously—wanting to perform well on the exam without putting a lot of time into preparation (an attempt to get the maximum of the minimum). Cramming allowed me to store a lot of information in my short-term memory. I would regurgitate information on the exam and then forget nearly all of it shortly thereafter. It is not how learning and education were intended.

My performance on the exams were satisfactory, but I could've done much better had I adequately prepared and been disciplined enough to review more frequently. Doing so would have allowed much of that information to enter my long-term memory, which would have had many benefits. Students often believe the information they are learning in classes that are required for general education have little to do with what is needed for them in their future career. However, skills like critical thinking, communication (both oral and written), and literacy are often developed from these courses and are extremely beneficial for the student. Sometimes these skills are acquired without the student realizing it! This makes for a better student, better person and better member of society.

In addition, I would love to be able to recall information from some classes I took in high school and college, but cannot because the information never entered my long-term memory. I did some of it the wrong way and hope that you do not make the same mistake. Students who take in information by gradually reviewing and memorizing over a longer period of time and can store more information in their long-term memory will be able to access it long after the course they are taking is over.

Moving Information from the Short-term Memory To the Long-term Memory

This is something that takes a lot of time: there is no shortcut for it. Students who skip putting in the time and work often end up cramming at the end.

Preview the information you are trying to memorize. The more familiar you are with what you are learning, the better. Create acronyms like SCUBA for memorizing "self-contained underwater breathing apparatus." Organizing information in this way can be helpful because it is not as difficult to memorize the acronym, and with practice and repetition, the acronym can trigger the brain to recall the entire piece of information.

Flash cards are a valuable tool for memorization because they allow students to be able to test themselves. They are convenient to bring with you anywhere, and can be used effectively whether a student has one minute or an hour.

Once information is memorized, regardless of when the exam is, the last step is to apply the information. Ask yourself: In what real world scenarios could you apply this information? And for mastery, try to teach the information to someone else.

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5.2: Chapter 25: Concentration and Distraction

Dave Dillon

concentration. n. exclusive attention to one object.

– dictionary.com

Where To Study

In order to study successfully, students must learn to concentrate at a high level. It is important to know where we study best. Some students study well at home. Other students study well at a library or coffee shop. There is no best for all. Your best environment is based on you and your preferences.

Watch this selective attention test video and see if you come up with the correct answer.

Video: *Selective Attention Test,* Daniel Simmons



When To Study

It is also important to know when we study best. Many students are most efficient studying in the morning when they are fresh. Studying late in the day may be the only option for some students but often we are tired at the end of the day, and this can have a major effect on study efficiency. Figuring out where and when we study best may take some time. And even when we find the best place and time to study, we also have to be aware of distractions, which can be internal or external.

Internal Distractions

An internal distraction includes thought processes, self-esteem, or confidence. It's something that interrupts you from what you're doing. It might also be a computer or cell phone – something that is controlled by you. Many students intend to study but easily get distracted with surfing the Internet, checking social media, watching YouTube videos, or receiving a text message. If you don't absolutely need your computer or cell phone for your study, it is my suggestion to not bring them or turn them off. If you do study with your phone or computer, it is best to have all potential alerts turned off. Notifications of text messages, emails, or social media updates all can serve as a major distraction to your studying.

External Distractions

External distractions might be your roommates, family or friends. Even if they are supportive of your study, it may be challenging to concentrate when they are around. Saying "no" is an important skill that may need to be utilized in order for you to have your study time without interruption.

Keep in mind that it may take 20 minutes to reach a high level of concentration. When we are interrupted, it takes on average another 23 minutes to get back to the level of concentration that we were at prior to the disruption.[1] If a student is studying for an hour and is interrupted twice, the consequence to study efficiency is devastating.

One way to try to monitor how many interruptions you incur and how well you maintain your level of concentration is to keep track of it. Take a blank piece of paper when you are studying and mark down each time you were interrupted.

Over time, with practice, you should be able to decrease the number of interruptions you incur. This will allow you to be most efficient when studying.

I always find it odd to think that before mobile phones, we invented the answering machine. Its purpose was to allow us to receive a message when someone called if we were not home or it was not convenient to answer the phone at the time. In contrast, text messaging is designed in most cases (user's notification preferences) to interrupt us and alert us immediately that someone has contacted us. Whatever your opinion may be on this, my point is to tread cautiously when using technology that may be addicting and may frequently (consciously or unconsciously) distract you from studying and concentrating.

Author's Story

When I was a first-year student in college, I lived in the dormitories and enjoyed socializing with my friends. I didn't want to miss out on any social interaction opportunities, so I waited to study after everyone else was asleep. I regularly studied from midnight to two or three in the morning. I would not ordinarily suggest this for most students. It worked for me because I did not have any early morning classes or work. I took my classes in the late morning and afternoon, worked in the afternoon, and attended basketball practices in the afternoon or early evening. I was able to stay awake and concentrate well at that age and also be able to get adequate sleep. However, if I was studying for an exam or doing the heavy work on a paper, I would do it in the morning because that was when I concentrated the best. Now, almost two decades after college, as someone who works full time and takes care of two young children, there is no way I could stay up that late and be productive on a regular basis. It's important to find out what works best for you, and it's also important to understand how the environment you are in effects your concentration ability.

Multitasking

Millennials are considered extraordinary multitaskers, though brain science tells us that multitasking is a myth[2]. More likely, they are apt to switch tasks quickly enough to appear to be doing them simultaneously. When it comes to heavy media multitasking, studies show greater vulnerability to interference, leading to decreased performance[3].

My classes have had lively discussions on multitasking. Most of the time, I am able to convince students that multitasking is not a good idea for them. (There are always a few stubborn hold outs). Trying to do multiple things at the same time may seem like it may allow you to accomplish more but when studying it often leads to accomplishing less. There are things that I think can be successfully multitasked. I could throw clothes in the washer and make a snack, then eat and read a book at the same time while waiting for the clothes to be washed. But if I try to text, check e-mail, watch TV and look at my Twitter timeline all while studying, it won't work well.

A study from Carnegie Mellon University found that driving while listening to a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent[4]. Why would anyone choose to use less brain activity when they study?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Unit 6: Test-Taking Strategies

6.1: Chapter 26: Pre- Mid- and Post-Test-Taking Strategies
6.2: Chapter 27: Test-Taking Strategy Specifics

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6.1: Chapter 26: Pre- Mid- and Post-Test-Taking Strategies

Phyllis Nissila

Pre-Test Strategies



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Q: When should you start preparing for the first test? Circle…

1. The night before.
2. The week prior.
3. The first day of classes.

If you answered “3. The first day of classes,” you are correct. If you circled all three, you are also correct. Preparing to pass tests is something that begins when learning begins and continues all the way through to the final exam.

Many students, however, don’t start thinking about test taking, whether weekly exams, mid-terms, or finals, until the day before when they engage in an all-nighter, or cramming. From the previous unit on memory, you might recall that the brain can only process an average of 5-7 new pieces of information at a time. Additionally, unless memory devices are used to aid memory and to cement information into long term memory (or at least until the test is over tomorrow!) chances are slim that students who cram will effectively learn and remember the information.

Additionally, a lot of students are unaware of the many strategies available to help with the test-taking experience before, during, and after. For starters, take a look at what has helped you so far.

Exercise

Pre-Test Taking Strategies

Part A:

Put a check mark next to the pre-test strategies you already employ.

____ Organize your notebook and other class materials the first week of classes.

____ Maintain your organized materials throughout the term.

____ Take notes on key points from lectures and other materials.

____ Make sure you understand the information as you go along.

____ Access your instructor’s help and the help of a study group, as needed.

____ Organize a study group, if desired.

____ Create study tools such as flashcards, graphic organizers, etc. as study aids.

____ Complete all homework assignments on time.

____ Review likely test items several times beforehand.

____ Ask your instructor what items are likely to be covered on the test.

____ Ask your instructor if she or he can provide a study guide or practice test.

____ Ask your instructor if he/she gives partial credit for test items such as essays.

____ Maintain an active learner attitude.

____ Schedule extra study time in the days just prior to the test.

____ Gather all notes, handouts, and other materials needed before studying.

____ Review all notes, handouts, and other materials.

____ Organize your study area for maximum concentration and efficiency.

____ Create and use mnemonic devices to aid memory.

____ Put key terms, formulas, etc., on a single study sheet that can be quickly reviewed.

____ Schedule study times short enough (1-2 hours) so you do not get burned out.

____ Get plenty of sleep the night before.

____ Set a back-up alarm in case the first alarm doesn't sound or you sleep through it.

____ Have a good breakfast with complex carbs and protein to see you through.

____ Show up 5-10 minutes early to get completely settled before the test begins.

____ Use the restroom beforehand to minimize distractions.

Part B

By reviewing the pre-test strategies, above, you have likely discovered new ideas to add to what you already use. Make a list of them.

Mid-Test Strategies

Here is a list of the most common–and useful–strategies to survive this ubiquitous college experience.

- Scan the test, first, to get the big picture of how many test items there are, what types there are (multiple choice, matching, essay, etc.), and the point values of each item or group of items.
- Determine which way you want to approach the test: Some students start with the easy questions first, that is, the ones they immediately know the answers to, saving the difficult ones for later, knowing they can spend the remaining time on them. Some students begin with the biggest-point items first, to make sure they get the most points.
- Determine a schedule that takes into consideration how long you have to test, and the types of questions on the test. Essay questions, for example, will require more time than multiple choice, or matching questions.
- Keep your eye on the clock.
- If you can mark on the test, put a check mark next to items you are not sure of just yet. It is easy to go back and find them to answer later on. You might just find help in other test questions covering similar information.
- Sit where you are most comfortable. That said, sitting near the front has a couple of advantages: You may be less distracted by other students. If a classmate comes up with a question for the instructor and there is an important clarification given, you will be better able to hear it and apply it, if needed.
- Wear ear plugs, if noise distracts you.
- You do NOT have to start with #1! It you are unsure of it, mark it to come back to later on.
- Bring water…this helps calm the nerves, for one, and water is also needed for optimum brain function.
- If permitted, get up and stretch (or stretch in your chair) from time to time to relieve tension and assist the blood to the brain!
- Remember to employ strategies to reduce test-taking anxiety (covered in the next lesson)

If despite all of your best efforts to prepare for a test you just cannot remember the answer to a given item for multiple choice, matching, and/or true/false questions, employ one or more of the following educated guessing (also known as "educated selection") techniques. By using these techniques, you have a *better* chance of selecting the correct answer. It is usually best to avoid selecting an extreme or all-inclusive answer (also known as 100% modifiers) such as "always," and "never". Choose, instead, words such as "usually," "sometimes," etc. (also known as in-between modifiers). If the answers are numbers, choose one of the middle numbers. If you have options such as "all of the above," or "both A and B," make sure each item is true before selecting those options. Choose the longest, or most inclusive, answer. Make sure to match the grammar of question and answer. For example, if the question indicates a plural answer, look for the plural answer. Regarding matching tests: count both sides to be matched. If there are more questions than answers, ask if you can use an answer more than once. Pay close attention to items that ask you to choose the "best" answer. This means one answer is better or more inclusive than a similar answer. Read all of the response options.

Post-Test Strategies

In addition to sighing that big sigh of relief, here are a few suggestions to help with future tests.

- If you don't understand why you did not get an item right, ask the instructor. This is especially useful for quizzes that contain information that may be incorporated into more inclusive exams such as mid-terms and finals.
- Analyze your results to help you in the future. For example, see if most of your incorrect answers were small things such as failing to include the last step in a math item, or neglecting to double-check for simple errors in a short-answer or essay item. See where in the test you made the most errors: beginning, middle, or end. Also analyze which type of questions, true/false, multiple choice, essay, etc. And which topics were missed. This will help you pay closer attention to those sections in the future.

Exercise

Write a letter of advice to Chen incorporating 10 test-taking tips and strategies you think will help him.

Chen believes he is good at organization, and he usually is–for about the first two weeks of classes. He then becomes overwhelmed with all of the handouts and materials and tends to start slipping in the organization department. When it comes to tests, he worries that his notes might not cover all of the right topics and that he will not be able to remember all of the key terms and points–especially for his math class. During tests, he sometimes gets stuck on an item and tends to spend too much time there. He also sometimes changes answers but finds out later that his original selection was correct. Chen is also easily distracted by other students and noises which makes it hard for him to concentrate sometimes, and, unfortunately, he does admit to occasionally "cramming" the night before.

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6.2: Chapter 27: Test-Taking Strategy Specifics

Dave Dillon

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

– Benjamin Franklin

Discipline, Preparation and Execution

From what I have seen in my own educational experiences, along with coaching and teaching at the college and university level for over 20 years, test taking (with few exceptions) comes down to discipline, preparation and execution. Students wanting to be successful have to have the self-discipline to schedule time to study well in advance of the exam. They have to actually do the work: the preparation needed in order to have the best opportunity for success on the exam. Then they must execute: they have to be able to apply their preparation accordingly and perform well on the exam.

Preparation for an exam is not glamorous. It's easy to find other things to do that are more interesting and fun. Students need to keep themselves motivated with their "eyes on the prize." Think of it like this: if the most important event of your life was coming up and you wanted to perform to the best of your ability in that event, you would likely spend some time preparing for it, rehearsing for it, practicing it, etc. A student may argue that an exam they will be taking would not be the most important event of their life, but think back to the chapter on Passion. If you're already spending the time, effort, energy and money to attend college, why not do it to the best of your ability?

It would be beneficial to spread this preparation and practice out over time and prepare periodically rather than to wait until the last minute and binge study or cram. Your preparation would not be the same and this may affect your test score. Binge studying and cramming also are not healthy. Staying up late puts stress on our brain and body, and not getting adequate sleep places our bodies at risk for getting sick.

"One of the most important keys to success is having the discipline to do what you know you should do, even when you don't feel like doing it."

– Unknown

"The will to succeed is important, but what's more important is the will to prepare."

– Bobby Knight

Everyone wants to be successful. When the exam is passed out, everyone wants to perform well. But what often separates successful students and less successful students is the preparation time put in.

Studying the right thing is a process and a skill. As you gain more experience, you will learn how to become better at knowing what to study. It can be very frustrating to spend a lot of time preparing and studying and then finding out that what you studied was not on the exam. You will see a lot of variance with exams due to different instructors, classes and types of tests. The better you become at predicting what will be on the exam and study accordingly, the better you will perform on your exams. Try placing yourself in your instructor's shoes and design questions you think your instructor would ask. It's often an eye-opening experience for students and a great study strategy.

Preparation for Exam Strategies

Find out as much about the exam in advance as you can

Some professors will tell you how many questions there will be, what format the exam will be in, how much time you will have, etc., and others will not. I encourage students to ask questions about the exam if there is not information given. I also encourage students to ask those questions before class, after class, in professors' office hours or via e-mail rather than during class.

Know the test

If you know how many questions, what the format is, and/or how much time you will have, you can start to mentally prepare for the exam much more so than if you are coming in with no information. There are two more important aspects that you may or may not know: a) what will be covered or asked on the exam; b) how the exam will be scored. Obviously, the more you know about what will be covered, the easier it is for you to be able to prepare for the exam. Most exam scoring is standardized, but not always.

Look for opportunities where some areas of the exam are worth more points than others. For example: An exam consists of 21 questions, with 10 being True/False, 10 being multiple choice, and one essay question. The T/F questions are worth 1 point each (10 points), the multiple-choice questions are worth 2 points each (20 points), and the essay question is worth 30 points. We know that the essay question is the most valuable (it is worth half of the value of the exam). And we should allocate our time for it accordingly. I would advise starting with the essay question. Do a quick analysis of time to be able to spend your time on the exam wisely. You want to spend some time with the exam question since it is so valuable, without sacrificing adequate time to ensure the T/F and multiple-choice questions are answered.

Often, the order of the exam in this scenario will be: T/F first, multiple choice second and essay third. Most students will go in the chronological order of the exam, but a savvy student would start with the essay. If an exam were to last for 30 minutes with this format of questions, I might recommend a student spent 15 minutes on the essay question, ten minutes on the multiple choice, three minutes on the T/F and two minutes reviewing their answer.

Also, look for situations where exams penalize students for incorrectly answering a question. This does not occur very often, but is the case with some exams. With the SAT for example, students are awarded one point for a correct answer and ¼ of a point subtracted for an incorrect answer. Points are not awarded nor subtracted for leaving a question blank. Thus, the strategy for a multiple-choice question is: if you can narrow down the potentially correct answer to two rather than four or five, it is statistically advantageous to answer the question and guess between the two answers; however, if a student had no idea if any of the answers were correct or incorrect, it would be best to leave the answer blank. Remember, this is rare, but it is important to understand the strategy when students take these exams.

In conclusion, the more information you have about the exam, the better you can prepare for content, allocation of time spent on aspects of the exam, and the more confident you will be in knowing how and when to attempt to answer questions.

Take care of your body

Before the exam, it is important to prepare your brain and body for optimal performance for your exam. Do not cram the night before. Get a good night's sleep. Make sure you eat (nutritiously) before the exam. I recommend exercising the day before and if possible a few hours before the exam.

Strategies for Specific Exam Formats

True or False Questions

Look for qualifiers. A qualifier is a word that is absolute. Examples are: all, never, no, always, none, every, only, entirely. They are often seen in false statements. This is because it is more difficult to create a true statement using a qualifier like never, no, always, etc. For example, "All cats chase mice." Cats may be known for chasing mice, but not all of them do so. The answer here is false and the qualifier "all" gave us a tip. Qualifiers such as: sometimes, many, some, most, often, and usually are commonly found in true statements. For example: "Most cats chase mice." This is true and the qualifier "most" gave us a tip.

Make sure to read the entire statement. All parts of a sentence must be true if the whole statement is to be true. If one part of it is false, the whole sentence is false. Long sentences are often false for this reason.

Students should guess on True or False questions they do not know the answer to unless there is a penalty for an incorrect answer.

Multiple Choice Questions

Think of multiple choice questions as four (or five) true or false statements in one. One of the statements is true (the correct answer) and the others will be false. Apply the same strategy toward qualifiers. If you see an absolute qualifier in one of the answer choices, it is probably false and not the correct answer. Try to identify the true statement. If you can do this, you have the answer as there is only one. If you cannot do this at first, try eliminating answers you know to be false.

If there is no penalty for incorrect answers, my suggestion is to guess if you are not certain of the answer. If there is a penalty for incorrect answers, common logic is to guess if you can eliminate two of the answers as incorrect (pending what the penalty is). If there's a penalty and you cannot narrow down the answers, it's best to leave it blank. You may wish to ask your instructor for clarification.

Answers that are strange and unrelated to the question are usually false. If two answers have a word that looks or sounds similar, one of those is usually correct. For example: abductor/ adductor. If you see these as two of the four or five choices, one of them is usually correct. Also look for answers that are grammatically incorrect. These are usually incorrect answers. If you have to completely guess, choose B or C. It is statistically proven to be correct more than 25 percent of the time. If there are four answers

for each question, and an exam had standardized the answers, each answer on the exam A, B, C and D would be equal. But most instructors do not standardize their answers, and more correct answers are found in the middle (B and C then the extremes A and D or E). “People writing isolated four-choice questions hide the correct answer in the two middle positions about 70% of the time.”[1] This is 20 percent more correct answers found in B or C than a standardized exam with equal correct answers for each letter.

Matching Questions

Although less common than the other types of exams, you will likely see some matching exams during your time in college. First, read the instructions and take a look at both lists to determine what the items are and their relationship. It is especially important to determine if both lists have the same number of items and if all items are to be used, and used only once.

Matching exams become much more difficult if one list has more items than the other or if items either might not be used or could be used more than once. If your exam instructions do not discern this, you may wish to ask your instructor for further clarification. I advise students to take a look at the whole list before selecting an answer because a more correct answer may be found further into the list. Mark items when you are sure you have a match (pending the number of items in the list this may eliminate answers for the future). Guessing (if needed) should take place once you have selected answers you are certain about.

Short-Answer Questions

Read all of the instructions first. Budget your time and then read all of the questions. Answer the ones you know best or feel the most confident with. Then go back to the other ones. If you do not know the answer and there is no penalty for incorrect answers, guess. Use common sense. Sometimes instructors will award partial credit for a logical answer that is related even if it is not the correct answer.

Essay Questions

Keep in mind that knowing the format of the exam can help you determine how to study. If I know that I am taking a True-False exam, I know that I will need to discern whether a statement is True or False. I will need to know subject content for the course. But if I am studying for short answer and especially for essay questions, I must know a lot more. For essay questions, I must have much greater content knowledge and be able to make a coherent argument that answers the question using information from textbooks, lectures or other course materials. I have to place a lot more time and thought into studying for an essay exam than for True-False or Multiple-Choice exams.

Read the essay question(s) and the instructions first. Plan your time wisely and organize your answer before you start to write. Address the answer to the question in your first or second sentence. It may help to restate the original question. Write clearly and legibly. Instructors have difficulty grading essays that they cannot read. Save some time for review when you have finished writing to check spelling, grammar and coherent thought in your answer. Make sure you have addressed all parts of the essay question.

During the Exam:

Always read the directions first. Read them thoroughly.

Preview the exam to help you allocate proper time for each area.

Skip questions if you do not know the answer but make a mark somewhere to ensure you are able to go back to those questions (you may need to reallocate your prepared time for this depending on how many there are).

Allocate some time to review your answers before submitting your exam or the exam time expiring.

One of the biggest mistakes that students make after they take an exam in a course is that they do not use the exam for the future. The exam contains a lot of information that can be helpful in studying for future exams. Students that perform well on an exam often put it away thinking they do not need it anymore. Students who do poorly on an exam often put it away, not wanting to think about it any further.

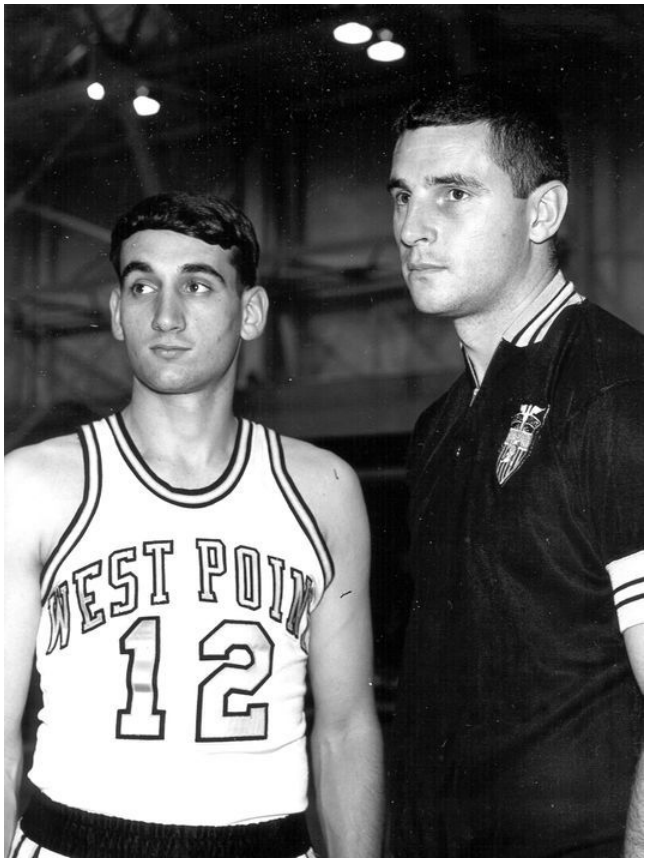
In both cases, students are missing out on the value of reviewing their exams. It is wise to review exams for three reasons: 1) students should review the answers that were correct because they may see those questions on future exams and it is important to reinforce learning; 2) students should review the answers that were incorrect in order to learn what the correct answer was and why. These questions also may appear on a future exam. In addition, occasionally an answer is marked incorrect, when it should have been marked correct. The student would never know this if they didn’t review their exam; and 3) there is value in reviewing the exam to try to predict what questions or what format will be used by a professor for a future exam in the same course.

Author's Story

What does it mean to be a "poor test taker?" Think about that. Does it mean that the student has put effort into studying but has difficulty under pressure? Does it mean that a student studies the wrong material? Is the student prepared but does not execute well? Could the student have a learning disability? Are they missing key strategies for taking tests? It could mean any of those things. And while I believe that it may be true that a student may be a "poor test taker," it does not by any means mean it is permanent. Students willing to work hard and learn can improve their test taking skills and raise their confidence.

In high school chemistry, I earned a D grade. In microeconomics at UC Santa Cruz, I struggled and barely passed. Both of these classes had grading systems that were heavily weighted by exams. I was an above average student in my other classes in both high school and college, and so I was told (and believed for a long time) that I was not a "good test taker." I no longer believe this. I will not make excuses. The responsibility for the grade I earned rests solely with me. I mention this because many students come to my office and complain that their professor grades in a way that is unfair to them because so much emphasis is on exams and that they understand the material but are "not good test takers." It may be the case that my grade or another students' grade would have been better had the course grade been determined with less weight levied to exams. That to me is irrelevant. It does not absolve me from being responsible for knowing what the grading metrics were at the beginning of the course and choosing to continue in the course after learning this knowledge. In the end, I realized I was not a poor test taker and that I needed to spend more time studying and preparing to perform well on exams. I changed my attitude from being afraid of exams to one of believing I was going to do well regardless of the class or the format of the exam. Once I had confidence that I had the necessary tools and was willing to work hard, it changed my entire perspective and experience with exams.

Note: If you think you may have a learning disability and would like to get assessed, contact your college to see what steps to follow to begin the assessment process.



Mike Krzyzewski, point guard at Army with Bob Knight, coach at Army.

Thinking about excuses reminds me of a story about Mike Krzyzewski, the successful Duke University men's basketball coach. Before Krzyzewski coached, he was a student at the United States Military Academy at West Point. One day in his first year, Krzyzweski and his roommate were walking and his roommate stepped in a puddle. Mud splashed onto Krzyzewski's uniform. Immediately, an upperclassman screamed at Krzyzewski about not knowing the rules of wearing a clean uniform. Plebes (first-year

students at military academies) are allowed three answers when asked a question: “Yes sir!” “No sir!” And “No excuse sir!” Krzyzewski repeated himself, “No excuse sir!” Despite wanting to explain what had happened and that it was not his fault, he realized that there was no excuse. It was his responsibility to keep a clean uniform.

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1. Yigal Attali and Maya Bar-Hillel, “Guess Where: The Position of Correct Answers in Multiple-Choice Test Items as a Psychometric Variable,” *Journal of Educational Measurement* 40 no. 2 (2003):109-128. ↵

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Unit 7: Health

7.1: Chapter 28: Nutrition
7.2: Chapter 29: Exercise
7.3: Chapter 30: Sleep
7.4: Chapter 31: Stress
7.5: Chapter 32: Words of Wisdom: Failure Is Not an Option

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7.1: Chapter 28: Nutrition

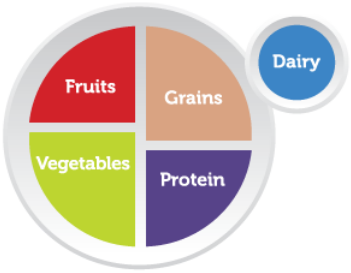
"A sound body nurtures a sound mind."

– Plato

A diet is anything that you consume on a regular basis. If you drink Diet Coke for breakfast every day, that's part of your diet. When people talk about "going on a diet," they usually mean changing their existing dietary habits in order to lose weight or change their body shape. All people are on a diet because everyone eats! Having a *healthy diet* means making food choices that contribute to short- and long-term health. It means getting the right amounts of nutrient-rich foods and avoiding foods that contain excessive amounts of less healthy foods. The right mix can help you be healthier now and in the future.

Developing healthy eating habits doesn't require you to sign up for a gimmicky health-food diet or lifestyle: you don't have to become vegan, gluten-free, "paleo," or go on regular juice fasts. The simplest way to create a healthy eating style is by learning to make wise food choices that you can enjoy, one small step at a time. See the ChooseMyPlate website for more guidelines. Additionally, the following current USDA Healthy Eating Guidelines replace the old "food pyramid."

USDA Healthy Eating Guidelines



Make half your plate fruits and vegetables: Focus on whole fruits, and vary your veggies

- Choose whole fruits—fresh, frozen, dried, or canned in 100% juice.
- Enjoy fruit with meals, as snacks, or for a dessert.
- Try adding fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables to salads, side dishes, and recipes.
- Choose a variety of colorful veggies prepared in healthful ways: steamed, sautéed, roasted, or raw.

Make half your grains whole grains

- Look for whole grains listed first or second on the ingredients list—try oatmeal, popcorn, whole-grain bread, and brown rice.
- Limit grain desserts and snacks, such as cakes, cookies, and pastries.

Vary your protein routine

- Mix up your protein foods to include a variety—seafood, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, soy products, eggs, and lean meats and poultry.
- Try main dishes made with beans and seafood, like tuna salad or bean chili.

Move to low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt

- Choose fat-free milk, yogurt, and soy beverages (soy milk) to cut back on your saturated fat.
- Replace sour cream, cream, and regular cheese in recipes and dishes with low-fat yogurt, milk, and cheese.

Drink and eat less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars

- Eating fewer calories from foods high in saturated fat and added sugars can help you manage your calories and prevent obesity. Most of us eat too many foods that are high in saturated fat and added sugar.
- Eating foods with less sodium can reduce your risk of high blood pressure.
- Use the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list to compare foods and drinks. Limit items high in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.
- Use vegetable oils instead of butter, and choose oil-based sauces and dips instead of those with butter, cream, or cheese.

- Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

Eat the right amount

- Eat the right amount of calories for you based on your age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity level. Visit the USDA SuperTracker, which can help you plan, analyze, and track your diet and physical activity.
- Building a healthier eating style can help you avoid obesity and reduce your risk of diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Cornell University found that the average adult eats 92% of whatever he or she puts on their plate. One of the challenges is that portion sizes have drastically increased over the last 50 years.[1]

Healthy Eating in College

College offers many temptations for students trying to create or maintain healthy eating habits. You may be on your own for the first time, and you're free to eat whatever you want, whenever you want. Cafeterias, all-you-can-eat dining facilities, vending machines, and easy access to food twenty-four hours a day make it tempting to overeat or choose foods loaded with calories, saturated fat, sugar, and salt. You may not be in the habit of shopping or cooking for yourself yet, and, when you find yourself short on time or money, it may seem easier to fuel yourself on sugary, caffeinated drinks and meals at the nearest fast-food place. Also, maybe you played basketball or volleyball in high school, but now you don't seem to be getting much exercise.

On top of that, it's common for people to overeat (or not eat enough) when they feel anxious, lonely, sad, stressed, or bored, and college students are no exception. It's incredibly important, though, to develop healthy ways of coping and relaxing that don't involve reaching for food, drink, or other substances. It's also important to eat regular healthy meals to keep up your energy.

Activity: Assess Your Snacking Habits

Objective

- Recognize the temptations not to eat well in a college setting

Directions

- Keep a daily snack journal for one week: Write down the types and amounts of snack foods and beverages you consume between meals each day. Record the time of day and note *where* you eat/drink each item.
- At the end of the week, review your journal. Do you notice any unhealthy snacks or empty-calorie drinks? Are there any patterns? Are there times of day when you're especially prone to choosing unhealthy snacks/drinks? Are there particular places where you tend to reach for junk food?
- In a short, reflective essay (1–2 pages long), describe what you observed about your snacking habits during the week. Identify any habits you'd like to change, and explain why. Describe several strategies you could use to break bad habits and replace unhealthy snacks with healthier ones. Explain why you think these strategies will be effective.
- Follow your instructor's instructions for submitting assignments.

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Adaptions: Removed images, video, relocated learning objectives, removed KidsHealthorg. paragraph and footnote.

1. Brian Wansink and Katherine Abowd Johnson, “The Clean Plate Club: About 92% of Self-Served Food is Eaten,” *International Journal of Obesity*, 39 (2015):371–374. ↵

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7.2: Chapter 29: Exercise

"Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle: when the sun comes up, you'd better be running."

– Dan Montano

Regular Exercise: Health for Life

The importance of getting regular exercise is probably nothing new to you. The health benefits are well known and established: Regular physical activity can produce long-term health benefits by reducing your risk of many health problems, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, and it can also increase your chances of living longer, help you control your weight, and even help you sleep better.

As a busy college student, you may be thinking, *I know this, but I don't have time! I have classes and work and a full life!* What you may not know is that—precisely because you have such a demanding, possibly stressful schedule—now is the perfect time to make exercise a regular part of your life. Getting into an effective exercise routine now will not only make it easier to build healthy habits that you can take with you into your life after college, but it can actually help you be a more successful student, too. As you'll see in the section on brain health, below, exercise is a powerful tool for improving one's mental health and memory—both of which are especially important when you're in school.

The good news is that most people can improve their health and quality of life through a modest increase in daily activity. You don't have to join a gym, spend a lot of money, or even do the same activity every time—just going for a walk or choosing to take the stairs (instead of the elevator) can make a difference. The following video describes how much activity you need.

Video: *Physical Activity Guidelines – Introduction*



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://press.rebus.community/blueprint1/?p=89

Fight or Flight

Our bodies have an automatic "fight or flight" reaction when we perceive a threat. Fighting or running is physical exercise and the result is metabolizing our excessive stress hormones and bringing our bodies and minds back to a more relaxed state. Even though we do not suffer from the same threats cavemen and cavewomen incurred many years ago, we still perceive threats and we still suffer from stress. Exercise has many physical and mental benefits in addition to lowering stress.

Regular physical activity is one of the best things you can do to be healthy. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, its benefits include: controlling weight, reducing risk of cardiovascular disease, reducing risk for type two diabetes, reducing risk of cancer, strengthening bones and muscles, improving mental health and mood, increasing chances of living longer[1]. One assignment I give my students is to have them record all food and drinks consumed in one week, along with keeping records of how much exercise and how many hours of sleep take place. Some students know exactly what they are putting into their body and how they are treating it. But most are surprised at how little one or more of these important aspects are sufficient. Try it. Think of it as an opportunity to see what you actually put into your body, how much exercise and rest you give it.

Author's Story

I had not prepared for an astronomy final exam. The night before the exam, I stayed up all night cramming, and regurgitated information I had learned onto the test. Immediately after the exam, I ordered a large pepperoni pizza, ate the whole thing in one sitting, and then slept for 15 hours. Regardless of the exam result, this example represents what not to do. In the long run, human bodies cannot do things like that without consequence. With the lifestyle I live now, being married, parenting kids and working full-time, there is no way that I could have done that and been able to function well with my responsibilities the next day. In addition, it was not healthy for my body.

After a class I was speaking with a student about diet and nutrition and our conversation led to a discussion on the contrast of what some students give their children to eat versus what they eat themselves. It reminded me of the 5-2-1-0 graphic my children recognize at their pediatrician visits. It stands for (each day) 5 or more fruits or vegetables, 2 hours or less recreational screen time, 1 hour or more of physical activity, 0 sugary drinks (more water). Of course, it is designed for kids. But many students would do well for themselves to keep the 5-2-1-0 recommendation in mind[2].

Our bodies are more prone to getting sick if they are not well taken care of. Getting sick in the middle of an academic term can have devastating effects on the academic performance.

A much better way to go (as I painfully learned) is to make a schedule, stick to it, prepare and review periodically, get adequate sleep, eat well, and be on an exercise plan.

For optimal concentration levels, work performance and test scores, proper nutrition and adequate sleep have a large effect. My personal opinion is that exercise helps clear the mind, which is so important in our current generations' overwhelming bombardment of information around us.

Physical Fitness and Types of Exercise

Physical fitness is a state of well-being that gives you sufficient energy to perform daily physical activities without getting overly tired or winded. It also means being in good enough shape to handle unexpected emergencies involving physical demands—that is, if someone said, "Run for your life!" or you had to rush over and prevent a child from falling, you'd be able to do it.

There are many forms of exercise—dancing, rock climbing, walking, jogging, yoga, bike riding, you name it—that can help you become physically fit. The major types are described below.

Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic exercise increases your heart rate, works your muscles, and raises your breathing rate. For most people, it's best to aim for a total of about thirty minutes a day, four or five days a week. If you haven't been very active recently, you can start out with five or ten minutes a day and work up to more time each week. Or, split up your activity for the day: try a brisk ten-minute walk after each meal. If you are trying to lose weight, you may want to exercise more than thirty minutes a day. The following are some examples of aerobic exercise:

- A brisk walk (outside or inside on a treadmill)
- Dancing
- A low-impact aerobics class
- Swimming or water aerobic exercises
- Ice-skating or roller-skating
- Playing tennis
- Riding a stationary bicycle indoors

Strength Training

Strength training, done several times a week, helps build strong bones and muscles and makes everyday chores like carrying heavy backpacks (or grocery bags) easier. When you have more muscle mass, you burn more calories, even at rest. Here are some ways to do it:

- Join a class to do strength training with weights, elastic bands, or plastic tubes (if your college has a gym, take advantage of it!)
- Lift light weights at home

Flexibility Exercises

Flexibility exercises, also called stretching, help keep your joints flexible and reduce your risk of injury during other activities. Gentle stretching for 5 to 10 minutes helps your body warm up and get ready for aerobic activities such as walking or swimming. Check to see if your college offers yoga, stretching, and/or pilates classes, and give one a try.

Being Active Throughout the Day

In addition to formal exercise, there are many opportunities to be active throughout the day. Being active helps burns calories. The more you move around, the more energy you will have. The following strategies can help you increase your activity level:

- Walk instead of drive whenever possible
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Work in the garden, rake leaves, or do some housecleaning every day
- Park at the far end of the campus lot and walk to class

Benefits of Exercise and Physical Fitness

Longevity

Exercise, even after age fifty, can add healthy, active years to one's life. Studies continue to show that it's never too late to start exercising and that even small improvements in physical fitness can significantly lower the risk of death. Simply walking regularly can prolong your life.

Moderately fit people—even if they smoke or have high blood pressure—have a lower mortality rate than the least fit. Resistance training is important because it's the only form of exercise that can slow and even reverse the decline of muscle mass, bone density, and strength. Adding workouts that focus on speed and agility can be especially protective for older people. Flexibility exercises help reduce the stiffness and loss of balance that accompanies aging.

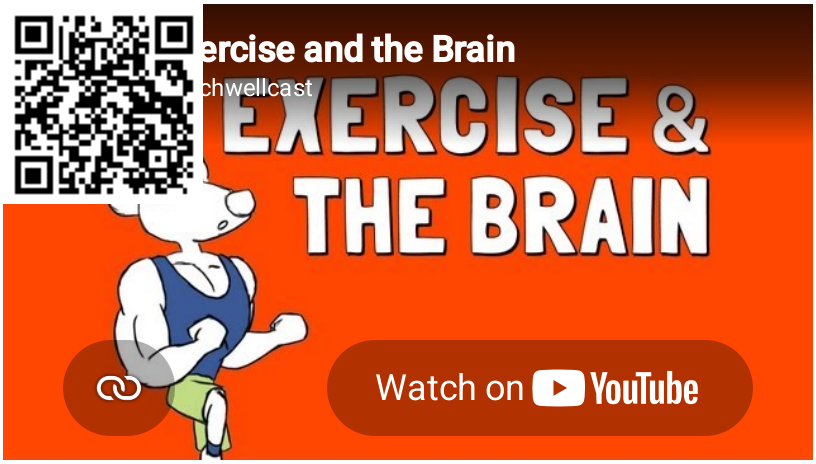
Diabetes

Diabetes, particularly type 2, is reaching epidemic proportions throughout the world as more and more cultures adopt Western-style diets (which tend to be high in sugar and fat). Aerobic exercise is proving to have significant and particular benefits for people with both type 1 and type 2 diabetes; it increases sensitivity to insulin, lowers blood pressure, improves cholesterol levels, and decreases body fat. In fact, studies show that people who engage in regular, moderate aerobic exercise (e.g., brisk walking, biking) lower their risk for diabetes even if they do not lose weight. Anyone on insulin or who has complications from diabetes should get advice from a physician before embarking on a workout program.

Brain: Mood, Memory, Creativity

In addition to keeping your heart healthy, helping with weight loss, and helping you live longer, regular exercise can also improve your mood and help keep depression and anxiety at bay. The following video explains why and challenges you to give it a try:

Video: *Exercise and the Brain*



If you still aren't persuaded, check out this slightly longer but excellent Tedx Talk, which describes how aerobic exercise can improve your cognitive functioning, memory, and creativity:

Video: *Exercise and the Brain*, Wendy Suzuki, TEDx Orlando 2001



Activity: Develop an Exercise Program

Objective

- Plan a regular exercise program that works for you.

Directions

- Sometimes getting started is the hardest part of being physically active. The important thing is to find activities you like to do, so you'll stick with them. Watch the following video, which can help you understand how much activity you need to do on a regular basis and how you can get going on a sensible routine. The video includes personal stories from people—even busy people like you—who have discovered what works for them.
- List 3 physical activities that you enjoy doing or would like to try doing on a regular basis.
- Identify any special requirements or equipment you need before doing them (for example, gym membership, running shoes, etc.).
- Set a realistic, weekly exercise time goal for yourself (150 minutes or more per week is ideal, but start with what you can really do).
- Using a digital or printed calendar, plan and label the days of the week, times, and places that you plan to exercise. Specify the activity or activities that you intend to do. (For example: Monday, 6–7 a.m., 30 min on stationary bike, college gym; Wednesday, 2–3 p.m., 60 min speed-walking with Maya, Riverside Park; Saturday, 1–2 p.m, lift weights, college gym.)
- Track your progress for one week, recording the amount of time you actually exercised. If you engaged in any unplanned physical activities (say you ended up riding your bike to school instead of taking the bus), include those, too.
- Write about your experience in a short journal entry (1–2 pages) and reflect on what you learned:
  - What kinds of exercise did you engage in, and which did you enjoy the most?
  - What was your weekly time goal? Did you meet it?
  - What worked or didn't work?
  - What might you need to change in order to make exercise a regular habit?
- Follow your instructor's instructions for submitting assignments.

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Adaptions: Removed image. Relocated learning objectives.

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1. “Physical Activity and Health,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018, http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/health/index.html. ↵
2. “Is your child at risk for obesity?,” CACM Health Center,www.camc.org/5210. ↵

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7.3: Chapter 30: Sleep

"Fatigue makes cowards of us all."

– Vince Lombardi

The Benefits of Slumber

We have so many demands on our time—school, jobs, family, errands, not to mention finding some time to relax. To fit everything in, we often sacrifice sleep. But sleep affects both mental and physical health. Like exercise and a healthy diet, it's vital to your well-being.

Of course, sleep helps you feel rested each day. But while you're sleeping, your brain and body don't just shut down. Internal organs and processes are hard at work throughout the night. Sleep can help you "lock in" everything you're studying and trying to remember.

"Sleep services all aspects of our body in one way or another: molecular, energy balance, as well as intellectual function, alertness and mood," says Dr. Merrill Mitler, a sleep expert and neuroscientist at the National Institute of Health (NIH).

When you're tired, you can't function at your best. Sleep helps you think more clearly, have quicker reflexes, and focus better. "The fact is, when we look at well-rested people, they're operating at a different level than people trying to get by on one or two hours less nightly sleep," says Mitler.

"Loss of sleep impairs your higher levels of reasoning, problem-solving, and attention to detail," Mitler explains. Tired people tend to be less productive at work and school. They're at a much higher risk for traffic accidents. Lack of sleep also influences your mood, which can affect how you interact with others. A sleep deficit over time can even put you at greater risk for developing depression.

But sleep isn't just essential for the brain. "Sleep affects almost every tissue in our bodies," says Dr. Michael Twery, a sleep expert at NIH. "It affects growth and stress hormones, our immune system, appetite, breathing, blood pressure and cardiovascular health."

Research shows that lack of sleep increases the risk for obesity, heart disease, and infections. Throughout the night, your heart rate, breathing rate and blood pressure rise and fall, a process that may be important for cardiovascular health. Your body releases hormones during sleep that help repair cells and control the body's use of energy. These hormone changes can affect your body weight.

"Ongoing research shows a lack of sleep can produce diabetic-like conditions in otherwise healthy people," says Mitler.

Recent studies also reveal that sleep can affect the efficiency of vaccinations. Twery described research showing that well-rested people who received the flu vaccine developed stronger protection against the illness.

A good night's sleep consists of four to five sleep cycles. Each cycle includes periods of deep sleep and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, when we dream. "As the night goes on, the portion of that cycle that is in REM sleep increases. It turns out that this pattern of cycling and progression is critical to the biology of sleep," Twery says.

Sleep can be disrupted by many things. Stimulants such as caffeine or certain medications can keep you up. Distractions such as electronics—especially the light from TVs, cell phones, tablets and e-readers—can prevent you from falling asleep.

Fatigue

In 1989, 11 million gallons of oil were spilled when the Exxon Valdez ran aground. "The National Transportation Safety Board investigation attributed the accident to the fact that [Third Mate Gregory] Cousins, [filling in for the captain], had been awake for 18 hours prior to taking the helm of the Valdez, failed to 'properly maneuver the vessel because of the fatigue and excessive workload.' Given what science can tell us about the deleterious effects of sleep deprivation on decision-making, alertness and coordination, a case can be made that had Cousins simply lain down for a brief sleep, one of the greatest environmental catastrophes in recent memory – and $2.5 billion cost for cleanup – might've been averted."[1]

"Fatigue has been cited as at least a contributing factor in many of the worst disasters in recent history – the Union Carbide chemical explosion that killed thousands of people in Bhopal, India, and the nuclear catastrophe at Chernobyl, to name just two."[2]

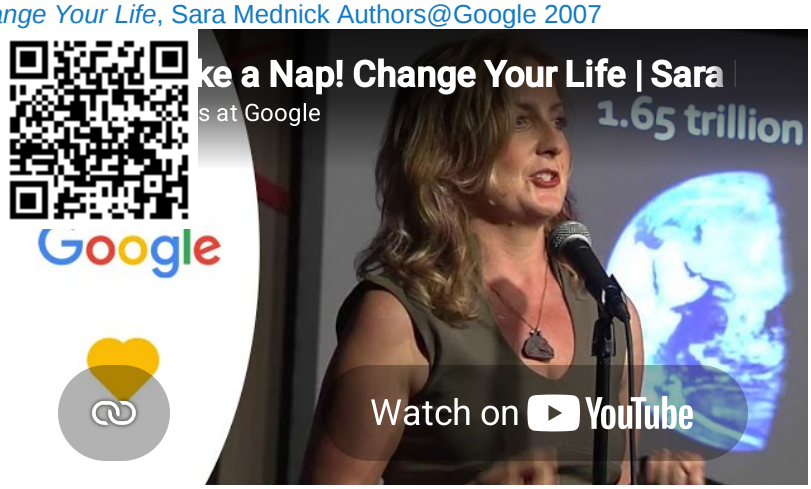
Dr. Sara Mednick is a sleep researcher at UC Riverside. Dr. Mednick's Ted Talk entitled, "Give it Up for the Down State – Sleep: Sarah Mednick at TEDxUCRSalon," is a resource for more information.

Video: *Give it up for the down state – sleep*, Sara Mednick, TEDxUCR Salon



Dr. Mednick's "Authors@Google: Sara Mednick" video on is a longer lecture on sleep.

Video: *Take a Nap! Change Your Life*, Sara Mednick Authors@Google 2007



It's difficult to do anything well when we're tired. Studying is difficult, concentration is difficult, writing is difficult and taking an exam is difficult. It's much more efficient to get adequate rest and study, write, think and perform when we are rested.

This is a link to an article of a National Public Radio interview with Charles Czeisler, the director of the Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School. This article, an interview with Czeisler and Scott Huettel, associate professor of psychology and neuroscience at Duke University links media with sleep interruption. These articles chronicle the benefits of getting adequate sleep and consequences of not getting adequate sleep along with questions and answers from the sleep specialists. It's easy for me to say that you will perform better in your studies if you are getting enough sleep, but here is some proof from experts on the value of sleep.

How Much Sleep Do We Need?

The amount of sleep each person needs depends on many factors, including age, and getting a full night of *quality* sleep is important. Infants generally require about sixteen hours a day, while teenagers need about nine hours on average. For most adults, seven to eight hours a night appears to be the best amount of sleep. The amount of sleep a person needs also increases if he or she has been deprived of sleep in previous days. Getting too little sleep creates a "sleep debt," which is a lot like being overdrawn at a bank. Eventually, your body will demand that the debt be repaid. We don't seem to adapt to getting less sleep than we need; while we may get used to a sleep-depriving schedule, our judgment, reaction time, and other functions are still impaired. If you're a student, that means that sleep-deprivation may prevent you from studying, learning, and performing as well as you can.

People tend to sleep more lightly and for shorter time spans as they get older, although they generally need about the same amount of sleep as they needed in early adulthood. Experts say that if you feel drowsy during the day, even during boring activities, you haven't had enough sleep. If you routinely fall asleep within five minutes of lying down, you probably have severe sleep deprivation, possibly even a sleep disorder. "Microsleeps," or very brief episodes of sleep in an otherwise awake person, are

another mark of sleep deprivation. In many cases, people are not aware that they are experiencing microsleeps. The widespread practice of “burning the candle at both ends” in western industrialized societies has created so much sleep deprivation that what is really abnormal sleepiness is now almost the norm.

Many studies make it clear that sleep deprivation is dangerous. Sleep-deprived people who are tested by using a driving simulator or by performing a hand-eye coordination task perform as badly as or worse than those who are intoxicated. Sleep deprivation also magnifies alcohol’s effects on the body, so a fatigued person who drinks will become much more impaired than someone who is well rested. Driver fatigue is responsible for an estimated 100,000 motor vehicle accidents and 1,500 deaths each year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Since drowsiness is the brain’s last step before falling asleep, driving while drowsy can—and often does—lead to disaster. Caffeine and other stimulants cannot overcome the effects of severe sleep deprivation. The National Sleep Foundation says that if you have trouble keeping your eyes focused, if you can’t stop yawning, or if you can’t remember driving the last few miles, you are probably too drowsy to drive safely.

Activity: Assess Your Sleep Habits

Objective

- Examine your current sleep habits.

Directions

- Take a few minutes to review and assess your own sleep habits. Are you getting enough?

Check the appropriate boxes:	Usually	Sometimes	Never
I get 7–8 hours of sleep at night.			
I feel sleepy or have trouble focusing during the day.			
I take a nap when I feel drowsy or need more sleep.			
I fall asleep or have trouble staying awake in class.			
I fall asleep while studying.			
I stay up all night to study for exams or write papers.			

- Track how much sleep you get each night during a one-week period.
- At the end of the week, write a short journal entry (1–2 pages) in which you reflect on your current sleep habits: How many hours of sleep do you think you need every night to function at your best? How can you tell? On an average, how many hours of sleep did you get on weeknights? On average, how many hours of sleep did you get on weekend nights?
- How would you rank the importance of sleep compared with studying, working, spending time with friends/family, and other activities? What things get in the way of your consistently getting enough sleep?
- What changes can you make to your schedule and/or routines that might improve your sleep habits?
- Follow your instructor’s guidelines for submitting assignments.

Falling Asleep and Getting a Good Night’s Rest

Many people, especially those who feel stressed, anxious, or overworked, have a hard time falling asleep and/or staying asleep, and this can shorten the amount of time and the quality of sleep when it actually comes. The following tips can help you get to sleep, stay asleep, and wake up feeling well rested:

- **Set a schedule**: Go to bed at a set time each night and get up at the same time each morning. Disrupting this schedule may lead to insomnia. “Sleeping in” on weekends also makes it harder to wake up early on Monday morning because it resets your sleep cycles for a later awakening.

- **Exercise**: Try to exercise 20 to 30 minutes a day. Daily exercise often helps people sleep, although a workout soon before bedtime may interfere with sleep. For maximum benefit, try to get your exercise about 5 to 6 hours before going to bed.
- **Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol before bed**: Avoid drinks that contain caffeine, which acts as a stimulant and keeps people awake. Sources of caffeine include coffee, chocolate, soft drinks, non-herbal teas, diet drugs, and some pain relievers. Smokers tend to sleep very lightly and often wake up in the early morning due to nicotine withdrawal. Alcohol robs people of deep sleep and REM sleep and keeps them in the lighter stages of sleep.
- **Relax before bed**: A warm bath, reading, or another relaxing routine can make it easier to fall sleep. It's also a good idea to put away books, homework, and screens (computer and phone) at least 30 minutes before bed. You can train yourself to associate certain restful activities with sleep and make them part of your bedtime ritual.
- **Sleep until sunlight**: If possible, wake up with the sun, or use very bright lights in the morning. Sunlight helps the body's internal biological clock reset itself each day. Sleep experts recommend exposure to an hour of morning sunlight for people having problems falling asleep.
- **Don't lie in bed awake**: If you can't get to sleep, don't just lie in bed. Do something else, like reading or listening to music, until you feel tired. (Avoid digital screens, though: watching TV, and being on the computer or a smartphone are too stimulating and will actually make you more awake.) The anxiety of being unable to fall asleep can actually contribute to insomnia.
- **Control your room temperature**: Maintain a comfortable temperature in the bedroom. Extreme temperatures may disrupt sleep or prevent you from falling asleep.
- **Screen out noise and light**: Sleep with earplugs and use an eye pillow to drown out any bright lights and noise of loud roommates, etc.
- **See a doctor if your sleeping problem continues**: If you have trouble falling asleep night after night, or if you always feel tired the next day, then you may have a sleep disorder and should see a physician. Your primary care physician may be able to help you; if not, you can probably find a sleep specialist at a major hospital near you. Most sleep disorders can be treated effectively, so you can finally get that good night's sleep you need.

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Adaptions: Images removed. Relocated learning objectives.

1. Sarah Mednick and Mark Ehrman, *Take a Nap! Change Your Life* (New York: Workman Publishing, 2006), 10. ↵
2. Mednick and Ehrman, *Take a Nap! Change Your Life*, 12. ↵

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7.4: Chapter 31: Stress

Causes of Stress

As a student, you're probably plenty familiar with the experience of stress—a condition characterized by symptoms of physical or emotional tension. What you may not know is that it's a natural response of the mind and body to a situation in which a person feels threatened or anxious. Stress can be positive (e.g., preparing for a wedding) or negative (e.g., dealing with a natural disaster).

Stress can hit you when you least expect it—before a test, after losing a job, or during conflict in a relationship. If you're a college student, it may feel like stress is a persistent fact of life. While everyone experiences stress at times, a prolonged bout of it can affect your health and ability to cope with life. That's why social support and self-care are important. They can help you see your problems in perspective… and the stressful feelings ease up.

Sometimes stress can be good. For instance, it can help you develop skills needed to manage potentially challenging or threatening situations in life. However, stress can be harmful when it is severe enough to make you feel overwhelmed and out of control.

Strong emotions like fear, sadness, or other symptoms of depression are normal, as long as they are temporary and don't interfere with daily activities. If these emotions last too long or cause other problems, it's a different story.

Signs and Effects of Stress

Physical or emotional tension are often signs of stress. They can be reactions to a situation that causes you to feel threatened or anxious. The following are all common symptoms of stress:

- Disbelief and shock
- Tension and irritability
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Difficulty making decisions
- Being numb to one's feelings
- Loss of interest in normal activities
- Loss of appetite (or increased appetite)
- Nightmares and recurring thoughts about the event
- Anger
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Sadness and other symptoms of depression
- Feeling powerless
- Crying
- Sleep problems
- Headaches, back pains, and stomach problems
- Trouble concentrating

It's not only unpleasant to live with the tension and symptoms of ongoing stress; it's actually harmful to your body, too. Chronic stress can impair your immune system and disrupt almost all of your body's processes, leading to increased risk of numerous health problems, including the following:[1]

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Digestive problems
- Heart disease
- Sleep problems
- Weight gain
- Memory and concentration impairment

That's why it's so important to learn healthy ways of coping with the stressors in your life.

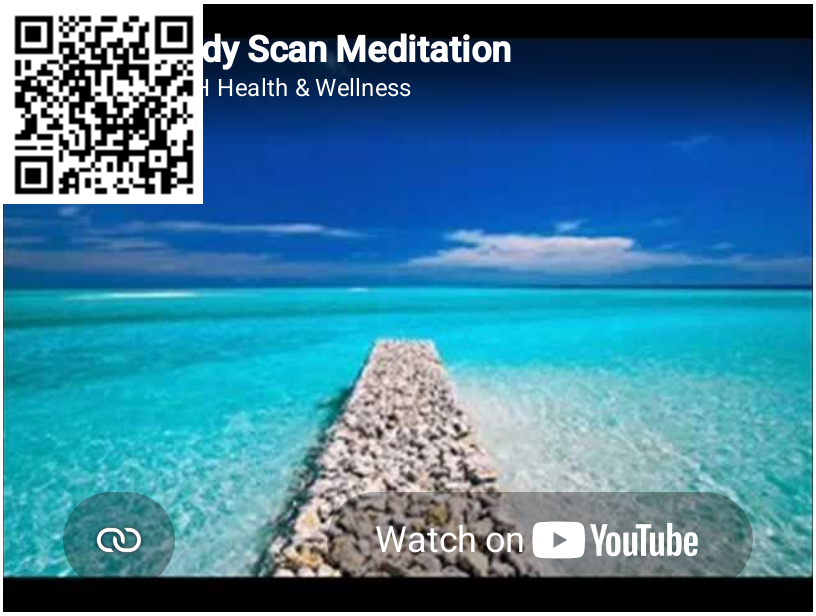
Ways of Managing Stress

The best strategy for managing stress is by taking care of yourself in the following ways:

- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** They may seem to be a temporary fix to feel better, but in the long run they can create more problems and add to your stress—instead of taking it away.
- **Manage your time.** Work on prioritizing and scheduling your commitments. This will help you feel in better control of your life, which, in turn, will mean less stress.
- **Find support.** Seek help from a friend, family member, partner, counselor, doctor, or clergy person. Having a sympathetic listening ear and talking about your problems and stress really can lighten the burden.
- **Connect socially.** When you feel stressed, it's easy to isolate yourself. Try to resist this impulse and stay connected. Make time to enjoy being with classmates, friends, and family; try to schedule study breaks that you can take with other people.
- **Slow down and cut out distractions for a while**. Take a break from your phone, email, and social media.
- **Take care of your health.**
  - Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet
  - Exercise regularly
  - Get plenty of sleep
  - Try a relaxation technique, such as meditation or yoga, or treat yourself to a massage
  - Maintain a normal routine

The following video features a progressive muscle relaxation meditation for you to try. There are many many others available on YouTube and elsewhere.

Video: *Progressive Muscle Relaxation Meditation*



If the self-care techniques listed above aren't enough and stress is seriously interfering with your studies or life, don't be afraid to get help. The student health center and college counselors are both good resources.

Activity: Reduce Your Stress Level

Objective

- List healthy ways of managing stress that fit your current lifestyle.

Directions

- Identify at least three things you currently do to cope with stress that aren't working or aren't good for you.
- Identify healthy replacements for each of them, and write yourself a "stress-relief prescription" that you plan to follow for one week. Try to include one stress management technique to use every day. At the end of the week, respond to the following prompts in a short, reflective essay (1–2 pages): Which ineffective or unhealthy coping strategies did you set out to change and why? Which stress-relief techniques did you try during the week? Were any of them new for you? Which ones were most effective? How much do you think stress affects you in your current life at college? Do you feel like you have it under control or not? If not, what else might you do to reduce your stress level?
- Follow your instructor's guidelines for submitting assignments.

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Adaptions: Removed quote and images, relocated learning objectives.

1. "Chronic Stress Puts Your Health at Risk," Mayo Clinic, 2016, accessed April 27, 2018, http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-li...s/art-20046037. ↵

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7.5: Chapter 32: Words of Wisdom: Failure Is Not an Option

Nathan Wallace

In the movie Apollo 13, Ed Harris portrays NASA flight director Gene Kranz as he successfully guides the crew of a damaged spacecraft to safety. In a famous scene during which Kranz and his staff are attempting to overcome some extremely daunting challenges, Harris shouts, “Failure is not an option!” This singular statement perfectly articulated the determination of Kranz to bring the Apollo astronauts back to Earth.

This “failure is not an option” credo was perfect for the life and death situation that NASA was facing. Failure meant that the astronauts on Apollo 13 would never come home, and that outcome was unacceptable. Attending college, on the other hand, shouldn’t be a life or death experience, though it sometimes might feel like one. Failure, though never the intended outcome, can and sometimes does happen. Sometimes failure manifests itself in election results for a student government post, in a test score, or even in a final grade.

Throughout my life I have had many failures. In high school I drove my parents and teachers crazy because of my lack of academic achievement. I even managed to get an F- in Spanish on my report card. When I told my mom that it was a typo she responded, “So you didn’t get an F?” “No,” I said, “I definitely earned the F, but there’s no such thing as an F-.” To this day I’m not so sure that my reply was accurate. I might have earned that minus after all.

My failures in high school led to only one acceptance from of all the colleges I applied to attend. Furthermore, I was not accepted to the school’s main campus, but to their branch campus. During my first semester there my effort wasn’t much better than in high school, but since my parents were now paying for my education I did enough work to avoid academic probation. It wasn’t until my second semester that I found my niche as a Religious Studies major and started getting good grades, moved to the main campus, and eventually graduated with honors.

Since graduating from college, my career path has taken me into higher education as a Student Affairs administrator. This career has exposed me to many great theories regarding student success, and many of them gave me insight into my own college experience. But it was Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck who appeared to be thinking of me when she wrote the following about fixed mindsets in the introduction to her book titled *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*:

Believing that your qualities are carved in stone—the fixed mindset—creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over. If you have only a certain amount of intelligence, a certain personality, and a certain moral character—well, then you’d better prove that you have a healthy dose of them. It simply wouldn’t do to look or feel deficient in these most basic characteristics. (Dweck, 2006)

This statement was a revelation to me. I finally understood my problem throughout high school and even in college. I earned good grades because I liked Religious Studies but never really challenged myself inside or outside of the classroom. My problem was that I had a fixed mindset about academic success. I believed that a person is either smart or they’re not, and nothing could be done to significantly change that. I also believed that I was one of the fortunate ones to be “gifted” with an abundance of intelligence.

One might think that having confidence in your intelligence is a whole lot better than thinking that you’re stupid, but the result was the same. My fixed mindset was holding me back because it led to a paralyzing fear of failure. Since as far back as I could remember, my family, friends, and teachers were always telling me how smart I was, and I believed them. But that belief was a double-edged sword. High school and college offered many occasions when self-confidence in my inherent intelligence could be threatened. If I fail on this test or in this course it means that I’m not the smart person I thought I was. If I fail, my family and friends will find out that they were wrong about me.

However, there was a way to avoid all of the risks of academic rigor. I could just not try. If I didn’t try I would get bad marks on my report card, but those wouldn’t be true indicators of my intelligence. By not putting forth any effort, my intelligence would never be disproven. I would always be able to say to myself and others that, “I could do the work and be a straight A student, but I’m just not interested.” Looking back on this time in my life, it is clear to me that this wasn’t a conscious decision to save face. It was fear, not logic, which was guiding my behavior.

After reading *Mindset* I have made a conscious effort to identify and thwart any remaining fixed mindset thoughts that I continue to hold. Dweck’s book acts as a manual for rooting out fixed mindset thoughts, because she explains that the idea of fixed mindsets is only half of her mindset theory. There is another kind of mindset, and she calls it growth mindset. Dweck writes that, “This growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts” (Dweck, 2006). Dweck

goes on to explain that we can choose to have a growth mindset about any type of ability, whether it's math, art, athletics, or any other skill that one wishes to cultivate.

I put this theory to the test not long after reading the book. A few years ago I attended a meeting only to find out that it wasn't any ordinary meeting. During this meeting we would be brainstorming solutions to a specific problem. This was going to be a true brainstorming session, led by a facilitator trained in the science of soliciting uninhibited ideas from an audience. As soon as I heard the word *brainstorming* I froze. I have always hated brainstorming. I'm the type of person that likes to think things through two or three times before expressing an opinion. My fear of failing at this task in front of my coworkers paralyzed my mind. I couldn't think.

That's when it hit me. This was fixed mindset thinking. My belief in my brainstorming inadequacies was preventing me from even trying. So I flipped this thinking on its head and decided the best way to improve my brainstorming abilities was to clear my mind and start firing out ideas. I gave it a shot, and though the ideas didn't come out at the prolific rate of some of my colleagues, I had never before had such a positive outcome and experience while brainstorming. Through this experience I found that I really could choose to have a growth mindset, and that this choice produces a greater chance of success. With a greater chance of success comes a smaller chance of failure.

Nevertheless, when it comes to academic success and success in all phases of life, failure is always an option. Though it can be painful, failure can lead to great learning and progress when a specific failure is analyzed through the lens of a growth mindset. By focusing more on effort than on outcomes anyone can learn and grow, regardless of their skill level. Therefore, to make the most of their time in college, students must seek out challenges that will stretch their abilities. These challenges can take many forms and they can occur in a variety of settings, both inside and outside of the classroom. When seeking out challenges there is always the possibility of agonizing defeat, but out of that defeat can be the seeds of great success in the future.

Reference

C. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006).

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Unit 8: Conclusion

8.1: Chapter 33: Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom Conclusion
8.2: Chapter 34: Conclusion

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8.1: Chapter 33: Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom Conclusion

Thomas Priester

In the text, the authors told true-to-life stories about their own academic, personal, and life-career successes. When reading *FAS: WoW*, you explored the following guiding questions:

- How do you demonstrate college readiness through the use of effective study skills and campus resources?
- How do you apply basic technological and information management skills for academic and lifelong career development?
- How do you demonstrate the use of critical and creative thinking skills to solve problems and draw conclusions?
- How do you demonstrate basic awareness of self in connection with academic and personal goals?
- How do you identify and demonstrate knowledge of the implications of choices related to wellness?
- How do you demonstrate basic knowledge of cultural diversity?

Now that you've read *FAS: WoW*, it's time to pay it forward by composing your own *Words of Wisdom* story to share with college students of the future. Reflect on the lessons learned during your own college experience this term and use the guiding questions to develop a true-to-life story that can help other college students connect the dots between being a college student and being a *successful* college student. Submit your story to be considered in the next edition of *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom* by emailing your name, institution, and a draft of your short story to opensunyfas@gmail.com. Submissions will be reviewed as they are received, and you will be contacted directly if your submission is reviewed and selected for publication.

The options for textbooks focusing on college student success in college are overwhelming; many textbooks exist at varying levels of rigor and cost (some well over $100). The *FAS: WoW* series of textbooks provides college students open access textbooks that are student-centered and readable (dare I even say enjoyable). *FAS: WoW* supports the open access textbook philosophy to help students reduce the cost of attending colleges and universities.

– Thomas Priester

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8.2: Chapter 34: Conclusion

Dave Dillon

"Success is a journey, not a destination."

– Ralph Arbitelle

Thank you for reading this OER textbook. I hope you had a positive experience. Your thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and criticisms are valuable for future revisions and improvements. I encourage you to let me know if you are finding success, accomplishing your goals, or even if you are struggling. I keep a list of students who let me know they are graduating. It is important to me. If you have the passion discussed in the first chapter, you can find a way to do it. And when all the hard work, time, energy and effort pays off, it should be a proud accomplishment. Previous students have contributed to this textbook by sharing design and content ideas. If you have comments, suggestions, questions, criticisms, or reflections about this textbook, I would appreciate hearing from you: blueprintforsuccessincollege@gmail.com.

Balance

Students often ask me what I think they should do. Achieving and maintaining balance is perhaps the most important advice I can give, and it isn't easy to accomplish. Each student has a balance for important things in their lives that is different from other students. There is no right or wrong there, but I see a lot of students who are not balanced and it makes academic success challenging. It may take time to achieve better balance, but it's worth the investment.

Persistence

Thomas Edison is well known for inventing the electric light bulb. But many people are not aware of how many times he failed in trying to do so. Edison made a note of what he had done and what components he used each time he made an attempt. He would make an adjustment and try again. When the adjustment didn't work, he would make a note of that, readjust and try again. Edison learned from every experiment. He learned all the ways that it would not work. After approximately 10,000 failed experiments, Edison then successfully invented the electric light bulb.

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

– Thomas Edison

British inventor Sir James Dyson, well known for creating the bagless vacuum cleaner took 15 years and 5,127 prototypes to "get it right."

"Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'Press On' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

– Calvin Coolidge

Be persistent. You will encounter situations where you will want to give up. You can overcome the obstacles and challenges, if you are persistent.

Teamwork

My friend Sherine Ebadi played on a UC San Diego volleyball team that won a National Championship. She gave a speech at the award banquet that remains one of the most inspirational speeches I have heard and one that still gives me chills when I reread. She described teamwork as "a complete denial of self-interest, individual statistics and personal glory, all in exchange for making your teammate look good, even when they don't, and be successful even when they're not. It's making sure she knows that she's never fighting alone, that she's not merely an individual member of a team but rather an essential component to a unified whole working toward a common goal."

You will not be able to accomplish some of your biggest goals by yourself. You will need support behind you and the selection of your support team is important. I ensured that I surrounded myself by people who were interested in supporting me and my goals. I also understood that being a good teammate meant supporting my friends' and family members' goals as well.

Other Advice

Make good decisions. More important than making good decisions though is learning from decisions that are made and the positive and negative results and consequences of those decisions.

If at all possible, be optimistic. This may not help you with studying, but it is an enjoyable way to go through life. There will be times where your attitude and outlook will reflect on you and may create opportunities for yourself. Take advantage of those opportunities.

Closing

It is my sincere hope that you will have found information in this textbook helpful. I wish you academic success, and an enjoyable journey to reach your goals.

– Dave Dillon, 2018

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