STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN A NURSING PROGRAM



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Bakersfield College

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Strategies for Success in a Nursing Program

Reaching your goal of becoming an RN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Strategies for Success in a Nursing Program

Licensing

Acknowledgments

1: Exploring College

- 1.1: Prelude to Exploring College
- 1.2: Let's Talk about Success
- 1.3: Why College?
- 1.4: Who Are You, Really?
- 1.5: Different Worlds of Different Students
- 1.6: College Culture and Expectations
- 1.7: What Is College, Really?
- 1.8: Navigating the Social world of College
- 1.9: Summary- How Can This Book And This Course Help?

2: Classroom Experiences in College

- 2.1: Prelude to Classroom Experiences in College
- 2.2: Participating in Class
- 2.3: Communicating with Instructors
- 2.4: Public Speaking and Class Presentations
- 2.5: Summary

3: Knowing Yourself as a Learner

- 3.1: Prelude to Knowing Yourself as a Learner
- 3.2: The Power to Learn
- 3.3: How You Learn
- 3.4: Setting Yourself Up for Success
- 3.5: The Motivated Learner
- 3.6: Are You Ready for Class?
- 3.7: Are You Really Listening?
- 3.8: It's All in the Mindset
- 3.9: Applying What You Know about Learning
- 3.10: The Hidden Curriculum
- 3.11: Summary

4: Managing Your Time and Priorities with Goal Setting

- 4.1: Prelude to Managing Your Time and Priorities...Start Now!
- 4.2: The Benefits of Time Management
- 4.3: Time Management in College
- 4.4: Organizing Your Time
- 4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
- 4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
- 4.7: Goal Setting and Motivation
- 4.8: Summary

5: Planning Your Academic Pathways

- 5.1: Prelude to Planning Your Academic Pathways
- 5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
- 5.3: Getting the Right Stuff
- 5.4: Making a Plan
- 5.5: Managing Change and the Unexpected
- 5.6: Exploration of the Field
- 5.7: Skill Development
- 5.8: Job Seeking
- 5.9: The Power of Networking
- 5.10: Summary

6: Reading and Notetaking

- 6.1: Prelude to Reading and Notetaking
- 6.2: The Nature and Types of Reading
- 6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
- 6.4: Are You Ready for the Big Leagues?
- 6.5: How Do You Read to Learn?
- 6.6: Dealing with Special Texts
- 6.7: Building Your Vocabulary
- 6.8: Success Before Class - Pre-reading
- 6.9: Success During Class- Effective Note-Taking
- 6.10: Summary

7: Studying, Memory, and Test Taking

- 7.1: Prelude to Studying, Memory, and Test Taking
- 7.2: The Basics of Study Skills
- 7.3: Remembering Course Materials
- 7.4: Success After Class - Reviewing Material
- 7.5: The Honest Truth
- 7.6: Dealing with Test Anxiety- Managing Your Stress for Success
- 7.7: The Secrets of the Q and A's
- 7.8: Taking Tests, Quizzes and Nursing School Tests
- 7.9: Using Test Results
- 7.10: Summary

8: Thinking

- 8.1: Prelude to Thinking
- 8.2: Types of Thinking
- 8.3: What Thinking Means
- 8.4: Creative Thinking
- 8.5: Analytical Thinking
- 8.6: Critical Thinking
- 8.7: Critical Thinking, Clinical Judgment and the Nursing Profession
- 8.8: Searching for "Aha"
- 8.9: Problem Solving and Decision Making
- 8.10: Metacognition
- 8.11: Summary

9: Using the Library

- 9.1: Prelude to Using the Library
- 9.2: Information Literacy
- 9.3: Using the Library Resources
- 9.4: Using Databases
- 9.5: Academic Integrity- Why Does It Matter So Much?
- 9.6: How to Cite Your Sources- Avoiding Plagiarism
- 9.7: Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Academic Integrity
- 9.8: What are Research Studies?
- 9.9: Summary

10: Communicating

- 10.1: Prelude to Communicating
- 10.2: An Overview of Communication
- 10.3: Purpose of Communication
- 10.4: Communication and Technology
- 10.5: The Context of Communication
- 10.6: Barriers to Effective Communication
- 10.7: Summary

11: Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence

- 11.1: Prelude to Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence
- 11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
- 11.3: Categories of Diversity
- 11.4: Living with Diversity
- 11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
- 11.6: Inclusivity and Civility- What Role Can I Play?
- 11.7: Summary

12: Understanding Financial literacy

- 12.1: Prelude to Understanding Financial literacy
- 12.2: Personal Financial Planning
- 12.3: Making Money
- 12.4: Spending Less
- 12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
- 12.6: Credit Cards and Other Debt
- 12.7: Paying for College
- 12.8: Defending against Attack- Securing Your Identity and Accounts
- 12.9: Summary

13: Engaging in a Healthy Lifestyle

- 13.1: Prelude to Engaging in a Healthy Lifestyle
- 13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
- 13.3: The Basics of Self-Care-Sleep
- 13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
- 13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
- 13.6: Maintaining Healthy Relationships
- 13.7: Self Awareness and Self Compassion
- 13.8: Your Safety
- 13.9: Summary

14: Nursing school Specific ..... most applies to other healthcare specialties too

- 14.1: Prelude to Nursing Program Specific Requirements
- 14.2: Extra degrees- Being a Lifelong Learner
- 14.3: Testing and question types
  - 14.4: Summary

15: Appendix

- 15.1: Chapter 15

Index

Glossary

Detailed Licensing

Bibliography

Hyperlinks

Derivative

Image Credits

Detailed Licensing

Licensing

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Acknowledgments

This project is a result of interest in providing low-cost educational materials to the academic realm as much as possible. Embarking on change can be both exciting and terrifying. The spring and summer spent reading, researching, remixing and collaborating has been quite the adventure. The intent of this resource is to combine college success resources and present the topics for the interested general studies major while integrating resources for a student focused on a career in healthcare with a Nursing focus.

Several OER publications were used as a template for this project.

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This resource is a remix from three key OER resources. The primary resource is the College Success from OpenStax(opens in new window). The second resource also titled "College Success" from LibreText. The final resource is specific to **Strategies for Success in Nursing School: From Start to Finish**(opens in new window) related to the University of Texas Arlington published by uta pressbooks

For: Strategies for Success in Nursing School from Start to Finish

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Exploring College

1.1: Prelude to Exploring College
1.2: Let’s Talk about Success
1.3: Why College?
1.4: Who Are You, Really?
1.5: Different Worlds of Different Students
1.6: College Culture and Expectations
1.7: What Is College, Really?
1.8: Navigating the Social world of College
1.9: Summary- How Can This Book And This Course Help?

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1.1: Prelude to Exploring College

Learning Objectives

1. Analyze the reasons behind attending college and how personal motivations influence academic success.
2. Compare and contrast different student experiences in college based on cultural, socioeconomic, and personal backgrounds.
3. Evaluate the importance of college culture and expectations in shaping a successful college experience.
4. Identify and apply strategies for navigating social and academic challenges within a college environment.
5. Develop a personal definition of success in college by integrating self-awareness and goal-setting principles.



Figure 1.1

Student Survey

How do you feel about your ability to meet the expectations of college? These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As we are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed. Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1 – 4, 1 meaning "least like me" and 4 meaning "most like me."

Don't be concerned with the results. If your score is low, you will most likely gain even more from this book.

1. I am fully aware of the expectations of college and how to meet them.
2. I know why I am in college and have clear goals that I want to achieve.
3. Most of the time, I take responsibility for my learning new and challenging concepts.
4. I feel comfortable working with faculty, advisors, and classmates to accomplish my goals.

You can also take the Chapter 1 survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

"As students transitioning to college, responsibility is an inherent component of self-advocacy. As someone accepted on full funding to a 4-year university, but whose life's circumstances disallowed attending college until years later, I used to dream of a stress-free college life. The reality is, college can be a meaningful place, but it can also be challenging and unpredictable. The key is to *be your own best advocate*, because no one else is obliged to advocate on your behalf.

"When I began my community college studies, I knew what I wanted to do. Cybersecurity was my passion, but I had no understanding of how credits transfer over to a 4-year university. This came to haunt me later, after I navigated the complex processes of transferring between two different colleges. Not everyone involved volunteers information. It is up to you, the

student, to be the squeaky wheel so you can get the grease. Visit office hours, make appointments, and schedule meetings with stakeholders so that you are not just buried under the sheaf of papers on someone's desk."

—Mohammed Khalid, University of Maryland

About this Chapter

In this chapter, you will learn about what you can do to get ready for college. By the time you complete this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Recognize the purpose and value of college.
- Describe the transitional experience of the first year of college.
- Discuss how to handle college culture and expectations.
- Identify resources in this text and on your campus for supporting your college success.

Reginald	Madison
Reginald has, after much thought and with a high level of family support, decided to enroll in college. It has been a dream in the making, as he was unable to attend immediately after high school graduation. Instead, he worked several years in his family's business, got married, had a son, and then decided that he didn't want to spend the rest of his life regretting that he didn't get a chance to follow his dreams of becoming a teacher. Because it has been almost a decade since he sat in a classroom, he is worried about how he will fit in as an adult learner returning to college. Will his classmates think he is too old? Will his professors think he is not ready for the challenges of college work? Will his family get tired of his long nights at the library and his new priorities? There is so much Reginald is unsure of, yet he knows it's a step in the right direction.	It has been only three months since Madison graduated from high school. She graduated in the top 10 percent of her class, and she earned college credit while in high school. She feels academically prepared, and she has a good sense of what degree she wants to earn. Since Madison was 5 years old, she's wanted to be an engineer because she loved building things in the backyard with her father's tools. He always encouraged her to follow her dreams, and her whole family has been supportive of her hobbies and interests. However, Madison is concerned that her choice of major will keep her from dance, creative writing, and other passions. Furthermore, Madison is heading to a distant college with no other people she knows. Will she be able to find new friends quickly? Will her engineering classes crush her or motivate her to complete college? Will she be able to explore other interests? Madison has a lot on her mind, but she aims to face these challenges head-on.

While Reginald and Madison have had different experiences before and certainly have different motivations for enrolling in college, they have quite a bit in common. They are both committed to this new chapter in their lives, and they are both connected to their families in ways that can influence their commitment to this pursuit. What they don't know just yet—because they haven't started their classes—is that they will have even more in common as they move through each term, focus on a major, and plan for life after graduation. And they have a lot in common with you as well because you are in a similar position—starting the next chapter of the rest of your life.

In this chapter, you will first learn more about identifying the reason you are in college. This is an important first step because knowing your *why* will keep you motivated. Next, the chapter will cover the transitions that you may experience as a new college student. Then, the chapter will focus on how you can acclimate to the culture and meeting the expectations—all of which will make the transition to a full-fledged college student easier. Finally, the chapter will provide you with strategies for overcoming the challenges that you may face by providing information about how to find and access resources.

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1.2: Let's Talk about Success

Success in college is the theme of this book—and you'll be learning more about everything involved in success in the following chapters. Let's first define what success really means so that you can get started, right now, on the right foot.

Understand first that no book can "make" you be successful—it can only offer the tools for you to use if you want. What are you thinking right now as you read these words? Are you reading this right now only because you *have* to, because it is assigned reading in a course you have to take—and your mind keeps drifting to other things because you're feeling bored? Or are you interested because you've decided you *want* to succeed in college?

We hope it's the latter, that you're feeling motivated—and excited, too—to do a great job in college. But even if you aren't much concerned at present about these issues, we hope you'll keep reading and do some thinking about why you're in college and how to get motivated to do well.

"Success" and "Failure"

So what does "success" actually mean in college? Good grades? That's what many students would say—at least toward the beginning of their time in college.

When you ask people about their college experience a few years later, grades are seldom one of the first things mentioned. College graduates reflecting back typically emphasize the following:

- The complete college experience (often described as "the best years of my life")
- Exploring many different subjects and discovering one's own interests
- Meeting a lot of interesting people, learning about different ways to live
- Learning how to make decisions and solve problems that are now related to a career
- Gaining the skills needed to get the job—and life—one desires

When you are achieving what you want in life and when you are happy and challenged and feel you are living life to its fullest and contributing to the world, then you likely feel successful. When you reach this point, your grades in college are about the last thing you'll think of.

This is not to say that grades don't matter—just that getting good grades is not the ultimate goal of college or the best way to define personal success while in college. Five or ten years from now, no one is going to care much about what grade you got in freshman English or Biology 101. A successful college experience does include acceptable grades, of course, but in the end—in your long-range goals—grades are only one component of a larger picture.

How Much Do Grades Matter?

As you begin your college experience, it's good to think about your attitude toward grades, since grades often motivate students to study and do well on assignments.

Valuing grades too highly, or not highly enough, can cause problems. A student who is determined to get only the highest grades can easily be frustrated by difficult college classes. Expectations that are too high may lead to disappointment—possibly depression or anxiety—and may become counterproductive. At the other extreme, a student who is too relaxed about grades, who is content simply with passing courses, may not be motivated to study enough even to pass—and may be at risk for failing courses.

What is a good attitude to have toward grades? The answer to that depends in part on how grades do matter generally—and specifically in your own situation. Here are some ways grades clearly do matter:

- At most colleges, all students must maintain a certain grade point average (GPA) to be allowed to continue taking courses and to graduate.
- Financial aid and scholarship recipients must maintain a certain grade in all courses, or a minimum GPA overall, to continue receiving their financial award.
- In some programs, the grade in certain courses must be higher than simply passing in order to count toward the program or major.

After graduation, it may be enough in some careers just to have completed the program or degree. But in most situations, how well one did in college may still affect one's life. Employers often ask how well you did in college (new graduates at least—this becomes less important after one has gained more job experience). Students who are proud of their grades usually include their

GPA on their résumés. Students with a low GPA may avoid including it on their resume, but employers may ask on the company's application form or in an interview (and being caught in a lie can lead to being fired). An employer who asks for a college transcript will see all your grades, not just the overall GPA.

In addition to the importance for jobs, grades matter if you plan to continue to graduate school, professional school, or other educational programs—all of which require your transcript.

Certainly grades are not the only way people are judged, but along with all forms of experience (work, volunteer, internship, hobbies) and personal qualities and the recommendations of others, they are an important consideration. After all, an employer may think, if this person goofed off so much in college that he got low grades, how can I expect him not to goof off on the job?

How to Calculate Your GPA

Because of various requirements for maintaining a GPA at a certain level, you may need to know how to calculate your GPA before grades come out at the end of the term. The math is not difficult, but you need to consider both the grade in every course and the number of credit hours for that course in order to calculate the overall GPA. Here is how you would do the calculation in the traditional four-point scale. First, translate each letter grade to a numerical score:

A = 4
B = 3
C = 2
D = 1

Then multiply each grade's numerical score by the number of units or hours for that course:

B in Math 101 × 5 hours = 3 × 5 = 15
B in English 4 × 3 hours = 3 × 3 = 9
C in Humanities 1 × 5 hours = 2 × 5 = 10
A in College Success × 3 hours = 4 × 3 = 12

Then add together those numbers for each course:

15 + 9 + 10 + 12 = 46.

Then divide that total by the total number of credit hours:

46 / 16 = 2.87 = GPA of 2.87.

Consult your college's policies regarding the numeric weighting of + and − grades.

The best attitude to take toward grades in college is simply to do the best you can do. You don't need to kill yourself, but if you're not going to make an effort then there's not much reason to be there in the first place. Almost everything in this book—from time management to study skills to social skills and staying healthy—will contribute to your overall success and, yes, to getting better grades.

If you have special concerns about grades, such as feeling unprepared in certain classes and at risk of failing, talk with your academic advisor. If a class requires more preparation than you have from past courses and experience, you might be urged to drop that class and take another—or to seek extra help. Your advisor can help you work through any individual issues related to doing well and getting the best grade you can.

Can You Challenge a Grade?

Yes and no. College instructors are very careful about how they assign grades, which are based on clear-cut standards often stated in the course syllabus. The likelihood of an instructor changing your grade if you challenge it is very low. On the other hand, we're all human—mistakes can occur, and if you truly feel a test or other score was miscalculated, you can ask your instructor to review the grade. Just be sure to be polite and respectful.

Most situations in which students want to challenge a grade, however, result from a misunderstanding regarding the expectations of the grading scale or standards used. Students may simply feel they deserve a higher grade because they think they understand the material well or spent a lot of time studying or doing the assignment. The instructor's grade, however, is based on your actual responses on a test, a paper or other assignment. The instructor is grading not what he or she thinks is in your head, but what you actually wrote down.

If you are concerned that your grade does not accurately reflect your understanding or effort, you should still talk with your instructor—but your goal should be not to argue for a grade change but to gain a better understanding of the course's expectations so that you'll do better next time. Instructors do respect students who want to improve. Visit the instructor during office hours or ask for an appointment and prepare questions ahead of time to help you better understand how your performance can improve and better indicate how well you understand the material.

A major aspect of college for some students is learning how to accept criticism. Your college instructors hold you to high standards and expect you to have the maturity to understand that a lower grade is not a personal attack on you and not a statement that you're not smart enough to do the work. Since none of us is perfect, we all can improve in almost everything we do—and the first step in that direction is accepting evaluation of our work. If you receive a grade lower than you think you have earned, take the responsibility to learn what you need to do to earn a higher grade next time.

Succeeding in Your First Year

The first year of college is almost every student's most crucial time. Statistics show a much higher drop-out rate in the first year than thereafter. Why? Because for many students, adjusting to college is not easy. Students wrestle with managing their time, their freedom, and their other commitments to family, friends, and work. It's important to recognize that it may not be easy for you.

On the other hand, when you do succeed in your first year, the odds are very good that you'll continue to succeed and will complete your program or degree.

Are you ready? Remember that everything in this book will help you succeed in your first year. Motivation and a positive attitude are the keys to getting off to a running start. The next section lists some things you can do to start right now, today, to ensure your success.

Getting Started on the Right Foot Right Now

- Make an appointment to talk with your academic advisor if you have any doubt about the courses you have already enrolled in or about the direction you're taking. Start examining how you spend your time and ensure you make enough time to keep up with your courses.
- Check for tutoring assistance if you feel you may need it and make an appointment or schedule time to visit tutoring centers on your college campus to see what help you can get if needed.
- Like yourself. You've come a long way to reach this point, you have succeeded in taking this first step toward meeting your college goal, and you are fully capable of succeeding the rest of the way. Avoid the trap of feeling down on yourself if you're struggling with any classes.
- Pay attention to your learning style and your instructors' teaching styles. Begin immediately applying the guidelines discussed earlier for situations in which you do not feel you are learning effectively.
- Plan ahead. Check your syllabus for each class and highlight the dates of major assignments and tests. Write on your calendar the important dates coming up.
- Look around your classroom and plan to introduce yourself right away to one or two other students. Talking with other students is the first step in forming study groups that will help you succeed.

Figure 1.2



Start getting to know other students right away by talking before or after class. This is often a good way to start a study group.

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- Introduce yourself to your instructors, if you haven't already. In a large lecture, go up to the instructor after class and ask a question about anything in the lecture or about an upcoming assignment.
- Participate in your classes. If you're normally a quiet person who prefers to observe others asking questions or joining class discussions, you need to take the first step toward becoming a participating student—another characteristic of the successful student. Find something of particular interest to you and write down a question for the instructor. Then raise your hand at the right time and ask. You'll find it a lot easier than you may think!
- Vow to pay more attention to how you spend your money. Some students have to drop out because they get into debt.
- Take good care of your body. Good health makes you a better student. Vow to avoid junk food, to get enough sleep, and to move around more. When you're done reading this chapter, take a walk!

Excellent! Start doing these few things, and already you'll be a step or two ahead—and on your way to a successful first year!

Key Takeaways

- While success in college involves many benefits and experiences, grades remain one important measure of success.
- Acceptable grades are important for continuing your college program and financial aid, for graduate school or other future educational opportunities, and for obtaining a good job in most careers.
- Succeeding is especially important in one's first year of college because this is the most critical period to avoid the factors that lead to many students dropping out.
- You can launch yourself on a path of success immediately by taking the first steps for help with studies, developing a positive attitude, taking advantage of your personal learning style, starting to practice time management, meeting your instructors and other students, participating actively in your classes, and taking control of your personal health and finances.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. In your college or your specific program, do you need to maintain a minimum GPA in order to continue in the program? (If you don't know, check your college catalog or Web site.) What is that minimum GPA?

   _____

   What was your cumulative GPA in high school?

   _____

   Because college classes are usually more difficult than high school classes, figure—purely as a starting point—that with the same effort, your college GPA could be a full point (or more) lower than your high school GPA. Does that give you any cause for concern? If so, what do you think you should work on most to ensure you succeed in college?

   _____

2. For each of the following statements about success in college, circle T for true or F for false:

T	F	See your academic advisor only when it's time to register for courses or when the college requires you to.
T	F	The best way to get help with a class is to pick whoever looks like the smartest student in class and offer to pay that person for tutoring.
T	F	A positive attitude about yourself as a college student helps you stay motivated to work on succeeding in your classes.
T	F	Understanding one's own learning style makes it easier to understand how to apply one's strengths when studying and to overcome obstacles to learning by adapting in other ways.
T	F	Meeting other students in your classes is important early on because you can skip classes once you arrange to borrow other people's notes.
T	F	Participating in class is a key to being successful in that class.

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1.3: Why College?

Questions to consider:

- Why are you in college?
- What are the rewards and value of a college degree?
- Why this course?

This chapter started with the profiles of two students, Reginald and Madison, but now we turn to who you are and why you are in college. Starting this chapter with *you*, the student, seems to make perfect sense. Like Reginald and Madison, you are probably full of emotions as you begin this journey toward a degree and the fulfillment of a dream. Are you excited about meeting new people and *finally* getting to take classes that interest you? Are you nervous about how you are going to handle your courses and all the other activities that come along with being a college student? Are you thrilled to be making important decisions about your future? Are you worried about making the right choice when deciding on a major or a career? All these thoughts, even if contradictory at times, are normal. And you may be experiencing several of them at the same time.

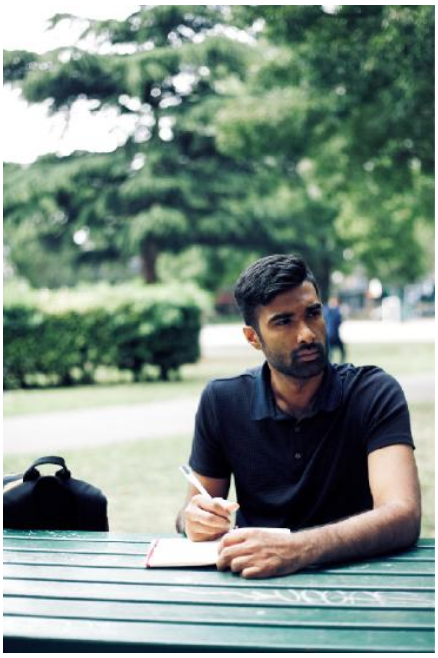


Figure 1.3: Decision-making about college and our future can be challenging, but with self-analysis and support, you can feel more confident and make the best choices.

Why Are You in College?

We know that college is not mandatory—like kindergarten through 12th grade is—and it is not free. You have made a *choice* to commit several years of hard work to earn a degree or credential. In some cases, you may have had to work really hard to get here by getting good grades and test scores in high school and earning money to pay for tuition and fees and other expenses. Now you have more at stake and a clearer path to achieving your goals, but you still need to be able to answer the question.

To help answer this question, consider the following questioning technique called “The Five Whys” that was originally created by Sakichi Toyoda, a Japanese inventor, whose strategy was used by the Toyota Motor Company to find the underlying cause of a problem. While your decision to go to college is not a problem, the exercise is helpful to uncover your underlying purpose for enrolling in college.

The process starts with a “Why” question that you want to know the answer to. Then, the next four “Why” questions use a portion of the previous answer to help you dig further into the answer to the original question. Here is an example of “The Five Whys,” with the first question as “Why are you in college?” The answers and their connection to the next “Why” question have been underlined so you can see how the process works.

While the example is one from a student who knows what she wants to major in, this process does not require that you have a specific degree or career in mind. In fact, if you are undecided, then you can explore the “why” of your indecision. Is it because

you have lots of choices, or is it because you are not sure what you really want out of college?

Five Whys in Action

The Five Whys in Action	
Why are you in college?	I am in college to earn a degree in speech pathology.
Why do you want to earn a degree in speech pathology?	I want to be able to help people who have trouble speaking.
Why do you want to help people who have trouble speaking?	I believe that people who have trouble speaking deserve a life they want.
Why do you feel it is important that people who have trouble speaking deserve a life they want?	I feel they often have needs that are overlooked and do not get treated equally.
Why do you want to use your voice to help these people live a life they deserve?	I feel it is my purpose to help others achieve their full potential despite having physical challenges.

Do you see how this student went beyond a standard answer about the degree that she wants to earn to connecting her degree to an overall purpose that she has to help others in a specific way? Had she not been instructed to delve a little deeper with each answer, it is likely that she would not have so quickly articulated that deeper purpose. And that understanding of "why" you are in college—beyond the degree you want or the job you envision after graduation—is key to staying motivated through what will most likely be some challenging times

How else does knowing your "why," or your deeper reason for being in college, help you? According to Angela Duckworth (2016), a researcher on *grit*—what it takes for us to dig in deep when faced with adversity and continue to work toward our goal—knowing your purpose can be the booster to grit that can help you succeed.[1] Other research has found that people who have a strong sense of purpose are less likely to experience stress and anxiety (Burrown, 2013)[2] and more likely to be satisfied in their jobs (Weir, 2013).[3] Therefore, being able to answer the question "Why are you in college?" not only satisfies the person asking, but it also has direct benefits to your overall well-being.

ACTIVITY

Try "The Five Whys" yourself in the table below to help you get a better sense of your purpose and to give you a worthy answer for anyone who asks you "Why are you in college?"

The Five Whys: Your Turn

The Five Whys: Your Turn	
Why are you in college?	I am in college to . . .
Why do you . . .	I . . .
Why do you . . .	I . . .
Why do you . . .	I . . .
Why do you . . .	I . . .

What Are the Rewards and Value of a College Degree?

Once you have explored your "why" for enrolling in college, it may be worth reviewing what we know about the value of a college degree. There is no doubt you know people who have succeeded in a career without going to college. Famous examples of college dropouts include Bill Gates (the cofounder and CEO of Microsoft) and Ellen DeGeneres (comedian, actor, and television producer, among her many other roles). These are two well-known, smart, talented people who have had tremendous success on a global scale. They are also not the typical profile of a student who doesn't finish a degree. For many students, especially those who are first-generation college students, a college degree helps them follow a career pathway and create a life that would not have been possible without the credential. Even in this time of rapid change in all kinds of fields, including technology and education, a college degree is still worth it for many people.

Consider the following chart that shows an average of lifetime earnings per level of education. As you can see, the more education you receive, the greater the increase in your average lifetime earnings. Even though a degree costs a considerable amount of money on the front end, if you think about it as an investment in your future, you can see that college graduates receive a substantial return on their investment. To put it into more concrete terms, let's say you spend $100,000 for a four-year degree (*Don't faint! That is the average sticker cost of a four-year degree at a public university if you include tuition, fees, room, and board*). The return on investment (ROI) over a lifetime, according to the information in the figure below, is 1,500%! You don't have to be a financial wizard to recognize that 1,500% return is fantastic.

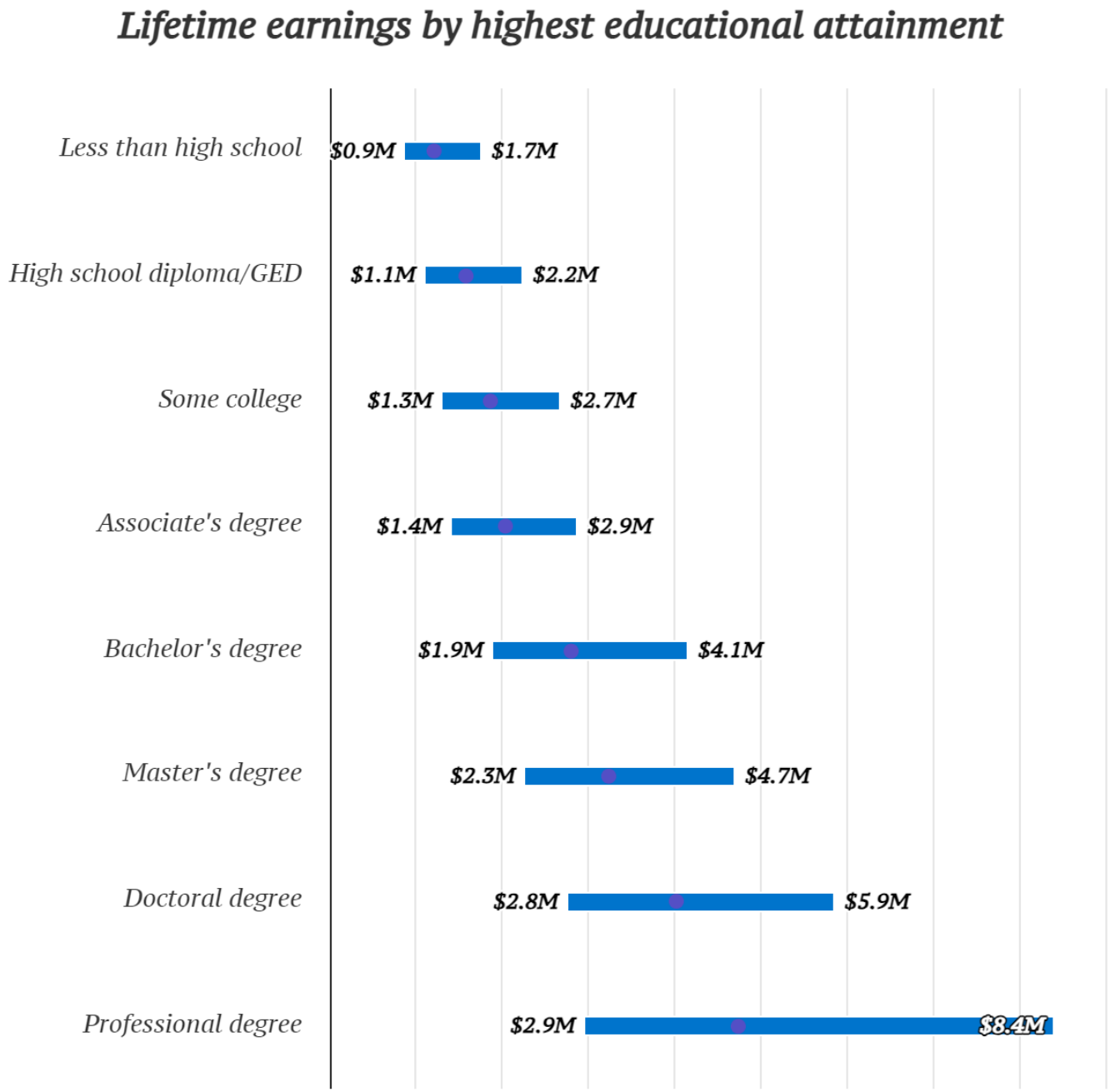


Figure 1.4: Every education level brings with it potential for greater lifetime earnings. These are simply averages and may not apply to all career types and individuals. For clarity, the "professional degree," attaining the highest earnings, refers to degrees such as those given to doctors or lawyers. Credit:Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of the US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–2019.Note: The figure is based on data for 25- to 64-year-olds working full-time, full-year.

Making more money over time is not the only benefit you can earn from completing a college degree. College graduates are also more likely to experience the following:

- **Greater job satisfaction.** That's right! College graduates are more likely to get a job that they like or to find that their job is more enjoyable than not.
- **Better job stability.** Employees with college degrees are more likely to find and keep a job, which is comforting news in times of economic uncertainty.
- **Improved health and wellness.** College graduates are less likely to smoke and more likely to exercise and maintain a healthy weight.
- **Better outcomes for the next generation.** One of the best benefits of a college degree is that it can have positive influences for the graduate's immediate family and the next generations.

One last thing: There is some debate as to whether a college degree is needed to land a job, and there are certainly jobs that you can get without a college degree. However, there are many reasons that a college degree can give you an edge in the job market. Here are just a few reasons that graduating with a degree is still valuable:

- More and more entry-level jobs will require a college degree. According to Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, in 2020, 35% of jobs will require a college degree.[4]
- A credential from a college or university still provides assurance that a student has mastered the material. Would you trust a doctor who never went to medical school to do open-heart surgery on a close relative? No, we didn't think so.
- College provides an opportunity to develop much-needed soft skills. The National Association of Colleges and Employers has identified eight career-readiness competencies that college students should develop: critical thinking/problem solving, oral/written communication, teamwork/collaboration, digital technology, leadership, professionalism/work ethic, career management, and global/intercultural fluency.[5] There are few occasions that will provide you the opportunity to develop all of these skills in a low-stakes environment (i.e., without the fear of being fired!). You will learn all of this *and* more in your classes. Seems like a great opportunity, doesn't it? If you find yourself asking the question "What does *this* course have to do with my major?" or "Why do I have to take *that*?" challenge yourself to learn more about the course and look for connections between the content and your larger educational, career, and life goals.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

In what ways will earning a certification or college degree be valuable to you now and in the future? Be sure to describe the financial, career, and personal benefits to earning a certification or college degree.

Why This Course?

Now that you have considered why you are in college and why a college degree may be valuable to you, it's time to focus on why you are reading this book. Most likely, you are enrolled in a course that is helping you learn about college and how to make the most of it. You may be asking yourself "Why am I taking this course?" or even "Why do I have to read this book?" Answers to the first question may vary, depending on your college's requirements for first-year students. Nevertheless, you are probably taking this course because your college believes that it will *help you succeed in college and beyond*. Likewise, the reason your professor has assigned this book is because it has been designed to give you the best information about how to make your transition to college a little smoother and attain your degree or certificate with more clarity. If you are not convinced just yet of the value of this course and its content, consider the following questions that you will be encouraged to answer as you learn about how to succeed in college:

- What will college expect of me in terms of skills, habits, and behaviors, and how can I develop them to ensure that I am successful?
- What do I need to know about how to navigate the process of completing a college degree?
- How can I ensure that I develop worthy long-term goals, and how best can I meet those goals?

These questions are designed to assist you in the transition from high school, or the workforce, to the new world of college. And this won't be the last monumental transition that you will experience. For example, you will experience a new job more than once in your life, and you may experience the excitement and challenge of moving to a new house or a new city. You can be assured that transitions will require that you identify what you need to get through them and that you will experience some discomfort along the

way. It wouldn't be such a great accomplishment without a little uncertainty, doubt, and self-questioning. To help you, the next section speaks specifically to transitions for the purpose of making your next steps a little smoother.

Footnotes

- 1 Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: The Power and Passion of Perseverance.* NY: Simon & Schuster.
- 2 Burrow, A.L. & Hill, P.L. (2013). Derailed by diversity? Purpose buffers the relationship between ethnic composition on trains and passenger negative mood. *Personality and Psychology Bulletin*, 39 (12), 1610-1619. DOI [doi 10.1177] [doi] [doi.org] [doi.org] [doi.org].
- 3 Weir, K. (2013). More than job satisfaction: Psychologists are discovering what makes work meaningful--and how to create value in any job. *American Psychological Association*, 44 (11), 39.
- 4 Carnevale, A.P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). Recover: Job growth and education requirements through 2020. Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved from cew.georgetown.edu [cew.georgetown.edu].
- 5 National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2019). Career readiness defined. Retrieved from www.naceweb.org [www.naceweb.org].

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1.4: Who Are You, Really?

Succeeding in college is rather like succeeding in life. It's really much more about *you* than it is about *college*. So the most important place to start is to consider why you're here, what matters to you, and what you expect to get out it. Even if you have already thought about these questions, it's good to reaffirm your commitment to your plan as we begin to consider what's really involved in being a college student.

What's Your Plan?

Take a few minutes and write down short answers to the questions in Activity 1. Be honest with yourself, and write down what *you* really feel. You are not writing for an instructor here—not what you think someone *expects* to hear—and you are not being graded on your answers!

Activity 1: Your College Plan

How long do you anticipate being in college?

_____

How many courses will you need to take per term to finish college in your planned time period?

_____

What do you anticipate will be the most difficult part of completing college?

_____

Are you confident you will be able to overcome any possible difficulties in completing college?

_____

Were you able to easily answer the questions in Activity 1? How confident do you feel about your plan?

These are important questions to think about for the simple reason that students who have a clear plan and who are prepared to overcome possible obstacles that may arise along the way are much more likely to succeed in college. In other words, *just thinking in a positive way about your future can help that future come true*!

What Matters to You?

The word values refers to things that matter to a person. What makes you feel good? What things would you be doing if you had all the time, money, and opportunities in the world? Questions like these help us define our own values. Every individual has his or her own values.

Thinking about your own values can help you know what you want from life and from college. Take a moment and consider the list of things in Activity 2 that are valued by some people. For each value, rate how important that thing is to you.

Activity 2: Your Values

Following is a list of things that different people say they value. For each item on this list, indicate how important it is to you yourself by ranking it as very important (5), not important (0), or somewhere in between.

Your Values

Value	Not important			Very important		
Making a good income	0	1	2	3	4	5
Having good friends	0	1	2	3	4	5
Learning new things about your interests	0	1	2	3	4	5

Value	Not important					Very important
Having a nice car	0	1	2	3	4	5
Having intelligent conversations	0	1	2	3	4	5
Staying current with the news	0	1	2	3	4	5
Playing sports	0	1	2	3	4	5
Hanging out with friends	0	1	2	3	4	5
Playing computer or video games	0	1	2	3	4	5
Cooking	0	1	2	3	4	5
Online social networking	0	1	2	3	4	5
Sleeping	0	1	2	3	4	5
Reading a good book	0	1	2	3	4	5
Traveling to new places	0	1	2	3	4	5
Shopping	0	1	2	3	4	5
Being liked by others	0	1	2	3	4	5
Studying and reading textbooks	0	1	2	3	4	5
Having nice clothing	0	1	2	3	4	5
Watching television	0	1	2	3	4	5
Enjoying time alone	0	1	2	3	4	5
Getting out in nature	0	1	2	3	4	5
Working your job	0	1	2	3	4	5
Looking good, personal hygiene	0	1	2	3	4	5

Value	Not important			Very important		
Meeting new people	0	1	2	3	4	5
Going to movies or entertainments	0	1	2	3	4	5
Eating nice meals out	0	1	2	3	4	5
Exercising, being physically active	0	1	2	3	4	5
Being your own boss	0	1	2	3	4	5
Having a positive romantic relationship	0	1	2	3	4	5
Engaging in your hobbies	0	1	2	3	4	5
Setting your own schedule	0	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteering your time for a good cause	0	1	2	3	4	5
Cleaning house	0	1	2	3	4	5
Attending classes	0	1	2	3	4	5
Going to religious services	0	1	2	3	4	5
Talking on the telephone, texting, e-mail	0	1	2	3	4	5
Going to parties	0	1	2	3	4	5
Participating in clubs, organized activities	0	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____ _____	0	1	2	3	4	5
Other: _____ _____	0	1	2	3	4	5

Look back at the values you rated highly (4 or 5) in Activity 2, which probably give a good indication of how you enjoy spending your time. But now look at these things you value in a different way. Think about how each relates to how you think you need to manage your time effectively while in college. Most college students feel they don't have enough time for everything they like to do. Do some of the activities you value most contribute to your college experience, or will they distract you from being a good student?

Students who enter college with their eyes open and who think about their own values and motivations will be more successful. If you have a good idea of what you want from life, the rest of it can be learned. Information in this text will help you stay motivated and manage your time well. The following chapters will then lead you through learning how to study well and everything else.

Thinking Ahead to a Major and Career

If you've just begun college, should you already know what career you seek in the future and what courses you should take or what you should major in? Good question!

Some students say they have known from a very early age what they want to do after college, choose the college that is best for that plan, never waiver from the plan and choose each course with the one goal in mind, and then enter their chosen career after college or graduate school. At the other extreme, some students have only a vague sense of direction before beginning college, take a wide variety of courses, select a major only when they reach the point that they must major in something (or perhaps change majors multiple times), and then after college choose to work in an entirely different field.

Some students choose to major in an academic subject simply because they enjoy that subject, never concerned with what kind of job they may get afterward. The traditional idea of the liberal arts education is that you can go to college not to prepare for a specific career but to become a well-educated person who is then in a better position to work in any number of careers.

None of these different approaches to choosing a major and a career is better than others. All students receive the many benefits of college, and all are likely to find a more fulfilling career.

So where are *you* in this great variety of attitudes about career and major choices?

Assuming you are still early in your college program, the take-home message here is that you don't need to make any decisions yet. Chances are, as you take courses in a variety of subjects and meet people in many different fields, you'll naturally discover something about what you really enjoy doing and what career options you may choose to pursue.

On the other hand, help is available for discovering your interests, strengths, and personality factors related to careers. You can learn a lot about your options and what you would be good at by visiting your college's advising or counseling department. Almost all colleges have tools to help you discover what careers you would most enjoy.

Figure 1.5



Talk with your advisor or visit the career counseling center to learn more about what future careers you may be interested in.

CAFNR – jean-martin fortier talk_121514_0105 – CC BY-NC 2.0.

The Strong Interest Inventory is such an assessment tool used by many colleges and universities. You answer a series of simple questions, and the computer-scored tabulation provides information about your interests, strengths, and personality related to different types of careers. This tool can also suggest specific courses, jobs and internships, and extracurricular activities relevant to personal and career interests. Ask your college's career counseling center if such a tool is available.

Another widely used tool is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). The MBTI is a personality inventory that identifies you as one of sixteen distinct personality types. Each personality type correlates with happiness in certain careers. Ask your college's career counselor to see if the MBTI is available for you.

Although there's nothing wrong with starting out without an intended major or career path, take care not to accidentally take courses that end up not counting toward your program goal or degree. You could end up in college longer than needed or have to pay for additional courses. Be sure to read your college catalog carefully and to talk to your academic advisor.

Your Past Educational Experience

It is important to understand how college is different from high school and how well your own past educational experiences have prepared you for what you will find in college. This is another way in which entering college "with your eyes wide open" will prove beneficial.

College is a unique experience for all students—whether you just graduated from high school or are returning to education after years of working. You are transitioning from one form of education to another. Some students have difficulty because of the differences between college and high school.

Generally speaking, however, the college experience is usually different from high school in these ways:

- Time management is more important in college because of varying class and work schedules and other time commitments.
- College instructors seldom seek you out to offer extra help if you're falling behind. You are on your own and expected to do the work, meet deadlines, and so on, without someone looking over your shoulder.
- There may be no attendance policy for classes. You are expected to be mature enough to come to class without fear of penalties.
- Many classes are large, making it easy to feel lost in a crowd.
- Many instructors, especially in large classes, teach by lecture—which can be difficult for those whose high school teachers interacted a great deal with students.
- College courses require more study time and require you to work on your own.
- Your social and personal life in college may be less supervised. Younger students may experience a sudden increase in freedom to do what they want.
- You will meet more people from more diverse backgrounds in college.
- All of these differences, along with a change in living situation for many students, can lead to emotional changes—both positive and negative.

What does all this add up to? For some students, the sudden independence and freedom can lead in negative directions: sleeping late, skipping classes, missing deadlines, failing to study adequately for tests, and so on. Other students who are highly motivated and work hard in their classes may also have difficulty transitioning to the higher academic standards of college. Suddenly, you're responsible for everything. That can be thrilling but also a challenge to get used to. All the chapters in this book will help you make this transition successfully.

Liking Yourself as a Student and Why That Matters

Of all the factors that affect how well one does in college, attitude is probably the single most important. A positive attitude leads to motivation, and someone who is strongly motivated to succeed can overcome obstacles that may occur.

Throughout this text, we'll discuss things you can do to keep a positive attitude about college and stay motivated in your studies. But your attitude toward yourself as a student matters just as much. Now that you are in college, you are a new person, not just the same person who happens now to be a college student. What do you think of this new person?

If you're feeling excited, enthusiastic, capable, and confident in your new life—great! Skip ahead to the next section. But if you're less sure how well you'll do in your new role, take comfort in knowing that you're not alone. A lot of new college students, once they begin experiencing the differences from high school, start having doubts. Some may start to feel "I'm not a good enough student" or "I can't keep up with all this." Some may become fearful or apathetic.

These feelings, while a perfectly natural response to a big change in one's life, can hinder one's motivation and ability to succeed. If you think you can't make it, that might become true. If you're sure you'll make it, you will.

Again, we'll ask you to think honestly about this. If you have these thoughts sometimes, why is that? Are you just reacting to a low grade on your first test? Are you just feeling this way because you see other students who look like they know what they're doing and you're feeling out of place? Most likely, if you have doubts about being able to do well, this is just a reaction to college being more difficult than what you're used to. It's mostly a matter of having the right skills for succeeding in college. This book will help you learn them—everything from how to study effectively, how to do better on tests, even how to read your textbooks more effectively.

Why is it that some students need to work on strengthening their skills after beginning college while others seem to waltz right in and do well from the start?

The answer sounds simple but is actually rather complex. There simply are many differences among people. There are differences among high schools as well as one's past teachers, one's peer group, one's family, one's cultural background, and many other factors. As a result of many different things, some students just need a little more help to succeed in college. No student is better or automatically more capable than another, however, and everyone can learn the skills to succeed.

Self-Management

To succeed in college, you need to take control of your life. Gone are the days when you could just "cruise" through school, or life, or let others motivate you or establish schedules to manage your time. This change presents an exciting opportunity. It's your first step in your new life and the key to your future. Here are a few thoughts to get you started in the right direction:

- **Accept responsibility for your life.** You are on equal footing with everyone else and have the same opportunities to succeed.
- **Decide what you want to do.** Don't let things just happen—*make* them happen by deciding that they should happen.
- **Realize you can change.** You can change your habits to become a better student. You can change your attitudes and become a more positive, motivated student.
- **Develop a personal** ethical code**.** Do what is right for you and for others. The college world demands ethical standards and rewards responsible, ethical behavior. Be proud of who you are and your good decisions.
- **Enjoy your life!** Going to college might seem overwhelming at times, but no one is asking you to "give up your life" to succeed in college. Enjoy meeting new people, learning new things, and experiencing the diversity of the college experience. Most college graduates look back on their college years as one of the best periods in their whole lives!

Key Takeaways

- A college education provides many intangible benefits as well as much better prospects for a career you will enjoy.
- Thinking about your personal values and how they relate to your education can help you stay motivated to succeed in college.
- Personality and skill inventories can help you discover the right career for your future and the best major in college.
- Because college is a new and different life experience for most students, taking responsibility for new freedoms and managing time well are critical.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Which of the following are benefits of a college education?
    1. A better understanding of the world
    2. Developing problem-solving skills
    3. Meeting interesting people
    4. Making wiser financial decisions in the future
    5. All of the above
2. What do you value that will be richer in your future life because you will have a college education?

    _____

    _____

    What do you value that will you likely have less time or money to spend on while in college?

    _____

    _____

3. Life in college usually differs in many ways from one's previous life in high school or in the workforce. What are the biggest changes you are experiencing now or anticipate experiencing this term?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. For each of the following statements, circle T for true or F for false:

Quiz

T	F	Attitude is one of the most important factors affecting college success.
T	F	If you sit back, wait patiently, and stick it out long enough, success in college will inevitably come to you.
T	F	To do well in college, you basically have to give up everything else in life for a while.
T	F	Most college graduates later look back on their college years as one of the best times in their lives.

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1.5: Different Worlds of Different Students

Not all college students are the same, and the world of college is therefore sometimes different for different students. Students will answer the following questions in a variety of different ways:

1. Are you attending college directly from high school or within a year of graduation?
2. Are you a full-time student?
3. Is English your first language?
4. Are you the first person in your family to attend college?
5. Have you spent most of your life in a country other than the United States?
6. Are you married or living with a partner? Do you have children?
7. Do you now or have you worked full time?

When thinking about different "types" of students, be careful to avoid stereotyping. While there are genuine differences among individual students, we must never assume an individual person has certain characteristics simply because he or she is a certain "type" of student. For example, if you answered yes to questions 1 through 3 and no to the other questions, you may be called a "traditional" student—young and attending college after high school. The word "traditional" is used simply because, in the past, this group of students formed the majority of college students—even though, at many colleges, these students are now the minority. On the other hand, if you are older and have worked for some years before returning to school, or if you are an international student or are working and attending classes part time, you might be considered a "nontraditional" student. Again, this term comes from past statistics, even though very many colleges have more "nontraditional" students than "traditional" students.

Figure 1.6



Colleges have students of all ages and with diverse backgrounds.

Bernard Oh – IMG_7560 – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

What does that mean to you? First, realize that not everything discussed in this book will apply to you. If you're eighteen and living away from your family for the first time in a college dormitory, you will likely not face the same issues of finding time for studying as an older student working full time and having children at home. If you're thirty and returning to school after years of successfully managing a job, you may have to reestablish your study skills but will not face the same issues as a younger student who may be tempted by the sudden freedom of college and have difficulty setting boundaries.

Every student brings certain advantages to college from their background experience. Every student may also face certain kinds of difficulties. Understanding how your own background may impact your own preparedness for college can help you make a good start in your college experience.

“Traditional” Students

We’re putting the quotation marks around the word “traditional,” again, because this group of college students is no longer the majority at many colleges, although the term is still sometimes used by educators. Coming directly or almost directly from high school, “traditional” students are used to attending classes, reading textbooks, and studying and thus may find the transition to college easier. Many are single and unattached and have fewer time commitments to others. Although a high percentage do work while in college, the work is typically part time or during the summer and does not have a severe time impact on their studies. As first-year students, usually living on campus at a four-year college or university, they do not lose time to commuting and typically their housing plan includes meals and otherwise simplifies their living arrangements. In all, many have few responsibilities other than their academic work.

On the other hand, “traditional” students living away from home for the first time may face more psychological and social issues than other student groups. One is away from family and old friends, perhaps forced to cope with an incompatible roommate or living arrangements, and facing all sorts of new temptations. Experiencing this sudden new freedom, many students experiment with or develop habits such as poor dietary and sleep habits, lack of exercise, and sometimes substance abuse or other behaviors that disrupt their academic routine and study habits. Many young students are forced to “grow up” quickly after arriving at college. Some students who do not adjust to the freedoms of college end up dropping out in their first year.

Returning Students

Students returning to their education are often older, may have worked for a number of years, and may be used to living on their own and being financially and psychologically independent. They are often more mature and have a stronger sense of what they want from college; they may be more goal driven. They may be paying their own way through college and want to get their money’s worth. They may be full-time students but frequently are still working and can take only a part-time course load. They often live off campus and may own a home and have a mortgage. They may have children. Because they have made a very deliberate decision to go to college, returning students are often serious students and are motivated to do the work. Having spent time in the work world, they may also have developed good problem-solving and decision-making skills as a result of their “real-world” experience.

On the other hand, returning students may have less time for studying because of work and family commitments. They may feel more stress because of the time and financial requirements of college. Spending less time on campus may contribute to not feeling completely at home in the academic world. They may not have time for many extracurricular and campus activities. Although they may be dedicated and hardworking students, they may also be less patient learning “theory” in courses and want all their coursework to relate directly to the real world.

Other Student Groups

Beyond this difference of age, some other common differences also affect one’s college experience. Students in the following groups may be either “traditional” students by age or returning students.

Commuter Students

Many returning students are commuter students, and it is increasingly common also for many young people after high school to continue to live at home or in their own apartment, coming to campus only for classes. Commuter students often face the same issues of limited time as returning students. They may find it difficult to find time to talk with an instructor outside of class.

First-Generation Students

The phrase “first-generation student” refers to students who are the first in their families to attend college. These students may be “traditional” students enrolled right after high school or may be returning students. Students whose parents did not attend college may be less familiar with some or all aspects of the college experience and thus may have to transition into their new life.

Recent Immigrant and International Students

Many colleges have a significant percentage of students who have recently immigrated to the United States or who are attending college here. What both groups may have in common is coming from a different culture and possibly speaking English as a second language. They may have to make cultural adjustments and accommodations. Language issues are often the most serious obstacle to overcome, especially since so much of college education is based on reading and writing in English.

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits colleges and universities from discriminating on the basis of disabilities and forces them to ensure that both classes and extracurricular activities are accessible to students with disabilities. Accessibility includes both physical accessibility to campus buildings and housing and accessibility to services and aids necessary for effective communication. Students with disabilities have the right to request any accommodations needed to allow them to succeed in college. For more information or to receive answers to any specific questions, contact the Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD) at Ahead.org(opens in new window) [www.ahead.org(opens in new window)].

Students Who Are Working

The key issue for working students often is time—how to find enough time for studying enough to do well in classes. Since it is very difficult to maintain two full-time schedules—work and school—one or the other may suffer. For those working long hours, future chapters will present many tips for managing your time when you have less of it and also suggests ways to cut back on expenses while in college so that you don't have to work so many hours.

Students with a Family

Typically it is returning students who have families of their own, although younger students may also have families to care for. Having children of your own means you have different priorities from most some students, but a family shouldn't be viewed as an obstacle to college success. Time may be short, and you'll have to manage it carefully to avoid falling behind in your studies. Often students find some creative ways to involve their families in the experience to prevent normal student stresses from disrupting family happiness.

Profile of a Successful Student

While it's important to consider your strengths, it's also important to develop a plan for moving forward and ensuring you have the knowledge and skills needed to succeed. The following are some of the characteristics of the successful student you can be:

- Successful students have a good attitude and know how to stay motivated.
- Successful students have developed good time management strategies, such as scheduling study time and getting started early on assignments and projects.
- Successful students have developed their critical thinking skills and apply them in their studies.
- Successful students have effective strategies for taking good notes in class and using them.
- Successful students have learned how to gain the most from their assigned readings for classes.
- Successful students know how to prepare for and take tests successfully.
- Successful students interact well with their instructors and fellow students in and outside of class.
- Successful students have learned to write well for their classes, an essential aspect of college education.
- Successful students develop social relationships that contribute to, rather than detract from, their educational experiences.
- Successful students take control of their health with good habits that help them be better students and feel less stress.
- Successful students have control over their finances. Because getting into debt is a very common reason that students have to drop out of college, it's important to control expenditures and manage your finances well.
- Successful students are able to transition well from the world of college into their future careers.

Key Takeaways

- College students vary widely in terms of age, work experience before college, cultural background, family, and other factors that may affect how they learn.
- Traditional, young students just out of high school face a transition involving new freedoms and new situations they may need to master in order to succeed academically.
- Returning students who work and may also have family responsibilities often have time issues and may feel out of place in the college environment.
- Other student groups include commuters, first-generation students, immigrant and international students, students with disabilities, and others, each of whom may need to face additional issues to be successful.
- Regardless of individual differences, all successful students share a number of traits, including a good attitude, effective time management strategies, good studying and test-taking skills, and more.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Are you a “traditional” or “returning” student? List an important advantage you have as a result of being in this classification:

   _____

2. Check off which traits in this list are true of successful students:

Checkpoint Exercises

	They know how to stay motivated.
	They don’t need to schedule study periods because they study at every available moment every day.
	They know better than to try to think on their own.
	They know how to speed-read so they don’t have to underline or highlight in their textbooks.
	They avoid talking with their instructors, so they can remain anonymous.
	They develop their writing skills.
	They eat fast food so they have more time for studying.
	They have few friends, because social relationships distract one from academics.
	They use several credit cards so they don’t have to worry about finances until after graduation.

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1.6: College Culture and Expectations

College Has Its Own Language and Customs

Going to college—even if you are not far from home—is a cultural experience. It comes with its own language and customs, some of which can be confusing or confounding at first. Just like traveling to a foreign country, it is best if you prepare by learning what words mean and what you are expected to say and do in certain situations.

Let's first start with the language you may encounter. In most cases, there will be words that you have heard before, but they may have different meanings in a college setting. Take, for instance, "office hours." If you are not in college, you would think that it means the hours of a day that an office is open. If it is your dentist's office, it may mean Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. In college, "office hours" can refer to the specific hours a professor is in her office to meet with students, and those hours may be only a few each day: for example, Mondays and Wednesdays from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m.

"Syllabus" is another word that you may not have encountered, but it is one you will soon know very well. A syllabus is often called the "contract of the course" because it contains information about what to expect—from the professor and the student. It is meant to be a roadmap for succeeding in the class. Understanding that office hours are for you to ask your professor questions and the syllabus is the guide for what you will be doing in the class can make a big difference in your transition to college. The table on Common College Terms, has a brief list of other words that you will want to know when you hear them on campus.

Table 1.6: Common College Terms, What They Mean, and Why You Need to Know

Term	What It Means	Why You Need to Know
Attendance policy	A policy that describes the attendance and absence expectations for a class	Professors will have different attendance expectations. Read your syllabus to determine which ones penalize you if you miss too many classes.
Final exam	A comprehensive assessment that is given at the end of a term	If your class has a final exam, you will want to prepare for it well in advance by reading assigned material, taking good notes, reviewing previous tests and assignments, and studying.
Learning	The process of acquiring knowledge	In college, most learning happens *outside* the classroom. Your professor will only cover the main ideas or the most challenging material in class. The rest of the learning will happen on your own.
Office hours	Specific hours professor is in the office to meet with students	Visiting your professor during office hours is a good way to get questions answered and to build rapport.

Term	What It Means	Why You Need to Know
Plagiarism	Using someone's words, images, or ideas as your own, without proper attribution	Plagiarism carries much more serious consequences in college, so it is best to speak to your professor about how to avoid it and review your student handbook's policy.
Study	The process of using learning strategies to understand and recall information	Studying in college may look different than studying in high school in that it may take more effort and more time to learn more complex material.
Syllabus	The contract of a course that provides information about course expectations and policies	The syllabus will provide valuable information that your professor will assume you have read and understood. Refer to it first when you have a question about the course.

Activity

The language that colleges and universities use can feel familiar but mean something different, as you learned in the section above, and it can also seem alien, especially when institutions use acronyms or abbreviations for buildings, offices, and locations on campus. Terms such as "quad" or "union" can denote a location or space for students. Then there may be terms such as "TLC" (The Learning Center, in this example) that designate a specific building or office. Describe a few of the new terms you have encountered so far and what they mean. If you are not sure, ask your professor or a fellow student to define it for you.

In addition to its own language, higher education has its own way of doing things. For example, you may be familiar with what a teacher did when you were in high school, but do you know what a professor does? It certainly seems like they fulfill a very similar role as teachers in high school, but in college professors' roles are often much more diverse. In addition to teaching, they may also conduct research, mentor graduate students, write and review research articles, serve on and lead campus committees, serve in regional and national organizations in their disciplines, apply for and administer grants, advise students in their major, and serve as sponsors for student organizations. You can be assured that their days are far from routine. See the Table on Differences between High School Teachers and College Professors for just a few differences between high school teachers and college professors.

Table 1.7: Differences between High School and College Faculty

High School Faculty	College Faculty
Often have degrees or certifications in teaching in addition to degrees in subject matter	Most likely have not even taken a course in teaching as part of their graduate program
Responsibilities include maximizing student learning and progress in a wide array of areas	Responsibilities include providing students with content and an assessment of their mastery of the content
Are available before or after school or during class if a student has a question	Are available during office hours or by appointment if a student needs additional instruction or advice

High School Faculty	College Faculty
Communicate regularly and welcome questions from parents and families about a student's progress	Cannot communicate with parents and families of students without permission because of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The relationships you build with your professors will be some of the most important ones you create during your college career. You will rely on them to help you find internships, write letters of recommendation, nominate you for honors or awards, and serve as references for jobs. You can develop those relationships by participating in class, visiting during office hours, asking for assistance with coursework, requesting recommendations for courses and majors, and getting to know the professor's own academic interests. One way to think about the change in how your professors will relate to you is to think about the nature of relationships you have had growing up. In Figure 1.6: You and Your Relationships Before College you will see a representation of what your relationships probably looked like. Your family may have been the greatest influencer on you and your development.

> *"The relationships you build with your professors will be some of the most important ones during your college career."*

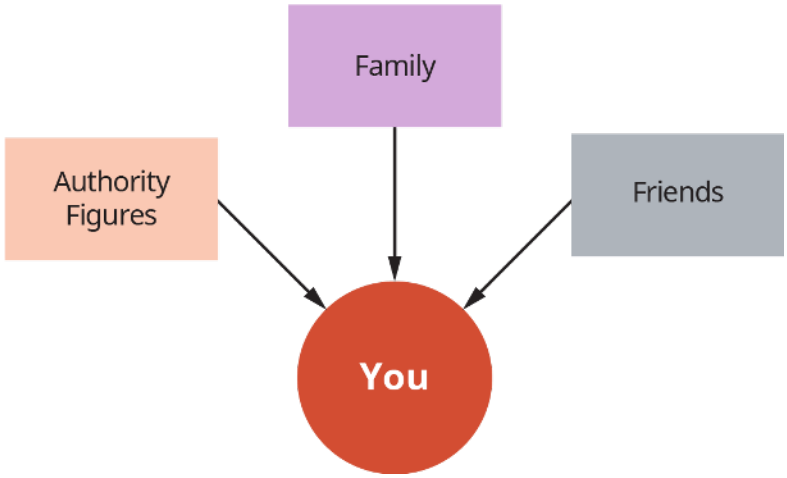


Figure 1.6: You and Your Relationships Before College.

In college, your networks are going to expand in ways that will help you develop other aspects of yourself. As described above, the relationships you will have with your professors will be some of the most important. But they won't be the only relationships you will be cultivating while in college. Consider the Figure on You and Your Relationships during College and think about how you will go about expanding your network while you are completing your degree.

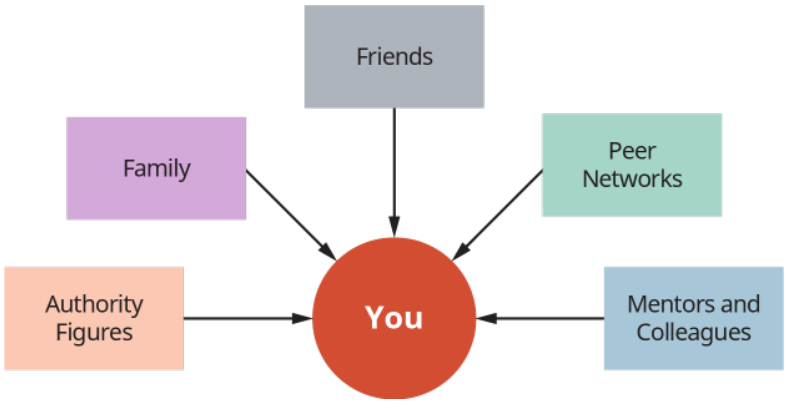


Figure 1.7: You and Your Relationships During College

Your relationships with authority figures, family, and friends may change while you are in college, and at the very least, your relationships will expand to peer networks—not friends, but near-age peers or situational peers (e.g., a first-year college student who is going back to school after being out for 20 years)—and to faculty and staff who may work alongside you, mentor you, or supervise your studies. These relationships are important because they will allow you to expand your network, especially as it

relates to your career. As stated earlier, developing relationships with faculty can provide you with more than just the benefits of a mentor. Faculty often review applications for on-campus jobs or university scholarships and awards; they also have connections with graduate programs, companies, and organizations. They may recommend you to colleagues or former classmates for internships and even jobs.

Other differences between high school and college are included in the table about Differences between High School and College. Because it is not an exhaustive list of the differences, be mindful of other differences you may notice. Also, if your most recent experience has been the world of work or the military, you may find that there are more noticeable differences between those experiences and college.

Table 1.8: Differences between High School and College

	High School	College	Why You Need to Know the Difference
Grades	Grades are made up of frequent tests and homework, and you may be able to bring up a low initial grade by completing smaller assignments and bonuses.	Grades are often made up of fewer assignments, and initial low grades may keep you from earning high course grades at the end of the semester.	You will need to be prepared to earn high grades on all assignments because you may not have the opportunity to make up for lost ground.
Learning	Learning is often done in class with the teacher guiding the process, offering multiple ways to learn material and frequent quizzes to ensure that learning is occurring.	Learning happens mostly outside of class and on your own. Faculty are responsible for assigning material and covering the most essential ideas; you are responsible for tracking and monitoring your learning progress.	You will need to practice effective learning strategies on your own to ensure that you are mastering material at the appropriate pace.
Getting Help	Your teachers, parents, and a counselor are responsible for identifying your need for help and for creating a plan for you to get help with coursework if you need it. Extra assistance is usually reserved for students who have an official diagnosis or need.	You will most likely need help to complete all your courses successfully even if you did not need extra help in high school. You will be responsible for identifying that you need it, accessing the resources, and using them.	Because the responsibility is on you, not parents or teachers, to get the help you need, you will want to be aware of when you may be struggling to learn material. You then will need to know *where* the support can be accessed on campus or where you can access support online.
Tests and Exams	Tests cover small amounts of material and study days or study guides are common to help you focus on what you need to study. If you paid attention in class, you should be able to answer all the questions.	Tests are fewer and cover more material than in high school. If you read all the assigned material, took good notes in class, and spent time practicing effective study techniques, you should be able to answer all the questions.	This change in how much material and the depth of which you need to know the material is a shock for some students. This may mean you need to change your strategies dramatically to get the same results.

Some of What You Will Learn Is “Hidden”

Many of the college expectations that have been outlined so far may not be considered common knowledge, which is one reason that so many colleges and universities have classes that help students learn what they need to know to succeed. The term, which was coined by sociologists,[7] describes unspoken, unwritten, or unacknowledged (hence, *hidden*) rules that students are expected to follow that can affect their learning. To illustrate the concept, consider the situation in the following activity.

Activity

Situation: Your history syllabus indicates that, on Tuesday, your professor is lecturing on the chapter that covers the stock market crash of 1929.

This information sounds pretty straightforward. Your professor lectures on a topic and you will be there to hear it. However, there are some unwritten rules, or hidden curriculum, that are not likely to be communicated. Can you guess what they may be? Take a moment to write at least one potential unwritten rule.

1. What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing before attending class?

   _____

2. What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing in class?

   _____

3. What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing after class?

   _____

4. What is an unwritten rule if you are not able to attend that class?

   _____

Some of your answers could have included the following:

Before class: *Read the assigned chapter, take notes, record any questions you have about the reading.*

During class: *Take detailed notes, ask critical thinking or clarifying questions, avoid distractions, bring your book and your reading notes.*

After class: *Reorganize your notes in relation to your other notes, start the studying process by testing yourself on the material, make an appointment with your professor if you are not clear on a concept.*

Absent: *Communicate with the professor, get notes from a classmate, make sure you did not miss anything important in your notes.*

The expectations before, during, and after class, as well as what you should do if you miss class, are often unspoken because many professors assume you already know and do these things or because they feel you should figure them out on your own. Nonetheless, some students struggle at first because they don't know about these habits, behaviors, and strategies. But once they learn them, they are able to meet them with ease.

Learning Is Your Responsibility

As you may now realize by reviewing the differences between high school and college, learning in college is your responsibility. Before you read about the how and why of being responsible for your own learning, complete the Activity below.

Activity

For each statement, circle the number that best represents you, with 1 indicating that the statement is least like you, and 5 indicating that the statement is most like you.

Table 1.9

Most of the time, I can motivate myself to complete tasks even if they are boring or challenging.				
1	2	3	4	5
I regularly work hard when I need to complete a task no matter how small or big the task may be.				
1	2	3	4	5
I use different strategies to manage my time effectively and minimize procrastination to complete tasks.				
1	2	3	4	5
I regularly track my progress completing work and the quality of work I do produce.				
1	2	3	4	5

Most of the time, I can motivate myself to complete tasks even if they are boring or challenging.				
I believe how much I learn and how well I learn is my responsibility.				
1	2	3	4	5

Were you able to mark mostly 4s and 5s? If you were even able to mark at least one 4 or 5, then you are well on your way to taking responsibility for your own learning. Let's break down each statement in the components of the ownership of learning:

- **Motivation.** Being able to stay motivated while studying and balancing all you have to do in your classes will be important for meeting the rest of the components.
- **Deliberate, focused effort.** Taking ownership of learning will hinge on the effort that you put into the work. Because most learning in college will take place outside of the classroom, you will need determination to get the work done. And there will be times that the work will be challenging and maybe even boring, but finding a way to get through it when it is not exciting will pay in the long run.
- **Time and task management.** You will learn more about strategies for managing your time and the tasks of college in a later chapter, but without the ability to control your calendar, it will be difficult to block out the time to study.
- **Progress tracking.** A commitment to learning must include monitoring your learning, knowing not only what you have completed (*this is where a good time management strategy can help you track your tasks*), but also the quality of the work you have done.

Taking responsibility for your learning will take some time if you are not used to being in the driver's seat. However, if you have any difficulty making this adjustment, you can and should reach out for help along the way.

What to Expect During the First Year

While you may not experience every transition within your first year, there are rhythms to each semester of the first year and each year you are in college. Knowing what to expect each month or week can better prepare you to take advantage of the times that you have more confidence and weather through the times that seem challenging. Review the table on First-Year College Student Milestones. There will be milestones each semester you are in college, but these will serve as an introduction to what you should expect in terms of the rhythms of the semester.

Table 1.10 While each student's first semester will differ, you will likely experience some of the following typical college milestones.

First-Year College Student Milestones for the First Semester				
Adjusting to the pace of college	Learning to access resources for support	Planning for next semester and beyond	Thinking about majors and degrees	Thinking about the break and how to manage changes
August	**September**	**October**	**November**	**December**
Expanding social circles	Completing first test and projects	Feeling more confident about abilities	Balancing college with other obligations	Focusing on finishing strong
Experiencing homesickness or imposter syndrome	Earning "lower-than-usual" grades or not meeting personal expectations	Dealing with relationship issues	Staying healthy and reducing stress	Handling additional stress of the end of the semester

The first few weeks will be pretty exhilarating. You will meet new people, including classmates, college staff, and professors. You may also be living in a different environment, which may mean that a roommate is another new person to get to know. Overall, you will most likely feel both excited and nervous. You can be assured that even if the beginning of the semester goes smoothly, your classes will get more challenging each week. You will be making friends, learning who in your classes seem to know what is going on, and figuring your way around campus. You may even walk into the wrong building, go to the wrong class, or have trouble finding what you need during this time. But those first-week jitters will end soon. Students who are living away from home for the first time can feel homesick in the first few weeks, and others can feel what is called "imposter syndrome," which is a fear some

students have that they don't belong in college because they don't have the necessary skills for success. Those first few weeks sound pretty stressful, but the stress is temporary.

After the newness of college wears off, reality will set in. You may find that the courses and assignments do not seem much different than they did in high school (more on that later), but you may be in for a shock when you get your graded tests and papers. Many new college students find that their first grades are lower than they expected. For some students, this may mean they have earned a B when they are used to earning As, but for many students, it means they may experience their first *failing or almost-failing grades* in college because they have not used active, effective study strategies; instead, they studied how they did in high school, which is often insufficient. This can be a shock if you are not prepared, but it doesn't have to devastate you if you are willing to use it as a wake-up call to do something different.

By the middle of the semester, you'll likely feel much more confident and a little more relaxed. Your grades are improving because you started going to tutoring and using better study strategies. You are looking ahead, even beyond the first semester, to start planning your courses for the next term. If you are working while in college, you may also find that you have a rhythm down for balancing it all; additionally, your time management skills have likely improved.

By the last few weeks of the semester, you will be focused on the increasing importance of your assignments and upcoming finals and trying to figure out how to juggle that with the family obligations of the impending holidays. You may feel a little more pressure to prepare for finals, as this time is often viewed as the most stressful period of the semester. All of this additional workload and need to plan for the next semester can seem overwhelming, but if you plan ahead and use what you learn from this chapter and the rest of the course, you will be able to get through it more easily.

Don't Do It Alone

Think about our earlier descriptions of two students, Reginald and Madison. What if they found that the first few weeks were a little harder than they had anticipated? Should they have given up and dropped out? Or should they have talked to someone about their struggles? Here is a secret about college success that not many people know: successful students seek help. They use resources. And they do that as often as necessary to get what they need. Your professors and advisors will expect the same from you, and your college will have all kinds of offices, staff, and programs that are designed to help. This bears calling out again: *you need to use those resources*. These are called "help-seeking behaviors," and along with self-advocacy, which is speaking up for your needs, they are essential to your success. As you get more comfortable adjusting to life in college, you will find that asking for help is easier. In fact, you may become really good at it by the time you graduate, just in time for you to ask for help finding a job! Review the table on Issues, Campus Resources, and Potential Outcomes for a few examples of times you may need to ask for help. See if you can identify where on campus you can find the same or a similar resource.

Table 1.11

Issues, Campus Resources, and Potential Outcomes

Type	Issue	Campus Resource	Potential Outcome
Academic	You are struggling to master the homework in your math class.	The campus tutoring center	A peer or professional tutor can walk you through the steps until you can do them on your own.
Health	You have felt extremely tired over the past two days and now you have a cough.	The campus health center	A licensed professional can examine you and provide care.
Social	You haven't found a group to belong to. Your classmates seem to be going in different directions and your roommate has different interests.	Student organizations and interest groups	Becoming a member of a group on campus can help you make new friends.

Issues, Campus Resources, and Potential Outcomes			
Financial	Your scholarship and student loan no longer cover your college expenses. You are not sure how to afford next semester.	Financial aid office	A financial aid counselor can provide you with information about your options for meeting your college expenses.

Application

Using a blank sheet of paper, write your name in the center of the page and circle it. Then, draw six lines from the center (see example in the figure below) and label each for the six areas of adjustment that were discussed earlier. Identify a campus resource or strategy for making a smooth adjustment for each area.

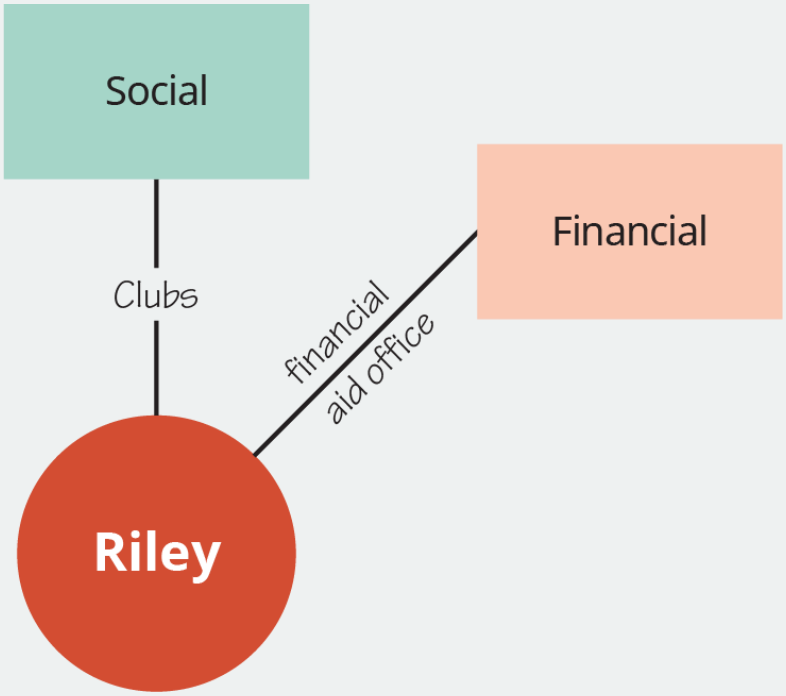


Figure 1.8: For each of the six adjustment areas mentioned above—Academic, Cultural, Emotional, Financial, Intellectual, and Social—identify a campus resource or strategy that will aid you in making a smooth adjustment.

Common Challenges in the First Year

It seems fitting to follow up the expectations for the first year with a list of common challenges that college students encounter along the way to a degree. If you experience any—or even all—of these, the important point here is that you are not alone and that you can overcome them by using your resources. Many college students have felt like this before, and they have survived—even thrived—despite them because they were able to identify a strategy or resource that they could use to help themselves. At some point in your academic career, you may do one or more of the following:

1. **Feel like an imposter.** There is actually a name for this condition: imposter syndrome. Students who feel like an imposter are worried that they don't belong, that someone will "expose them for being a fake." This feeling is pretty common for anyone who finds themselves in a new environment and is not sure if they have what it takes to succeed. Trust the professionals who work with first-year college students: you *do* have what it takes, and you *will* succeed. Just give yourself time to get adjusted to everything.
2. **Worry about making a mistake.** This concern often goes with imposter syndrome. Students who worry about making a mistake don't like to answer questions in class, volunteer for a challenging assignment, and even ask for help from others. Instead of avoiding situations where you may fail, embrace the process of learning, which includes—is even dependent on—

making mistakes. The more you practice courage in these situations and focus on what you are going to learn from failing, the more confident you become about your abilities.

3. **Try to manage everything yourself.** Even superheroes need help from sidekicks and mere mortals. Trying to handle everything on your own every time an issue arises is a recipe for getting stressed out. There will be times when you are overwhelmed by all you have to do. This is when you will need to ask for and allow others to help you.
4. **Ignore your mental and physical health needs.** If you feel you are on an emotional rollercoaster and you cannot find time to take care of yourself, then you have most likely ignored some part of your mental and physical well-being. What you need to do to stay healthy should be non-negotiable. In other words, your sleep, eating habits, exercise, and stress-reducing activities should be your highest priorities.
5. **Forget to enjoy the experience.** Whether you are 18 years old and living on campus or 48 years old starting back to college after taking a break to work and raise a family, be sure to take the time to remind yourself of the joy that learning can bring.

Get Connected

Which apps help you meet the expectations of college? Will you be able to meet the expectations of being responsible for your schedule and assignments?

- My Study Life(opens in new window) understands how college works and provides you with a calendar, to-do list, and reminders that will help you keep track of the work you have to do.

How can you set goals and work toward them while in college?

- The Strides(opens in new window) app provides you with the opportunity to create SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time bound) goals and track daily habits. These daily habits will add up over time toward your goals.

What can you do to develop your learning skills?

- Lumosity(opens in new window) is a brain-training app that can help you build the thinking and learning skills you will need to meet learning challenges in college. If you want to test your memory and attention—and build your skills—take the fit test and then play different games to improve your fitness.

How can you develop networks with people in college?

- LinkedIn(opens in new window) is a professional networking app that allows you to create a profile and network with others. Creating a LinkedIn account as a first-year college student will help you create a professional profile that you can use to find others with similar interests.
- Internships.com provides information, connections, and support to help your career planning and activities. Even if you are not planning an internship right away, you may find some useful and surprising ideas and strategies to motivate your approach.

Footnotes

- P.P. Bilbao, P. I. Lucido, T. C. Iringan and R. B. Javier. (2008). *Curriculum Development*.

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1.7: What Is College, Really?

Big Classes, Small Classes

While most high school classes are fairly small, many college classes are large—up to several hundred students in a large lecture class. Other classes you may take will be as small as high school classes. In large lecture classes you may feel totally anonymous—even invisible—in a very large class. This feeling can get some students in trouble, however. Here are some common mistaken assumptions and attitudes about large classes:

- The instructor won't notice me sitting there, so I can check e-mail or read for a different class if I get bored.
- The instructor doesn't know my name or recognize me, so I don't even need to go to class as long as I can borrow someone's notes to find out what happens.
- I hate listening to lectures, so I might as well think about something else because I'm not going to learn anything this way anyway.

These comments all share the same flawed attitude about college: it's up to the instructor to teach in an entertaining way if I am to learn at all—and it's actually the college's or instructor's fault that I'm stuck in this large class, so they're to blame if I think about or do other things. But remember, *in college, you take responsibility for your own learning*. Sure, a student is free to try to sleep in a lecture class, or not attend the class at all—the same way a student is "free" to fail any class he or she chooses!

Figure 1.9



In a lecture class, avoid the temptation to cruise the Web or engage in other activities that will distract you from paying attention.

hackNY.org – fall 2012 hackNY student hackathon – CC BY-SA 2.0.

If you dislike large lecture classes but can't avoid them, the best solution is to learn how to learn in such a situation. Later chapters will give you tips for improving this experience. Just remember that it's up to you to stay actively engaged in your own learning while in college—it's not the instructor's job to entertain you enough to "make" you learn.

There is one thing you need to know right away. Even in a lecture hall holding three hundred students, your instructors *do* know who you are. They may not know your name right away or even by the end of the term, but they see you sitting there, doing whatever you are doing, looking wherever you are looking—and will form a distinct impression of you. Instructors do have academic integrity and won't lower your grade on an exam because you slept once in class, but the impression you make just might affect how far instructors go out of their way to offer a helping hand. Interacting with instructors is a crucial part of education—and the primary way students learn. Successful interaction begins with good communication and mutual respect. If you want your instructors to respect you, then you need to show respect for them and their classes as well.

Core Courses, Electives, Majors, and Credits

Every college has its own course requirements for different programs and degrees. This information is available in a printed course catalog or online. While academic advisors are generally assigned to students to help them plot their path through college and take the most appropriate courses, you should also take this responsibility yourself to ensure you are registering for courses that fit well into your plan for a program completion or degree. In general there are three types of courses:

1. **Core courses**, sometimes called "general education requirements," involve a range of courses from which you can choose to meet this general requirement. You may need to take one or more English classes and possibly math or foreign language requirements. You will need a certain number of credits or course hours in certain types of core courses, but you can often choose among various specific courses for how you meet these requirements.
2. **Required courses in your major** are determined by individual academic departments. Whether you choose to major in English, math, engineering, history, a health field, chemistry, business, or any other field, your individual department sets specific required courses you must take and gives you options for a required additional number of credits in the department. You may not need to declare a major for a while, but this is something you can start thinking about now.
3. **Electives** are courses you choose freely to complete the total number of college credits needed for your program or degree. How many electives you may take, how they "count" toward your total, and what kinds of courses are acceptable as electives all vary considerably among different schools and programs.

Most important is that you understand what courses you need and how each counts. Study the college catalog carefully and be sure to talk things over fully with your advisor. Don't just sign up for courses that sound interesting—you might end up taking courses that don't count toward your degree at all.

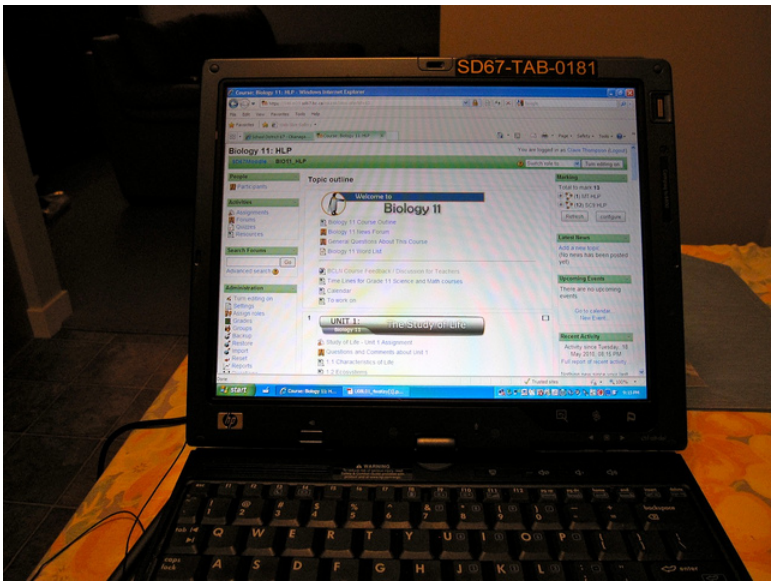
In addition, each term you may have to choose how many courses or hours to take. Colleges have rules about the maximum number of hours allowed for full-time students, but this maximum may in fact be more than you are prepared to manage—especially if you work or have other responsibilities. Taking a light course load, while allowing more time for studying and other activities, could add up over time and result in an extra full year of college (or more!)—at significant additional expense. Part-time students often face decisions based more on time issues. Everyone's situation is unique, however, and all students should talk this issue over with their advisor each year or term.

Online Courses

Most colleges now offer some online courses or regular courses with an online component. You experience an online course via a computer rather than a classroom. Many different variations exist, but all online courses share certain characteristics, such as working independently and communicating with the instructor (and sometimes other students) primarily through written computer messages. If you have never taken an online course, carefully consider what's involved to ensure you will succeed in the course.

- You need to own or have frequent access to a recent model of computer with a high-speed Internet connection.
- Without the set hours of a class, you need to be self-motivating to schedule your time to participate regularly.
- Without an instructor or other students in the room, you need to be able to pay attention effectively to the computer screen. Learning on a computer is not as simple as passively watching television! Take notes.
- Without reminders in class and peer pressure from other students, you'll need to take responsibility to complete all assignments and papers on time.
- Since your instructor will evaluate you primarily through your writing, you need good writing skills for an online course. If you believe you need to improve your writing skills, put off taking an online course until you feel better prepared.
- You must take the initiative to ask questions if you don't understand something.
- You may need to be creative to find other ways to interact with other students in the course. You could form a study group and get together regularly in person with other students in the same course.

Figure 1.10



Online courses are increasingly common at colleges and require independent learning.

Claire Thompson – Marking – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

If you feel you are ready to take on these responsibilities and are attracted to the flexibility of an online course and the freedom to schedule your time in it, see what your college has available.

Class Attendance and Promptness

In some classes at some colleges, attendance is required and absences can affect one's grade in the course. But even when attendance is not required, missing classes will inevitably affect your grade as well. You're not learning if you're not there. Reading another student's notes is not the same.

Arriving to class promptly is also important. Walking into a class that has already begun is rude to the instructor (remember what we said earlier about the impression you may be making) and to other students. A mature student respects the instructor and other students and in turn receives respect back.

College Policies

A college campus is almost like a small town—or country—unto itself. The campus has its own police force, its own government, its own stores, its own ID cards, its own parking rules, and so on. Colleges also have their own policies regarding many types of activities and behaviors. Students who do not understand the rules can sometimes find themselves in trouble.

The most important academic policy is academic honesty. Cheating is taken very seriously. Some high school students may have only received a slap on the wrist if caught looking at another student's paper during a test or turning in a paper containing sentences or paragraphs found online or purchased from a "term-paper mill." In many colleges, academic dishonesty like this may result in automatic failure of the course—or even expulsion from college. The principle of academic honesty is simple: every student must do his or her own work. If you have any doubt of what this means for a paper you are writing, a project you are doing with other students, or anything else, check the college Web site for its policy statements or talk with your instructor.

Colleges also have policies about alcohol and drug use, sexual harassment, hazing, hate crimes, and other potential problems. Residence halls have policies about noise limits, visitors, hours, structural and cosmetic alterations of university property, and so on. The college registrar has policies about course add and drop dates, payment schedules and refunds, and the like. Such policies are designed to ensure that all students have the same right to a quality education—one not unfairly interrupted by the actions of others. You can find these policies on the college Web site or in the catalog.

College Resources

To be successful in college, you need to be fully informed and make wise decisions about the courses you register for, college policies, and additional resources. Always remember that your college *wants* you to succeed. That means that if you are having any difficulties or have any questions whose answers you are unsure about, there are college resources available to help you get

assistance or find answers. This is true of both academic and personal issues that could potentially disrupt your college experience. *Never* hesitate to go looking for help or information—but realize that usually **you have to take the first step**.

The college catalog has already been mentioned as a great source of many kinds of information. You should have an updated catalog every year or know where to find it online.

The college's Web site is the second place to look for help. Students are often surprised to see how much information is available online, including information about college programs, offices, special assistance programs, and so on, as well as helpful information such as studying tips, personal health, financial help, and other resources. Take some time to explore your college's Web site and learn what is available—this could save you a lot of time in the future if you experience any difficulty.

In addition, many colleges have offices or individuals that can help in a variety of ways. Following are some of the resources your college may have. Learn more about your college's resources online or by visiting the office of student services or the dean of students.

- **Academic advising office.** This office helps you choose courses and plan your program or degree. You should have a personal meeting at least once every term.
- **Counseling office.** This office helps with personal problems, including health, stress management, interpersonal issues, and so on.
- **Financial aid office.** If you are presently receiving financial aid or may qualify for assistance, you should know this office well.
- **Tutoring or skill centers.** The title of this resource varies among colleges, but most have special places where students can go for additional help for their courses. There may be a separate math center, writing center, or general study skills center.
- **Computer lab.** Before almost all students became skilled in computer use and had their own computers, colleges built labs where students could use campus computers and receive training or help resolving technical problems. Many campuses still maintain computer centers to assist students with technical issues.
- **Student health clinic.** In addition to providing some basic medical care and making referrals, most college student health centers also help with issues such as diet and exercise counseling, birth control services, and preventive health care.
- **Career guidance or placement office.** This center can help you find a student job or internship, plan for your career after graduation, and receive career counseling.

Figure 1.11



Your college has many resources and many professionals available to help you with any issue that may affect your success as a student.

Tulane Public Relations – Orientation – CC BY 2.0.

- **Office for students with disabilities.** This office may provide various services to help students with disabilities adapt within the college environment.
- **Housing office.** This office not only controls campus residential housing but often assists students to find off-campus private accommodations.
- **Diversity office.** This office promotes cultural awareness on campus, runs special programs, and assists diverse students with adjusting to campus culture.

- **Office of student affairs or student organizations.** Participating in a group of like-minded students often supports academic success.
- **Athletic center.** Most colleges have exercise equipment, pools, courts and tracks, and other resources open to all students. Take advantage of this to improve or maintain your personal health, which promotes academic success.
- **Other specialized offices for student populations.** These may include an office supporting students who speak English as a second language, adult students returning to college, international students, religious students, students with children (possibly a child-care center), veterans of the armed services, students preparing for certain types of careers, and so on.
- **Your instructors.** It never hurts to ask a friendly instructor if he or she knows of any additional college resources you haven't yet discovered. There may be a brand new program on campus, or a certain department may offer a service not widely promoted through the college Web site.

Everyone needs help at some time—you should never feel embarrassed or ashamed to seek help. Remember that a part of your tuition and fees are going to these offices, and you have every right to take advantage of them.

Key Takeaways

- Even in large lecture classes, attendance is important, along with forming a good impression and paying attention.
- Study the college catalog and talk with your advisor to ensure you understand the role of core classes, electives, and major courses in your program or degree requirements.
- Online courses offer another option in many colleges but require a certain preparedness and a heightened sense of responsibility.
- To avoid inadvertently finding yourself in trouble, know your college's policies for academic issues and campus behavior.
- Taking advantage of the many resources your college offers to help you with a wide range of academic and personal matters is essential for success in college.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. For each of the following statements, circle T for true or F for false:

checkpoint exercises

T	F	If your instructor in a large lecture class is boring, there's nothing you can do except to try to stay awake and hope you never have him or her for another class.
T	F	In a large lecture hall, if you sit near the back and pretend to listen, you can write e-mails or send text messages without your instructor noticing.

2. List three things a college student should be good at in order to succeed in an online course.

_____

_____

_____

3. Use your imagination and describe three different actions that would violate of your college's academic honesty policy.

_____

_____

_____

4. Where on campus would you first go for help choosing your courses for next term?

_____

For help with your math class?

_____

For a problem coping with a lot of stress?

_____

To learn about your options for student loans?

_____

To find a better apartment?

_____

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1.8: Navigating the Social world of College

Getting Along with Others

Interdependence

Humans are social creatures—it's simply in our nature. We continually interact with other students and instructors, and we can learn a great deal from these interactions that heighten the learning process. This frequent interaction with others forms a state of interdependence. College students depend on their instructors, but just as importantly, they depend on other students in many ways.

As important as our interactions with others are, we do not automatically possess the skills that help us form good relationships and make the most of our experiences. Consider how these two college students are different:

John often arrives just as class is beginning and leaves immediately afterward. He makes little effort to talk with other students in the classroom, and after class he goes off to study alone or to his part-time job, where he spends most of his time at a computer screen. He is diligent in his studies and generally does well. After two months, he has not gotten to know his roommate very well, and he generally eats alone with a book in hand. He stops by to see his instructors in their offices only if he missed a class due to illness, and on weekends and holidays he often hangs out at his parents' house or sees old friends.

Kim likes to get to class early and sits near others so they can talk about the reading for class or compare notes about assignments. She enjoys running into other students she knows from her classes and usually stops to chat. Although she is an older working student who lives alone off campus, she often dines in a campus café and asks students she meets in her classes to join her. After two months, with the approach of midterms, she formed a study group with a couple other students. If she feels she doesn't understand an important lecture topic very well, she gets to her instructor's office a few minutes ahead of office hours to avoid missing out by having to wait in line. A few weeks into the term, she spent a weekend with a student from another country and learned much about a culture about which she had previously known little.

These students are very different. Which do you think is more fully enjoying the college experience? Which do you think is more likely to do well academically? Most of us fall somewhere between these two extremes, but we can learn to be more like Kim and more actively engage with others.

Recognize the Value of Social Interaction

Building good relationships is important for happiness and a successful college experience. College offers the opportunity to meet many people you would likely not meet otherwise in life. Make the most of this opportunity to gain a number of benefits:

- A growing understanding of diverse other people, how they think, and what they feel that will serve you well throughout your life and in your future career
- A heightened sense of your own identity, especially as you interact with others with different personalities and from different backgrounds
- Emotional comfort from friendship with someone who understands you and with whom you can talk about your problems, joys, hopes, and fears
- An opportunity to grow with wider intellectual and emotional horizons

College often offers an opportunity to be stimulated and excited by new relationships and interactions with people who will challenge your thinking and help you become your best. Still, it can be difficult to get started with new relationships in college.

Making New Friends

Some people just make friends naturally, but many first-year college students are more shy or quiet and may need to actively seek new friends. Here are some starting points:

1. **Keep all doors open for meeting new people.** If you live in a dorm, literally keep the door open. Try to sit with different people at meals so you can get to know them better. Study in a common area or lounge where you'll be among others.
2. **Be open in your interests.** Don't limit yourself to people who share only certain interests. Meeting people by studying together is an excellent way to get to know people with different interests.

3. **Don’t try to get involved in everything going on around you.** Committing to too many activities or joining too many social groups will spread your time too thin, and you may not spend enough time with anyone to get to know them.
4. **Let others see who you really are.** Let people get to know the things you’re interested in, your real passions. People who really know you are more likely to become good friends.
5. **Make an effort to get to know others, too.** Show some interest. Don’t talk just about *your* interests—ask them about theirs. Show others that you’re interested, that you think they’re worth spending time with, and that you really do want to get to know them.
6. **Once a friendship has started, be a good friend.** Respect your friends for what they are and don’t criticize them or talk about them behind their back. Give emotional support when your friends need it and accept their support as well when you need it.

Are You Shy?

If you’re shy, try meeting and talking to people in situations where you can interact one-to-one, such as talking with another student after class. Start with what you have in common—“How’d you do on the test?”—and let the conversation grow from there. Avoid the emotional trap of thinking everyone but you is making new friends and start some conversations with others who look interesting to you. You’ll soon find other “shy” or quiet people eager to interact with you as well and get to know you.

Shy people may be more likely to feel lonely at times, especially while still feeling new at college. Loneliness is usually a temporary emotional state, however. For tips for how to overcome feelings of loneliness, seek out a counselor or ally on your campus to help you.

Communication Skills

Communication is at the core of almost all social interactions, including those involved in friendships and relationships with your instructors. Communication with others has a huge effect on our lives, what we think and feel, and what and how we learn. Communication is, many would say, what makes us human.

Oral communication involves not only speech and listening, of course, but also nonverbal communication: facial expressions, tone of voice, and many other body language signals that affect the messages sent and received. Many experts think that people pay more attention, often unconsciously, to *how* people say something than to *what* they are saying. When the nonverbal message is inconsistent with the verbal (spoken) message, just as when the verbal message itself is unclear because of poorly chosen words or vague explanations, then miscommunication may occur.

Miscommunication is at the root of many misunderstandings among people and makes it difficult to build relationships.

Figure 1.12



Miscommunication is at the root of many misunderstandings.

smile_kerry – argument. – CC BY-NC 2.0.

The next chapter discusses oral communication skills in general and guidelines for communicating well with your instructors. The same communication skills are important for building and maintaining significant relationships.

Remember that communication is a two-way process. Listening skills are critical for most college students simply because many of us may not have learned how to really listen to another person. Here are some guidelines for how to listen effectively:

- **Talk less to listen more.** Most people naturally like to share their thoughts and feelings, and some people almost seem unable to stop talking long enough to ever listen to another person. Try this: next time you're in a conversation with another student, deliberately try not to speak very much but give the other person a chance to speak fully. You may notice a big difference in how much you gain from the conversation.
- **Ask questions.** To keep the conversational ball rolling, show your interest in the other person by asking them about things they are saying. This helps the other person feel that you are interested in them and helps build the relationship.
- **Watch and respond to the other person's body language.** You'll learn much more about their feelings for what they're saying than if you listen only to their words.
- **Show the other person that you're really listening and that you care.** Make eye contact and respond appropriately with nods and brief comments like "That's interesting!" or "I know what you mean" or "Really?" Be friendly, smile when appropriate, and encourage the person to keep speaking.
- **Give the other person feedback.** Show you understand by saying things like "So you're saying that…" or asking a question that demonstrates you've been following what they're saying and want to know more.

As you learn to improve your listening skills, think also about what you are saying yourself and how. Here are additional guidelines for effective speaking:

- **Be honest, but don't be critical**. Strongly disagreeing may only put the other person on the defensive—an emotion sure to disrupt the hope for good communication. You can disagree, but be respectful to keep the conversation from becoming emotional. Say "I don't know, I think that maybe it's…" instead of "That's crazy! What's *really* going on is.…"
- **Look for common ground.** Make sure that your side of a conversation relates to what the other person is saying and that it focuses on what you have in common. There's almost no better way to stop a conversation dead in its tracks than to ignore everything the other person has just said and launch into an unrelated story or idea of your own.
- **Avoid sarcasm and irony unless you know the person well.** Sarcasm is easily misunderstood and may be interpreted as an attack on the other person's ideas or statements.
- **Don't try to talk like the other person,** especially if the person is from a different ethnic or cultural background or speaks with an accent or heavy slang. The other person will feel that you are imitating them and maybe even making fun of them. Be yourself and speak naturally.
- **While not imitating the other person, relate to his or her personality and style of thinking.** We do not speak to our parents or instructors the exact same way we speak to our closest friends, nor should we speak to someone we've just met the same way. Show your respect for the other person by keeping the conversation on an appropriate level.
- **Remember that** assertive communication **is better than passive or aggressive communication.** "Assertive" in this context means you are honest and direct in stating your ideas and thoughts; you are confident and clear and willing to discuss your ideas while still respecting the thoughts and ideas of others. A passive communicator is reluctant to speak up, seems to agree with everything others say, hesitates to say anything that others might disagree with, and therefore seldom communicates much at all. Passive communication simply is not a real exchange in communication. Aggressive communication, at the other extreme, is often highly critical of the thoughts and ideas of others. This communication style may be sarcastic, emotional, and even insulting. Real communication is not occurring because others are not prompted to respond honestly and openly.
- **Choose your conversations wisely.** Recognize that you don't have to engage in all conversations. Make it your goal to form relationships and engage in interactions that help you learn and grow as a person. College life offers plenty of opportunities for making relationships and interacting with others if you keep open to them, so you needn't try to participate in every social situation around you.

Some students may have difficulty in the opposite direction: their social lives may become so rich or so time consuming that they have problems balancing their social lives with their schoolwork. Online social media, for example, may eat up a lot of time.

Online Social Networking

Most college students know all about Facebook, Twitter, blogging, chat rooms, and other social networking sites. Current studies reveal that over 90 percent of all college students use Facebook or MySpace regularly, although older students use these sites less commonly. The media have often emphasized negative stories involving safety concerns, obsessive behavior, a perceived superficiality of social interaction online, and so on. But more recently, online social networking has been found to have several

benefits. Many of those who once criticized Facebook and MySpace are now regularly networking among themselves via LinkedIn, Plaxo, and other “professional” networking sites.

Following are some of the benefits of Facebook—some clear to those using it, others revealed only recently by research in the social sciences:

- Facebook and other forms of online networking makes it easy to stay in touch with friends and family at a geographical distance. College students who have moved away from former friends seem to make the transition more easily when they stay in touch. Maintaining past relationships does not prevent most people from making new friends at college.
- Facebook provides users with increased “social capital,” which is a sum of resources gained through one’s relationships with people. Facebook users gain information, opportunities for participation in activities and groups, greater knowledge about others, some interaction skills, and so forth. Social capital is also associated with self-esteem, success in some endeavors, and general happiness.
- Facebook makes it easier for people who are shy or otherwise slow to initiate or respond to interactions with others to participate socially in a group. Online network sites also offer an outlet for self-expression and sharing.
- For many college students, interactions on Facebook strengthen personal relationships rather than detracting from them.
- Acknowledging that online social networking is a reality for most college students, many college administrators and instructors also use it to stay in better touch with students, to provide information and encouragement, and to help students experience the full richness of the college experience. Your college may have a Facebook page where you can learn much about things happening around campus, and you may even receive tweets about important announcements.

Figure 1.13



ULCA Bruins Facebook page [www.facebook.com].

Still, online social networking is not 100 percent beneficial for all college students. Someone who becomes obsessed with constantly updating their profile or attracting a huge number of friends can spend so much time at their computer that they miss out on other important aspects of college life. Hopefully by now everyone knows why you should never post compromising or inappropriate photos or information about yourself anywhere online, even as a joke: many employers, college admissions offices, and others may find this compromising material in the future and deny you the job, internship, graduate program, or other position that you want. It’s important also to protect your identity and privacy on online sites.

Overall, online networking in moderation can help enrich one's life. When used to build relationships, gain information, and stay in touch with a larger community, it can contribute to success in college. Most college students use Facebook ten to thirty minutes a day. If you're spending more than that, you might ask yourself if you're missing out on something else.

Balancing Schoolwork and Social Life

If there's one thing true of virtually all college students, it's that you don't have enough time to do everything you want. Once you've developed friendships within the college community and have an active social life, you may feel you don't have enough time for your studies and other activities such as work. For many students, the numerous social opportunities of college become a distraction, and with less attention to one's studies, academic performance can drop. Here are some tips for balancing your social life with your studies:

- **Keep working on your time management skills,** as you will learn in future chapters, you can't just "go with the flow" and hope that, after spending time with friends, you have enough time (and energy) left over for studying. Make a study schedule that provides enough time for what you need to do. Study first; socialize after.
- **Keep working on your study skills,** apply what you will learn in future chapters covering reading, note taking, studying and test taking, when you have only a limited amount of time for studying, be sure you're using that time as effectively as possible as you read assignments and prepare for class, organize your notes after class, and prepare for tests.
- **If you can't resist temptations, reduce them.** If you are easily distracted by the opportunity to talk with your roommate, spouse, or family members because you study where you live, then go to the library to study.
- **Make studying a social experience.** If your studying keeps you so busy that you feel like you don't have much of a social life, form a study group. You will learn more than you would alone by gaining from the thoughts of others, and you can enjoy interacting with others without falling behind.
- **Keep your social life from affecting your studying.** Simply scheduling study time doesn't mean you'll use it well. If you stayed up late the night before, you may not today be able to concentrate well as you study for that big test. This is another reason for good time management and scheduling your time well, looking ahead.
- **Get help if you need it.** If you're still having difficulty balancing your study time with other activities, talk with your academic advisor or a counselor. Maybe something else is keeping you from doing your best. Maybe you need some additional study skills or you need to get some extra help from a tutor or campus study center. Remember, your college wants you to succeed and will try to help those who seek help.

Campus Groups

The college social experience also includes organized campus groups and activities. Participating in organized activities requires taking some initiative—you can't be passive and expect these opportunities to come knocking on your door—but is well worthwhile for fully enriching college interactions. The active pursuit of a stimulating life on campus offers many benefits:

- **Organized groups and activities speed your transition into your new life.** New students can be overwhelmed by their studies and every aspect of a new life, and they may be slow to build a new life. Rather than waiting for it to come along on its own, you can immediately begin broadening your social contacts and experiences by joining groups that share your interests.
- **Organized groups and activities help you experience a much greater variety of social life than you might otherwise.** New students often tend to interact more with other students their own age and with similar backgrounds—this is just natural. But if you simply go with the flow and don't actively reach out, you are much less likely to meet and interact with others from the broader campus diversity: students who are older and may have a perspective you may otherwise miss, upper-level students who have much to share from their years on campus, and students of diverse heritage or culture with whom you might otherwise be slow to interact.
- **Organized groups and activities help you gain new skills, whether technical, physical, intellectual, or social.** Such skills may find their way into your résumé when you next seek a job or your application for a scholarship or other future educational opportunity. Employers and others like to see well-rounded students with a range of proficiencies and experiences.
- **Organized groups and activities are fun and a great way to stay healthy and relieve stress.** Exercise and physical activity are essential for health and well-being, and many organized activities offer a good way to keep moving.

Participating in Groups and Activities

College campuses offer a wide range of clubs, organizations, and other activities open to all students. College administrators view this as a significant benefit and work to promote student involvement in such groups. When you made your decision to attend your

college, you likely received printed materials or studied the college's Web site and saw many opportunities. But you may have been so busy attending to academic matters that you haven't thought of these groups since. It's a good time now to check out the possibilities:

Figure 1.14



Check bulletin boards on campus to learn about cultural events.

Jeffrey Beall – College Campus Bulletin Board(opens in new window) – CC BY-ND 2.0.

- Browse the college Web site, where you're likely to find links to pages for student clubs and organizations.
- Watch for club fairs, open houses, and similar activities on campus. Especially near the beginning of the year, an activity fair may include tables set up by many groups to provide students with information. Talk with the representatives from any group in which you may be interested.
- Look for notices on bulletin boards around campus. Student groups really do want new students to join, so they usually try to post information where you can find it.
- Stop by the appropriate college office, such as the student affairs or student activities office or cultural center.
- If you are looking for a group with very specialized interests, check with the academic offices of departments where many students with that interest may be majoring.
- Consider a wide variety of types of organizations. Some are primarily social; some are political or activist; some are based on hobbies (photography, chess, equestrianism, bird watching, videogaming, computer programming); some involve the arts (instrumental music, choral singing, painting, poetry writing, drama club); some are forms of physical recreation (rock-climbing, ballroom dancing, archery, yoga, table tennis, tai chi, team sports); some focus on volunteerism (tutoring other students, community service projects, food drives); and others are related to academic or intellectual pursuits (nursing club, math club, chess club, engineering club, debate club, student literary magazine).
- Consider other forms of involvement and roles beyond clubs. Gain leadership experience by running for office in student government or applying for a residence hall support position. If you are looking for a job, consider what kinds of people you'll have the opportunity to interact with. Seek out the job placement specialist on your campus for assistance in landing a great on or off-campus job. These may be associated with your financial aid department on campus.
- If your campus doesn't have a group focused on a particular activity you enjoy yourself, think about starting a new club. Your college will help you get started; talk with the student activities or affairs office.

Whatever your interests, don't be shy about checking out a club or organization. Take chances and explore. Attending a meeting or gathering is not a commitment—you're just going the first time to see what it's like, and you have no obligation to join. Keep an open mind as you meet and observe other students in the group, especially if you don't feel at first like you fit in: remember that part of the benefit of the experience is to meet others who are not necessarily just like everyone you already know.

A Note on Greek Life

Fraternities and sororities appeal to many students on many campuses. You meet a lot of people quickly and have a social life provided for you almost automatically, with many events and parties as well as usually an active house life. Many people have formed lasting, even lifelong relationships with their fraternity and sorority friends. On the other hand, this living and social experience may limit the kinds of people you meet and present fewer opportunities to interact with others outside the Greek system. If there are frequent activities, it may be important to learn to say no at time when studying becomes a priority. If you are interested in but not yet committed to this life, it's worthwhile to find out what the houses at your school are really like, consider what your life would likely be like in a fraternity or sorority, and think about how it may impact your college goals.

Bridging the Generation Gap

Is there still a "generation gap" in our society? Maybe not in the same sense as when that phrase came into being in the 1960s, but it remains generally true that most people naturally gravitate toward others of similar age. Even in the open, accepting environment of most colleges, many students interact primarily with others of similar age—which, sadly, misses a great opportunity for both older and younger students to learn from each other.

Younger, "traditional" students just out of high school usually live in residence halls and immediately meet other students of the same age. New students who are just a few years older, who usually have spent some time in the workforce before returning to their education, are more likely to live in a house or apartment and probably spend less time on campus interacting with other students. Some students may be decades older than both traditional and most untraditional students, returning to college sometimes with the desire to change careers or simply to take classes of special interest; their lives may be so well settled in other respects that they have little interest at all in the social world of college. Students in all of these groups may be slow to initiate interactions with each other.

This is one of the great benefits of organized campus groups and activities, however. Regardless of your age or background, you can attend a meeting of those with similar interests and have the opportunity to meet people you simply would not have crossed paths with otherwise. Age barriers rapidly break down when people share the same interests.

Overcoming Difficulties and Resolving Conflicts

Conflicts among people who are interacting are natural. People have many differences in opinions, ideas, emotions, and behaviors, and these differences sometimes cause conflicts. Here are just a few examples of conflicts that may occur among college students:

- Your roommate is playing loud music in your room, and you need some quiet to study for a test.
- You want to have a nice dinner out, but your spouse wants to save the money to buy new furniture.
- Your instructor gave you a C on a paper because it lacks some of the required elements, but you feel it deserves a better grade because you think it accomplished more important goals.
- Others at your Greek house want to invite only members of other fraternities and sororities to an upcoming party, but you want the party to be more inclusive and to invite more diverse students.
- Your partner wants to have sex with you, but you want to wait until you get protection.

So how can such conflicts be resolved? Two things are necessary for conflict resolution that does not leave one or more of the people involved feeling negative about the outcome: attitude and communication.

A conflict cannot be resolved satisfactorily unless all people involved have the right attitude:

- **Respect the options and behaviors of others.** Accept that people are not all alike and learn to celebrate your differences. Most situations do not involve a single right or wrong answer.
- **Be open minded.** Just because at first you are sure that that you are right, do not close the door to other possibilities. Look at the other's point of view. Be open to change—even when that means accepting constructive criticism.
- **Calm down.** You can't work together to resolve a conflict while you're still feeling strong emotions. Agree with the other to wait until you're both able to discuss it without strong emotions.
- **Recognize the value of compromise.** Even if you disagree after calmly talking over an issue, accept that as a human reality and understand that a compromise may be necessary in order to get along with others.

With the right attitude, you can then work together to resolve the issue. This process depends on good communication:

- **Listen.** Don't simply argue for your position, but listen carefully to what the other says. Pay attention to their body language as you try to understand their point of view and ask questions to ensure that you do. Paraphrase what you think you hear to give the other a chance to correct any misunderstanding.
- **Use "I statements" rather than "you statements."** Explain your point of view about the situation in a way that does not put the other person on the defensive and evoke emotions that make resolution more difficult. Don't say, "You're always playing loud music when I'm trying to study." Instead, say, "I have difficulty studying when you play loud music, and that makes me frustrated and irritable." Don't blame the other for the problem—that would just get emotions flowing again.
- **Brainstorm together to find a solution that satisfies both of you.** Some compromise is usually needed, but that is usually not difficult to reach when you're calm and have the right attitude about working together on a solution. In some cases, you may simply have to accept a result that you still do not agree with, simply in order to move on.

The process of conflict resolution is often uncomfortable at times. In most cases, when the people involved have a good attitude and are open to compromise, conflicts can be resolved successfully.

Yet sometimes there seems to be no resolution. Sometimes the other person may simply be difficult and refuse to even try to work out a solution. Regrettably, not everyone on or off campus is mature enough to be open to other perspectives. With some interpersonal conflicts, you may simply have to decide not to see that person anymore or find other ways to avoid the conflict in the future. But remember, most conflicts can be solved among adults, and it's seldom a good solution to run away from a problem that will continue to surface and keep you from being happy with your life.

Roommate Issues

At many colleges students just out of high school must live in a campus residence hall. Other students may live in a shared apartment with new roommates. This is the first time many students have had to share a room, suite, or apartment with others who were not family members, and this situation may lead to conflicts and strong feelings that can even affect your academic success.

As in other interactions, the keys to forming a good relationship with a roommate are communication and attitude. From the beginning, you should talk about everyone's expectations of the other(s) and what matters most to you about where you live. Don't wait until problems happen before talking. It's often good to begin with the key practical issues: agreeing on quiet hours for study (limiting not only loud music but also visits from others), time for lights out, neatness and cleaning up, things shared and private things not to touch.

Show respect for the other's ideas and possessions, respect their privacy, and try to listen more than you talk. Even if your roommate does not become a close friend, you can have a harmonious, successful relationship that makes your residence a good home for both of you. Millions of college students before you have learned to work this out, and if both (or all) of you respect each other and keep communication open and nonconfrontational, you will easily get through the small bumps in the road ahead, too. Follow these guidelines to help ensure you get along well:

- **Anticipate problems before they happen.** Think about things that you consider essential in your living environment and talk with a new roommate about these essentials now.
- **Deal with any problem promptly.** Don't wait until a behavior is well established before speaking up, as if the other person will somehow catch on that it aggravates you. It may be as simple as a roommate using your coffee cup or borrowing your toothpaste without asking, but if you say nothing, trying to be polite, the habit may expand to other things.
- **Be patient, flexible, and willing to compromise.** It may take a while for each of you to get used to each other and to establish a communication pattern of openness so that you can be honest with each other about what really matters.
- **Be warm, use humor, and be sensitive.** Telling someone that they're doing something bothersome can be very difficult for many people. Think before speaking, looking for the best way to communicate what you feel. Remember, you'll be spending a lot of time around this person, so do you really want them to think of you as bossy or obsessive-compulsive?
- **Get out more.** Sometimes it helps to spend more time elsewhere on campus, studying in the library or another quiet place. You just might need a certain amount of time a day alone. That's fine, but don't expect your roommate to have to leave just to give you that time alone!

But What If You *Really* Have a Roommate Problem?

In some situations and with some people who will not compromise and do not respect you and your needs, a roommate can be a serious problem. In some circumstances, you may able to move to a different room. Room changes usually are not granted simply because you "don't get along," but certain circumstances may justify a change. The following are some examples:

- Your roommate smokes in the room.
- Your roommate uses illegal drugs, drinks alcohol underage, or conducts other illegal activities in the room.
- Your roommate repeatedly refuses to limit activities at any hour to allow you to sleep.
- Your roommate does anything that threatens your physical well-being or safety.
- Your roommate denies you your rights to practice your religion or other basic rights.

If you have a problem like this, first talk with your resident advisor (RA) or other residence hall authority. They will explain the process for a room change, if warranted, or other ways for managing the problem,

Dealing with Harassment

Although college campuses are for the most part safe, secure, and friendly places where social and intellectual interaction is generally mature and responsible, harassment can occur in any setting. Harassment is a general term referring to behavior that is intended to disturb or threaten another person in some way, often psychologically. Typically the person or people doing the harassment target their victim because of a difference in race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sex, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

Acts of harassment may be verbal, physical, psychological, or any other behavior intended to disturb another person. Bullying behavior, name-calling, belittling, gesturing obscenely, stalking, mobbing—any action intended to torment or deliberately make another person uncomfortable or feel humiliated is harassment. Harassment may also be intended to manipulate a targeted person to act in some specific way.

Sexual harassment is a special term referring to persistent, unwanted sexual behaviors or advances. Sexual harassment may begin with words but progress to unwanted touching and potentially even rape.

Many types of harassment are illegal. In the workplace, a supervisor who tells off-color sexual jokes around an employee of the opposite gender may be guilty of sexual harassment. Students who deliberately malign members of another race may be guilty of committing a hate crime. Physically tormenting another student in a hazing may be judged assault and battery. Any discrimination in the workplace based on race, religion, age, sex, and so on is illegal. On a college campus, any harassment of a student by a faculty member or college employee is expressly forbidden, unethical, and also possibly illegal.

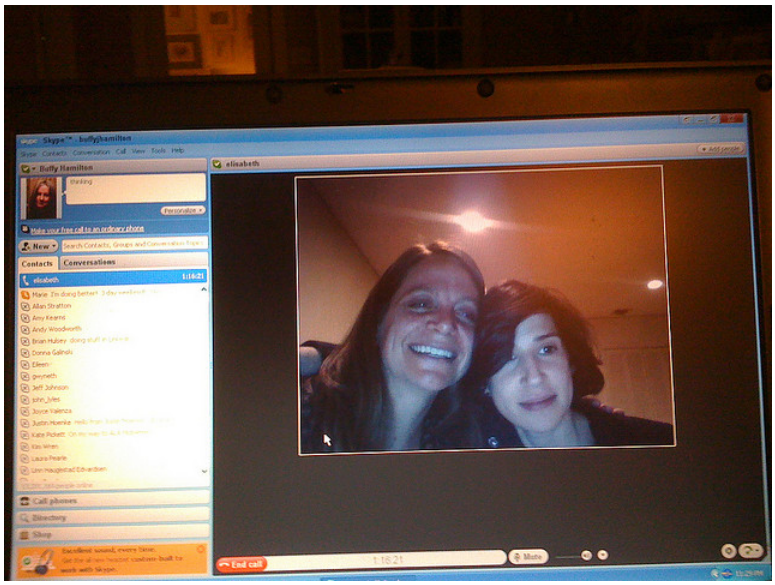
Harassment of any type, at any time, of any person, is wrong and unacceptable. You will know it if you are harassed, and you should know also that it is your basic right to be free of harassment and that your college has strict policies against all forms of harassment. Here's what you should do if you are being harassed:

1. Tell the person to stop the behavior—or if you feel at any risk of harm, get out of the situation immediately.
2. Document the incident, particularly with ongoing harassment. Keep notes of the details. Tell someone you trust about the situation.
3. Report the harassment to the appropriate college authority. If you are unsure which to go to, go to the dean of students first.

Changing Family Relationships

The college years are a time of many changes, including one's relationships with parents, siblings, and one's own children and partners. Any time there is change, issues may arise.

Figure 1.15



A video communication program like Skype makes it easy to stay in touch with friends and family.

theunquietlibrarian – Skyping with Cherished Friends Elisabeth and Michelle! – CC BY-NC 2.0.

As in other relationships, try to understand the other's perspective. Honesty is particularly important—but with tact and understanding. Here are some tips for getting along:

- Understand that your parents may not change their attitudes toward you as quickly as you yourself may be changing. They may still think of you as a younger person in need of their continued guidance. They will worry about you and fear that you might fall in with the wrong crowd or engage in risky behavior. Be patient. Take the time to communicate, and don't close yourself off. Let them gradually accept you as a more mature person who can make your own decisions wisely.
- Stay in touch. You may be busier than ever and feel you haven't time for a phone call or e-mail, but communication is very important for parents—especially if they are now empty nesters without other children at home. Even if they seem to want too much involvement in your life and to make decisions for you, realize that this at least in part is simply a desire to stay in touch with you—and to feel they still matter in your life.
- Use your best listening skills. Understanding what they're really feeling, which is often simply a concern for you born of their love for you, will usually help you know best to respond.
- Be assured that over time your parents and other family members will get used to your being on your own and will accept your ability to make your own decisions. Time itself often solves issues.
- With your own family, now that you are busier than ever with classes and work, you may need to pay special attention to ensuring you stay active in family relationships. Schedule times for family outings and make room in your days for casual interactions. But remember, it's not how much time you spend together but the quality of that time, so give your family your full attention when you are together.

Key Takeaways

- A rich, diverse social life is an important dimension of the college experience that contributes also to academic success.
- Getting along with others involves communication skills and a willingness to interact with different people in a number of different ways.
- Effective listening skills are as important as expressing yourself well verbally and nonverbally.
- Online social networking used in moderation can be beneficial.
- Balancing one's social life with schoolwork requires time management skills as well as good study skills.
- Because social interactions frequently involve conflicting values, behaviors, or ideas, it's important to respect others, stay open minded, be open to compromise, and understand how to resolve conflicts.
- Acknowledge that family relationships will likely change after you enter college and work to ease the transition for everyone.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. List three or four guidelines for interacting successfully with others.

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. You are talking after class with another student with whom you'd like to be friends, but you're distracted by a test you have to study for. If you're not careful, what nonverbal communication signals might you accidentally send that could make the other person feel you are *not* friendly? Describe two or three nonverbal signals that could give the wrong impression.

_____

_____

_____

3. What are the best things *to say* when you're actively engaged in *listening* to another?

_____

_____

_____

4. For each of the following statements about effective communication, circle T for true or F for false:

checkpoint exercises

T	F	Avoid eye contact until you've gotten to know the person well enough to be sure they will not misinterpret your interest.
T	F	Using the same slang or accent as other people will make them see you respect them as they are.
T	F	Communicating your ideas with honesty and confidence is usually more effective than just agreeing with what others are saying.
T	F	Communicating with people online is seldom as effective as calling them on the telephone or seeing them in person.
T	F	It's usually best to accept spontaneous opportunities for social interaction, because you'll always have time later for your studies.

5. You are upset because your roommate (or a family member) always seems to have several friends over just when you need to study most. Write in the space below what you might say to this person to explain the problem, using "I statements" rather than "you statements."

_____

_____

_____

6. If another person is acting very emotionally and is harassing you, what should you *not* do at that moment?

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1.9: Summary- How Can This Book And This Course Help?

Questions to consider:

- How will you be able to develop your purpose?
- In what ways will you be able to create strategies for your success?
- What other resources can you use to help you succeed?

As Reginald and Madison go through their college experiences and create a balance between their academic and personal lives, their stories, no doubt, will diverge. But you can be assured that each of them will demonstrate grit, the ability to stay focused on a goal over the long-term, along the way. As Duckworth (2016) has said, it takes passion and perseverance to be gritty. It also takes resilience, or the ability to bounce back from adversity. The challenges you face will certainly stretch you, but if you have these three things—purpose, strategies, and resources—you will be more likely to bounce back, even become stronger in the process. This book has been designed with these things in mind.

Develop Your "Why"

This chapter began with the suggestion to explore why you are in college or, more simply, what your purpose is. This course—and this book—will help you continue to refine your answer and create a map for your journey to fulfill your purpose. The features in this book that help you develop your purpose include the following:

- Student Survey Questions: Each chapter opens with several questions that provide you with a snapshot on how you feel about the chapter content. How does this feature help you develop purpose? It allows you to develop better self-awareness, which will in turn help you build an awareness of your purpose.
- Analysis Questions: These questions are included throughout each chapter. Consider them "pauses" to help you reflect on what you have read and how to incorporate the information into your own journey.

Refine Your Strategies for Success

Purpose by itself may illuminate the pathway forward, but it will take strategies to help you complete your journey. Think of the strategies you will learn in this course as tools you will need along the way to completing your degree. The following features provide you with an opportunity to practice and refine strategies for success:

- Application Questions: Any time you are asked to *apply* what you are learning in the chapters, you are improving your skills. Look for them throughout and take some time to stop, think, and use the skill.
- Activities: As you read, you will also have the opportunity to interact with the content. They give you the chance to refine the strategies that will help you succeed in college.
- Career Connection: This feature allows you to consider how the skills you are developing for college connect to your future career. Making these connections will help you appreciate the deeper importance of them.

Use Your Resources

In addition to developing strategies for succeeding in your academic and future professional career, you will find that this course will point out the resources you may need to obtain more tools or refuel your desire to continue along the pathway. No one succeeds at anything by oneself. The features related to resources will certainly help you find ways to fill up your toolkit of information.

- Get Connected: Despite its ability to distract us from the work we need to do, technology can help you accomplish your day-to-day tasks with relative ease. This feature offers suggestions for apps and websites that can help you build skills or just keep track of due dates!
- Where Do You Go from Here?: The skills and habits you are building now will serve you well in your future endeavors. This feature is designed to help you dig deeper into the chapter content and refine your research skills. It also asks that you find ways to connect what you are learning now to your life and career.

All of these features, in addition to the content, will help you see yourself for who you are and provide opportunities to develop in ways that will make reaching your goal a little easier. Will it be challenging at times? Yes, it will. Will it take time to reflect on those challenges and find better ways to learn and reach your goals? Most definitely. But the effort you put into completing your

college degree will result in the confidence you will gain from knowing that anything you set your mind to do—and you work hard for—can be accomplished.

Chapter Takeaways

- The first year of college is the most critical. Make the commitment to overcome any obstacles to a successful transition and stay committed and motivated to succeed.
- Although college students differ in many ways, all successful students share certain common traits, including a positive attitude, effective critical thinking skills, good time management skills, effective study skills, interactions with instructors and other students, and good habits for personal health and financial stability.
- You can learn to maximize your learning by attending to each step of the learning process: preparing, absorbing, capturing, and reviewing.
- It is important to understand your personal learning style and use it well in classes, while also making the effort to learn in new ways and work with other students for a more effective overall learning experience.
- Working with your academic advisor and taking advantage of the many resources available at your college are key actions to ensure success.
- Understanding the larger characteristics of college success leads to a richer college experience, supplementing the value of good grades.
- While it may take a few weeks to develop all the skills needed for success in college, there are many steps you can begin taking today to get moving in the right direction.

This chapter provides an introduction to the transition to college by first asking “Why?” Understanding why you are in college and what a college degree can do for you is the foundation of making a smooth transition. These transitional experiences are part of being in college, and this chapter provides you with information about what to expect and how to handle the changes you will go through. Next, the chapter discusses college culture and how to understand the customs and language of higher education. The chapter ends with resources throughout the text that can help you practice skills and dive deeper into the topics.

Where do you go from here?

Making the transition into college smoother for you can have long-term benefits. What have you learned about in this chapter that you want to know more about that could help you? Review the questions below. The answer to these questions will be further discussed in future chapters.

- What is the long-term value of a college degree?
- What is the “hidden curriculum,” and how can knowing about it help you succeed in college?
- What learning strategies are the most effective?
- What kinds of resources and services do colleges now offer that help students’ personal development?

Chapter Takeaways

- An active social life and social interaction with a variety of people on campus contribute to college students’ well-being and overall academic success.
- Successfully interacting with diverse others requires effective communication skills, including both listening skills and assertive communication rather than passive or aggressive communication.
- Social interaction can be heightened by productive and moderate online networking.
- Time management and study skills help one avoid problems when balancing social life and academic studies.
- To prevent or resolve conflicts that may occur in any social interaction, maintain an attitude of respect for others, be open minded and willing to compromise, and know how to work together calmly to resolve conflicts.
- Diversity on campus is beneficial for all students, not just those from ethnic or minority groups. The wider perspectives of students from different backgrounds and the greater variety of teaching methods help everyone gain more fully in educational experiences. Socially, students develop a more mature worldview and are better prepared for interacting with a diverse world in the future.
- Multiculturalism involves an attitude of respect for the ideas, feelings, behaviors, and experiences of others who differ from oneself in any way. Colleges promote both diversity in the student body and multiculturalism among all students.
- To gain a multicultural perspective, challenge your own learned stereotypes while you learn more about other cultural groups. Understanding what can be learned from others leads to celebrating the diversity found on most campuses.

- Take a personal responsibility both for broadening your own social world and for speaking out against prejudice and discrimination wherever encountered.
- Take advantage of campus opportunities to increase your cultural awareness and to form social relationships with diverse others. Organized campus groups and events can help you broaden your horizons in many beneficial ways.
- Participation in campus clubs and other organizations is not only fun and a good way to reduce stress but also helps develop social, intellectual, and technical skills that may serve you well in your future career or other endeavors.

Outside the Book

1. Visit your college's Web site and look for a section on student activities and organizations. Try to identify two or three groups you might be interested to learn more about.
2. Next time you walk across campus or through the student center, stop to look at bulletin boards and posters. Look for upcoming events that celebrate cultural diversity in some way. Read the information in detail and imagine how much fun the event might be while you also learn something new. Then ask a friend to go with you.
3. Go to www.understandingrace.org/liv...rts/index.html—a Web site of the American Anthropological Association—and take the short online sports quiz. Many things have been said about why certain races or people from certain geographic areas excel at certain sports. People often talk about differences in biology and other differences among ethnic groups as related to sports. How much is true, partly true, or blatantly false? How much do you know about what are real or not real differences?

Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter, and consider one option you learned in this chapter that might change your answer to them.

1. I am fully aware of the expectations of college and how to meet them.
2. I know why I am in college and have clear goals that I want to achieve.
3. Most of the time, I take responsibility for my learning new and challenging concepts.
4. I feel comfortable working with faculty, advisors, and classmates to accomplish my goals.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Classroom Experiences in College

Classroom Experiences in College

2.1: Prelude to Classroom Experiences in College
2.2: Participating in Class
2.3: Communicating with Instructors
2.4: Public Speaking and Class Presentations
2.5: Summary

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2.1: Prelude to Classroom Experiences in College

Learning Objectives

1. Evaluate the importance of regular class attendance and its impact on academic success and learning outcomes in a college setting.
2. Apply strategies for active participation in class to enhance learning and engagement with course material.
3. Demonstrate effective communication techniques with instructors to address academic concerns and seek clarification.
4. Develop and practice public speaking skills and presentation techniques to effectively convey information during class presentations.

Why Attend Classes at All?

Among the student freedoms in college is the choice not to attend classes. Most college instructors do not "grade" attendance, and some college students soon develop an attitude that if you can get class notes from someone else, or watch a podcast of a lecture, there's no reason to go to every class at all. What's wrong with that?

It is in fact true that you don't have to attend every single class of every course to get a good grade. But thinking only in terms of grades and how much one can get away with is a dangerous attitude toward college education. The real issue is whether you're trying to get the most out of your education. Let's compare students with different attitudes toward their classes:

Carla wants to get through college, and she knows she needs the degree to get a decent job, but she's just not that into it. She's never thought of herself as a good student, and that hasn't changed much in college. She has trouble paying attention in those big lecture classes, which mostly seem pretty boring. She's pretty sure she can pass all her courses, however, as long as she takes the time to study before tests. It doesn't bother her to skip classes when she's studying for a test in a different class or finishing a reading assignment she didn't get around to earlier. She does make it through her freshman year with a passing grade in every class, even those she didn't go to very often. Then she fails the midterm exam in her first sophomore class. Depressed, she skips the next couple classes, then feels guilty and goes to the next. It's even harder to stay awake because now she has no idea what they're talking about. It's too late to drop the course, and even a hard night of studying before the final isn't enough to pass the course. In two other classes, she just barely passes. She has no idea what classes to take next term and is starting to think that maybe she'll drop out for now.

Karen wants to have a good time in college and still do well enough to get a good job in business afterward. Her sorority keeps a file of class notes for her big lecture classes, and from talking to others and reviewing these notes, she's discovered she can skip almost half of those big classes and still get a B or C on the tests. She stays focused on her grades, and because she has a good memory, she's able to maintain OK grades. She doesn't worry about talking to her instructors outside of class because she can always find out what she needs from another student. In her sophomore year, she has a quick conversation with her academic advisor and chooses her major. Those classes are smaller, and she goes to most of them, but she feels she's pretty much figured out how it works and can usually still get the grade. In her senior year, she starts working on her résumé and asks other students in her major which instructors write the best letters of recommendation. She's sure her college degree will land her a good job.

Alicia enjoys her classes, even when she has to get up early after working or studying late the night before. She sometimes gets so excited by something she learns in class that she rushes up to the instructor after class to ask a question. In class discussions, she's not usually the first to speak out, but by the time another student has given an opinion, she's had time to organize her thoughts and enjoys arguing her ideas. Nearing the end of her sophomore year and unsure of what to major in given her many interests, she talks things over with one of her favorite instructors, whom she has gotten to know through office visits. The instructor gives her some insights into careers in that field and helps her explore her interests. She takes two more courses with this instructor over the next year, and she's comfortable in her senior year going to him to ask for a job reference. When she does, she's surprised and thrilled when he urges her to apply for a high-level paid internship with a company in the field—that happens to be run by a friend of his.

Think about the differences in the attitudes of these three students and how they approach their classes. One's attitude toward learning, toward going to class, and toward the whole college experience is a huge factor in how successful a student will be. Make

it your goal to attend every class—don't even think about not going. Going to class is the first step in engaging in your education by interacting with the instructor and other students. Here are some reasons why it's important to attend every class:

- Miss a class and you'll miss *something*, even if you never know it. Even if a friend gives you notes for the class, they cannot contain *everything* said or shown by the instructor or written on the board for emphasis or questioned or commented on by other students. What you miss might affect your grade or your enthusiasm for the course. Why go to college at all if you're not going to *go* to college?
- While some students may say that you don't have to go to every class to do well on a test, that is very often a myth. Do you want to take that risk?
- Your final grade often reflects how you think about course concepts, and you will think more often and more clearly when engaged in class discussions and hearing the comments of other students. You can't get this by borrowing class notes from a friend.
- Research shows there is a correlation between absences from class and lower grades. It may be that missing classes causes lower grades or that students with lower grades miss more classes. Either way, missing classes and lower grades can be intertwined in a downward spiral of achievement.
- Your instructor will note your absences—even in a large class. In addition to making a poor impression, you reduce your opportunities for future interactions. You might not ask a question the next class because of the potential embarrassment of the instructor saying that was covered in the last class, which you apparently missed. Nothing is more insulting to an instructor than when you skip a class and then show up to ask, "Did I miss anything important?"
- You might be tempted to skip a class because the instructor is "boring," but it's more likely that you found the class boring because you weren't very attentive or didn't appreciate how the instructor was teaching.
- You paid a lot of money for your tuition. Get your money's worth!

Figure 2.1



In a large class, your instructor will still notice if you are paying attention.

teddy-rised – That Huge Lecture Theatre! – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Figure 2.2



In a small class, it's easy to interact with the instructor.

Susan Sermoneta – Flickr [small group work at FIT- 2] – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

If You Must Miss a Class…

- If you know that you will miss a class, take steps in advance. Tell your instructor and ask if he or she teaches another section of the course that you might attend instead. Ask about any handouts or special announcements.
- Ask another student whose judgment you trust if you can copy his or her notes. Then talk to them after you've read their notes to go over things that may be unclear to you.
- It may not be necessary to see your instructor after missing a lecture class, and no instructor wants to give you fifty minutes of office time to repeat what was said in class. But if you are having difficulty after the *next* class because of something you missed earlier, stop and see your instructor and ask what you can do to get caught up. But remember the worst thing you can say to an instructor: "I missed class—did you talk about anything important?"

The Value of Interaction in Class

As noted earlier, there are many good reasons to attend every class. But it's not enough just to *be* there—you need to interact with the the instructor and other students to enjoy a full educational experience:

- Participating in class discussions is a good way to start meeting other students with whom you share an interest. You may form a study group, borrow class notes if you miss a class, or team up with other students on a group project. You may meet students with whom you form a lasting relationship, developing your network of contacts for other benefits in the future, such as learning about internships or jobs.
- Asking the instructor questions, answering the instructor's questions in class, and responding to other students' comments is a good way to make an impression on your instructor. The instructor will remember you as an engaged student—and this matters if you later need extra help or even a potential mentor.
- Paying close attention and thinking critically about what an instructor is saying can dramatically improve your enjoyment of the class. You'll notice things you'd miss if you're feeling bored and may discover your instructor is much more interesting than you first thought.
- Students actively engaged in their class learn more and thus get better grades. When you speak out in class and answer the instructor's questions, you are more likely to remember the discussion.

Attending the first day of class is especially critical. There you'll get the syllabus and other handouts, learn the instructor's policies and preferences for how the class will function, and often take notes in an opening lecture.

Are Podcasts and Recordings an Effective Alternative to Attending Class?

Why not just listen to a recording of the lecture—or a video podcast, if available—instead of going to class? After all, you hear and perhaps see the lecture just as if you were there, and you can sleep late and "go" to this class whenever it's convenient for you. What could be wrong with that?

This issue has received considerable discussion in recent years because many colleges and universities began videotaping class lectures and making them available for students online or in podcasts. There was a lot of debate about whether students would stop coming to class and simply watch the podcasts instead. In fact, some students do cut class, as some always have, but most students use podcasts and recordings as a way to review material they do not feel they grasp completely. A video podcast doesn't offer the opportunity to ask questions or participate, and even if you pay close attention to watching a video, it's still a passive experience from which you're likely to learn much less.

Health Science classes

Embarking on a journey through nursing school is both an exciting and challenging endeavor. Nursing programs are known for their rigor, requiring a deep commitment and a strong work ethic. The coursework is intense, often involving complex material that demands a high level of understanding and application. Students will encounter detailed studies of human anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and pathology, among other subjects. Each class builds upon the last, requiring students to retain and integrate knowledge continuously. This cumulative learning process is essential for developing the critical thinking and clinical judgment skills necessary for effective nursing practice.

The variety of schedules in nursing programs can be daunting. Unlike many traditional college courses, nursing classes often include a mix of lectures, laboratory work, and clinical rotations. Clinical rotations are a key component, providing hands-on experience in healthcare settings under the supervision of experienced nurses and instructors. These rotations can occur during weekdays, evenings, and even weekends, necessitating flexibility and time management from students. Balancing these diverse schedules with personal responsibilities can be challenging, but it is a crucial aspect of the nursing education experience.

Nursing coursework differs significantly from regular college classes in its focus on practical, real-world applications. While theoretical knowledge is important, nursing education places a strong emphasis on skills and competencies required in clinical settings. Students are trained not only to understand the science behind healthcare but also to apply this knowledge in patient care scenarios. This includes learning to perform clinical procedures, communicate effectively with patients and colleagues, and make quick, informed decisions in high-pressure situations. The integration of classroom learning with clinical practice ensures that nursing students are well-prepared to meet the demands of their future profession.

Furthermore, nursing programs often incorporate interprofessional education, where students learn to collaborate with peers from other healthcare disciplines. This teamwork fosters a holistic approach to patient care and highlights the importance of communication and cooperation in healthcare settings. As a result, nursing students must develop strong interpersonal skills alongside their clinical expertise. The combination of rigorous academic work, diverse schedules, and the unique demands of nursing coursework makes nursing school a challenging but immensely rewarding path for those committed to making a difference in the lives of others.

Key Takeaways

- The benefits of attending every class include not missing important material, thinking more clearly about course topics, developing a better relationship with the instructor, and being better prepared for tests.
- When possible, prepare in advance for missing a class by speaking with your instructor and arranging to borrow and discuss someone's notes.
- Students benefit in many ways from class interaction, including more actively engaging in learning, developing a network with other students, and forming a relationship with the instructor.
- Podcasts, lecture recordings, and similar learning methods can supplement lectures but cannot replace all the benefits of attending class in person.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Why is it more important to interact with your instructors in college than it was in high school?

   _____

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2. Give an example of something important you may miss in a class from which you are absent—even if you read a friend's notes and hear a recording of the lecture.

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3. List at least three potential benefits of forming a network with other students.

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4. What can you do as a student to be more engaged during a lecture if you are finding it boring?

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2.2: Participating in Class

Guidelines for Participating in Classes

Smaller classes generally favor discussion, but often instructors in large lecture classes also make some room for participation.

A concern or fear about speaking in public is one of the most common fears. If you feel afraid to speak out in class, take comfort from the fact that many others do as well—and that anyone can learn how to speak in class without much difficulty. Class participation is actually an impromptu, informal type of public speaking, and the same principles will get you through both: preparing and communicating.

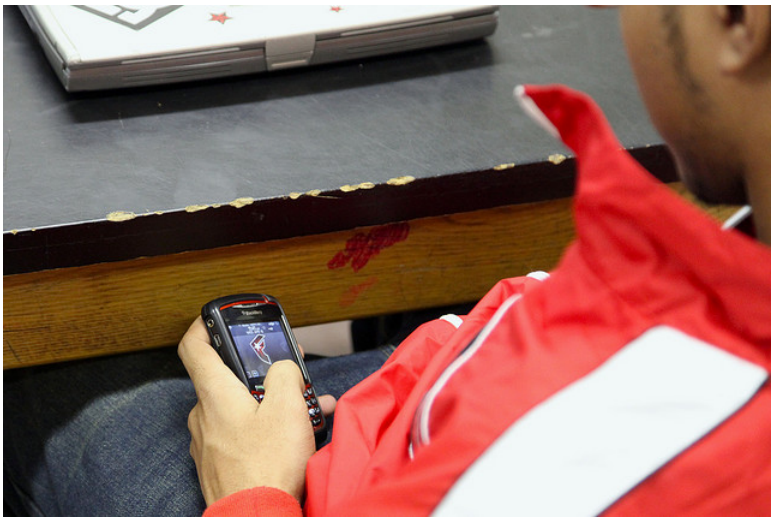
- Set yourself up for success by coming to class fully prepared. Complete reading assignments. Review your notes on the reading and previous class to get yourself in the right mind-set. If there is something you don't understand well, start formulating your question now.
- Sit in the front with a good view of the instructor, board or screen, and other visual aids. In a lecture hall, this will help you hear better, pay better attention, and make a good impression on the instructor. Don't sit with friends—socializing isn't what you're there for.
- Remember that your body language communicates as much as anything you say. Sit up and look alert, with a pleasant expression on your face, and make good eye contact with the instructor. Show some enthusiasm.
- Pay attention to the instructor's body language, which can communicate much more than just his or her words. How the instructor moves and gestures, and the looks on his or her face, will add meaning to the words—and will also cue you when it's a good time to ask a question or stay silent.
- Take good notes, but don't write obsessively—and never page through your textbook (or browse on a laptop). Don't eat or play with your cell phone. Except when writing brief notes, keep your eyes on the instructor.
- Follow class protocol for making comments and asking questions. In a small class, the instructor may encourage students to ask questions at any time, while in some large lecture classes the instructor may ask for questions at the end of the lecture. In this case, jot your questions in your notes so that you don't forget them later.
- Don't say or ask anything just to try to impress your instructor. Most instructors have been teaching long enough to immediately recognize insincere flattery—and the impression this makes is just the opposite of what you want.
- Pay attention to the instructor's thinking style. Does this instructor emphasize theory more than facts, wide perspectives over specific ideas, abstractions more than concrete experience? Take a cue from your instructor's approach and try to think in similar terms when participating in class.
- It's fine to disagree with your instructor when you ask or answer a question. Many instructors invite challenges. Before speaking up, however, be sure you can explain why you disagree and give supporting evidence or reasons. Be respectful.
- Pay attention to your communication style. Use standard English when you ask or answer a question, not slang. Avoid sarcasm and joking around. Be assertive when you participate in class, showing confidence in your ideas while being respectful of the ideas of others. But avoid an aggressive style that attacks the ideas of others or is strongly emotional.
- When your instructor asks a question to the class:
  - Raise your hand and make eye contact, but don't call out or wave your hand all around trying to catch his or her attention.
  - Before speaking, take a moment to gather your thoughts and take a deep breath. Don't just blurt it out—speak calmly and clearly.
- When your instructor asks you a question directly:
  - Be honest and admit it if you don't know the answer or are not sure. Don't try to fake it or make excuses. With a question that involves a reasoned opinion more than a fact, it's fine to explain why you haven't decided yet, such as when weighing two opposing ideas or actions; your comment may stimulate further discussion.
  - Organize your thoughts to give a sufficient answer. Instructors seldom want a yes or no answer. Give your answer and provide reasons or evidence in support.
- When you want to ask the instructor a question:
  - Don't ever feel a question is "stupid." If you have been paying attention in class and have done the reading and you still don't understand something, you have every right to ask.
  - Ask at the appropriate time. Don't interrupt the instructor or jump ahead and ask a question about something the instructor may be starting to explain. Wait for a natural pause and a good moment to ask. On the other hand, unless the instructor asks

students to hold all question until the end of class, don't let too much time go by, or you may forget the question or its relevance to the topic.

- Don't ask just because you weren't paying attention. If you drift off during the first half of class and then realize in the second half that you don't really understand what the instructor is talking about now, don't ask a question about something that was already covered.
- Don't ask a question that is really a complaint. You may be thinking, "Why would so-and-so believe that? That's just crazy!" Take a moment to think about what you might gain from asking the question. It's better to say, "I'm having some difficulty understanding what so-and-so is saying here. What evidence did he use to argue for that position?"
- Avoid dominating a discussion. It may be appropriate in some cases to make a follow-up comment after the instructor answers your question, but don't try to turn the class into a one-on-one conversation between you and the instructor.

Lecture Hall Classes

Figure 2.3



Don't use your cell phone during class time.

Tom Woodward – Undercover – CC BY-NC 2.0.

While opportunities are fewer for student discussions in large lecture classes, participation is still important. The instructor almost always provides an opportunity to ask questions. Because time is limited, be ready with your question or comment when the opportunity arises—and don't be shy about raising your hand first.

Being prepared is especially important in lecture classes. Have assigned readings done before class and review your notes. If you have a genuine question about something in the reading, ask about it. Jot down the question in your notes and be ready to ask if the lecture doesn't clear it up for you.

Being prepared before asking a question also includes listening carefully to the lecture. You don't want to ask a question whose answer was already given by the instructor in the lecture. Take a moment to organize your thoughts and choose your words carefully. Be as specific as you can. Don't say something like, "I don't understand the big deal about whether the earth revolves around the sun or the sun around the earth. So what?" Instead, you might ask, "When they discovered that the earth revolves around the sun, was that such a disturbing idea because people were upset to realize that maybe they weren't the center of the universe?" The first question suggests you haven't thought much about the topic, while the second shows that you are beginning to grasp the issue and want to understand it more fully.

Following are some additional guidelines for asking good questions:

- Ask a question or two early in the term, even on the first day of class. Once the instructor has "noticed" you as a class participant, you are more likely to be recognized again when you have a question. You won't be lost in the crowd.
- Speak deliberately and professionally, not as you might when talking with a friend. Use standard English rather than slang.
- If you're very shy about public speaking or worried you'll say the wrong thing, write down your question before asking. Rehearse it in your mind.

- When you have the opportunity to ask questions in class, it's better to ask right away rather than saving a question for after class. If you really find it difficult to speak up in a large class, this is an acceptable way to ask your question and participate. A private conversation with an instructor may also be more appropriate if the question involves a paper or other project you are working on for the course.

A note on technology in the lecture hall. Colleges are increasingly incorporating new technology in lecture halls. For example, each student in the lecture hall may have an electronic "clicker" with which the instructor can gain instant feedback on questions in class. Or the classroom may have wireless Internet and students are encouraged to use their laptops to communicate with the instructor in "real time" during the lecture. In these cases, the most important thing is to take it seriously, even if you have anonymity. Most students appreciate the ability to give feedback and ask questions through such technology, but some abuse their anonymity by sending irrelevant, disruptive, or insulting messages.

Teaching Style versus Learning Style

As you learned students have many different learning styles. Understanding your learning style(s) can help you study more effectively. Most instructors tend to develop their own teaching style, however, and you will encounter different teaching styles in different courses.

When the instructor's teaching style matches your learning style, you are usually more attentive in class and may seem to learn better. But what happens if your instructor has a style very different from your own? Let's say, for example, that your instructor primarily lectures, speaks rapidly, and seldom uses visuals. This instructor also talks mostly on the level of large abstract ideas and almost never gives examples. Let's say that you, in contrast, are more a visual learner, that you learn more effectively with visual aids and visualizing concrete examples of ideas. Therefore, perhaps you are having some difficulty paying attention in class and following the lectures. What can you do?

- Capitalize on your learning strengths. In this example, you could use a visual style of note taking, such as concept maps, while listening to the lecture. If the instructor does not give examples for abstract ideas in the lecture, see if *you* can supply examples in your own thoughts as you listen.
- Form a study group with other students. A variety of students will likely involve a variety of learning styles, and when going over course material with other students, such as when studying for a test, you can gain what they have learned through their styles while you contribute what you have learned through yours.
- Use ancillary study materials. Many textbooks point students to online resource centers or include a computer CD that offers additional learning materials. Such ancillary materials usually offer an opportunity to review course material in ways that may better fit your learning style.
- Communicate with your instructor to bridge the gap between his or her teaching style and your learning style. If the instructor is speaking in abstractions and general ideas you don't understand, ask the instructor for an example.
- You can also communicate with the instructor privately during office hours. For example, you can explain that you are having difficulty understanding lectures because so many things are said so fast.

Finally, take heart that a mismatch between a student's learning style and an instructor's teaching style is not correlated with lower grades.

Key Takeaways

- To prepare for class participation, come to class ready, sit in front, and pay attention to the instructor's words and body language.
- Use good communication techniques when asking or answering questions in class.
- Take advantage of all opportunities to interact with your instructors, even in large lecture classes.
- If your learning style does not match the instructor's teaching style, adapt your learning and study with other students to stay actively engaged.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. For each of the following statements about class participation, circle T for true or F for false:

Checkpoint Exercises

T	F	To avoid having to answer a question in class when you don't know the answer, sit in the back row and avoid making eye contact with the instructor.
T	F	If you haven't finished a reading assignment before coming to a lecture class, bring the book along and try to complete the reading during the lecture.
T	F	Although it is OK to disagree with something in your textbook, never disagree with something the instructor says in a lecture.
T	F	If you are asked a question but don't know the answer, it's best to be honest and admit it.
T	F	Before raising your hand to ask a question, take a moment to consider whether maybe it's a stupid question.
T	F	Because you don't want your instructor to form a poor impression of you, wait a week or two into the term before starting to ask questions in class.
T	F	If you're shy, it's best never to speak up in class at all.
T	F	If you are struggling with a class during the first two weeks of the term, it's always best to drop the class immediately because the situation won't improve.

2. List two things you can do if you are having difficulty understanding what your instructor is talking about.

_____

_____

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2.3: Communicating with Instructors

So far we've been looking at class participation and general interaction with both instructors and other students in class. In addition to this, students gain very specific benefits from communicating directly with their instructors. Learn best practices for communicating with your instructors during office hours and through e-mail.

Additional Benefits of Talking with Your Instructors

College students are sometimes surprised to discover that instructors like students and enjoy getting to know them. After all, they want to feel they're doing something more meaningful than talking to an empty room. The human dimension of college really matters, and as a student you are an important part of your instructor's world. Most instructors are happy to see you during their office hours or to talk a few minutes after class.

This chapter has repeatedly emphasized how active participation in learning is a key to student success. In addition, talking with your instructors often leads to benefits beyond simply doing well in that class.

- Talking with instructors helps you feel more comfortable in college and more connected to the campus. Students who talk to their instructors are less likely to become disillusioned and drop out.
- Talking with instructors is a valuable way to learn about an academic field or a career. Don't know for sure what you want to major in, or what people with a degree in your chosen major actually *do* after college? Most instructors will share information and insights with you.
- You may need a reference or letter of recommendation for a job or internship application. Getting to know some of your instructors puts you in an ideal position to ask for a letter of recommendation or a reference in the future when you need one.
- Because instructors are often well connected within their field, they may know of a job, internship, or research possibility you otherwise may not learn about. An instructor who knows you is a valuable part of your network. Networking is very important for future job searches and other opportunities. In fact, most jobs are found through networking, not through classified ads or online job postings.
- Think about what it truly means to be "educated": how one thinks, understands society and the world, and responds to problems and new situations. Much of this learning occurs outside the classroom. Talking with your highly educated instructors can be among your most meaningful experiences in college.

Guidelines for Communicating with Instructors

Getting along with instructors and communicating well begins with attitude. As experts in their field, they deserve your respect. Remember that a college education is a collaborative process that works best when students and instructors communicate freely in an exchange of ideas, information, and perspectives. So while you should respect your instructors, you shouldn't fear them. As you get to know them better, you'll learn their personalities and find appropriate ways to communicate. Here are some guidelines for getting along with and communicating with your instructors:

Figure 2.4



Your instructor can often help explain course topics.

NJLA : New Jersey Library Association – Tutoring @ Long Branch Library – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

- **Prepare before going to the instructor's office.** Go over your notes on readings and lectures and write down your specific questions. You'll feel more comfortable, and the instructor will appreciate your being organized.
- **Don't forget to introduce yourself.** Especially near the beginning of the term, don't assume your instructor has learned everyone's names yet and don't make him or her have to ask you. Unless the instructor has already asked you to address him or her as "Dr. ____," "Ms. _____" or Mr. _____," or something similar, it's appropriate to say "Professor _____."
- **Respect the instructor's time.** In addition to teaching, college instructors sit on committees, do research and other professional work, and have personal lives. Don't show up two minutes before the end of an office hour and expect the instructor to stay late to talk with you.
- **Realize that the instructor will recognize you from class—even in a large lecture hall.** If you spent a lecture class joking around with friends in the back row, don't think you can show up during office hours to find out what you missed while you weren't paying attention.
- **Don't try to fool an instructor.** Insincere praise or making excuses for not doing an assignment won't make it in college. Nor is it a good idea to show you're "too cool" to take all this seriously—another attitude sure to turn off an instructor. To earn your instructor's respect, come to class prepared, do the work, participate genuinely in class, and show respect—and the instructor will be happy to see you when you come to office hours or need some extra help.
- **Try to see things from the instructor's point of view.** Imagine that you spent a couple hours making PowerPoint slides and preparing a class lecture on something you find very stimulating and exciting. Standing in front of a full room, you are gratified to see faces smiling and heads nodding as people understand what you're saying—they really get it! And then a student after class asks, "Is this going to be on the test?" How would *you* feel?
- **Be professional when talking to an instructor.** You can be cordial and friendly, but keep it professional and on an adult level. Come to office hours prepared with your questions—not just to chat or joke around. (Don't wear sunglasses or earphones in the office or check your cell phone for messages.) Be prepared to accept criticism in a professional way, without taking it personally or complaining.
- **Use your best communication skills.** In future chapters you'll learn the difference between assertive communication and passive or aggressive communication.

Part-Time and Returning Students

Students who are working and who have their own families and other responsibilities may have special issues interacting with instructors. Sometimes an older student feels a little out of place and may even feel "the system" is designed for younger students; this attitude can lead to a hesitation to participate in class or see an instructor during office hours.

But participation and communication with instructors is very important for all students—and may be even more important for "nontraditional" students. Getting to know your instructors is particularly crucial for feeling at home in college. Instructors

enjoy talking with older and other nontraditional students—even when, as sometimes happens, a student is older than the instructor. Nontraditional students are often highly motivated and eager to learn. If you can't make the instructor's office hours because of your work schedule, ask for an appointment at a different time—your needs will be respected.

Part-time students, especially in community colleges where they may be taking evening courses, often have greater difficulty meeting with instructors. In addition, many part-time students taking evening and weekend classes are taught by part-time faculty who, like them, may be on campus only small amounts of time. Yet it is just as critical for part-time students to engage in the learning process and have a sense of belonging on campus. With effort, you can usually find a way to talk with your instructors. Don't hesitate to ask for an appointment at another time or to meet with your instructor over a cup of coffee after class before driving home. Assert yourself: You are in college for reasons just as good as those of other students, and you have the same rights. Avoid the temptation to give up or feel defeated; talk with your instructor to arrange a time to meet, and make the most of your time interacting together. Use e-mail to communicate when you need to and contact your instructor when you have any question you can't raise in person.

E-mail Best Practices

Just as e-mail has become a primary form of communication in business and society, e-mail has a growing role in education and has become an important and valuable means of communicating with instructors. Virtually all younger college students have grown up using e-mail and have a computer or computer access in college, although some have developed poor habits from using e-mail principally with friends in the past. Some older college students may not yet understand the importance of e-mail and other computer skills in college; if you are not now using e-mail, it's time to learn how (see "Getting Started with E-mail"). Especially when it is difficult to see an instructor in person during office hours, e-mail can be an effective form of communication and interaction with instructors. E-mail is also an increasingly effective way to collaborate with other students on group projects or while studying with other students.

Getting Started with E-mail

- If you don't have your own computer, find out where on-campus computers are available for student use, such as at the library or student center.
- You can set up a free Web-based e-mail account at Google, Yahoo! or other sites. These allow you to send and receive e-mail from any computer that is connected to the Internet.
- If you don't have enough computer experience to know how to do this, ask a friend for help getting started or check at your library or student services office for a publication explaining how e-mail works.
- Once you have your account set up, give your e-mail address to instructors who request it and to other students with whom you study or maintain contact. E-mail is a good way to contact another student if you miss a class.
- Once you begin using e-mail, remember to check it regularly for messages. Most people view e-mail like a telephone message and expect you to respond fairly soon.
- Be sure to use good e-mail etiquette when writing to instructors.

If your instructor gives you his or her e-mail addresses, use e-mail rather than the telephone for nonurgent matters. Using e-mail respects other people's time, allowing them to answer at a time of their choosing, rather than being interrupted by a telephone call.

But e-mail is a written form of communication that is different from telephone voice messages and text messages. Students who text with friends have often adopted shortcuts, such as not spelling out full words, ignoring capitalization and punctuation, and not bothering with grammar or full sentence constructions. This is inappropriate in an e-mail message to an instructor, who expects a more professional quality of writing. Most instructors expect your communications to be in full sentences with correctly spelled words and reasonable grammar. Follow these guidelines:

- Use a professional e-mail name. If you have a funny name you use with friends, create a different account with a professional name you use with instructors, work supervisors, and others.
- Use the subject line to label your message effectively at a glance. "May I make an appointment?" says something; "In your office?" doesn't.
- Address e-mail messages as you do a letter, beginning "Dear Professor ____." Include your full name if it's not easily recognizable in your e-mail account.
- Get to your point quickly and concisely. Don't make the reader scroll down a long e-mail to see what it is you want to say.

- Because e-mail is a written communication, it does not express emotion the way a voice message does. Don't attempt to be funny, ironic, or sarcastic, Write as you would in a paper for class. In a large lecture class or an online course, your e-mail voice may be the primary way your instructor knows you, and emotionally charged messages can be confusing or give a poor impression.
- Don't use capital letters to emphasize. All caps look like SHOUTING.
- Avoid abbreviations, nonstandard spelling, slang, and emoticons like smiley faces. These do not convey a professional tone.
- Don't make demands or state expectations such as "I'll expect to hear from you soon" or "If I haven't heard by 4 p.m., I'll assume you'll accept my paper late."
- When you reply to a message, leave the original message within yours. Your reader may need to recall what he or she said in the original message.
- Be polite. End the message with a "Thank you" or something similar.
- Proofread your message before sending it.
- With any important message to a work supervisor or instructor, it's a good idea to wait and review the message later before sending it. You may have expressed an emotion or thought that you will think better about later. Many problems have resulted when people sent messages too quickly without thinking.

Resolving a Problem with an Instructor

The most common issue students feel with an instructor involves receiving a grade lower than they think they deserve—especially new students not yet used to the higher standards of college. It's depressing to get a low grade, but it's not the end of the world. Don't be too hard on yourself—or on the instructor. Take a good look at what happened on the test or paper and make sure you know what to do better next time. Review the chapters on studying habits, time management, and taking tests.

If you genuinely believe you deserved a higher grade, you can talk with your instructor. *How* you communicate in that conversation, however, is very important. Instructors are used to hearing students complain about grades and patiently explaining their standards for grading. Most instructors seldom change grades. Yet it can still be worthwhile to talk with the instructor because of what you will learn from the experience.

Follow these guidelines to talk about a grade or resolve any other problem or disagreement with an instructor:

- First go over the requirements for the paper or test and the instructor's comments. Be sure you actually have a reason for discussing the grade—not just that you didn't do well. Be prepared with specific points you want to go over.
- Make an appointment with your instructor during office hours or another time. Don't try to talk about this before or after class or with e-mail or the telephone.
- Begin by politely explaining that you thought you did better on the assignment or test (not simply that you think you deserve a better grade) and that you'd like to go over it to better understand the result.
- Allow the instructor to explain his or her comments on the assignment or grading of the test. Don't complain or whine; instead, show your appreciation for the explanation. Raise any specific questions or make comments at this time. For example, you might say, "I really thought I was being clear here when I wrote.…"
- Use good listening skills. Whatever you do, don't argue!
- Ask what you can do to improve grade, if possible. Can you rewrite the paper or do any extra-credit work to help make up for a test score? While you are showing that you would like to earn a higher grade in the course, also make it clear that you're willing to put in the effort and that you want to *learn more*, not just get the higher grade.
- If there is no opportunity to improve on this specific project, ask the instructor for advice on what you might do on the next assignment or when preparing for the next test. You may be offered some individual help or receive good study advice, and your instructor will respect your willingness to make the effort as long as it's clear that you're more interested in learning than simply getting the grade.

Tips for Success: Talking with Instructors

- When you have a question, ask it sooner rather than later.
- Be prepared and plan your questions and comments in advance.
- Be respectful but personable and communicate professionally.
- Be open minded and ready to learn. Avoid whining and complaining.
- There is no such thing as a "stupid question."

Controlling Anger over Grades

If you're going to talk with an instructor about your grade or any other problem, control any anger you may be feeling. The GPS LifePlan project of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System offers some insights into this process:

- Being upset about a grade is good because it shows you care and that you have passion about your education. But anger prevents clear thinking, so rein it in first.
- Since anger involves bodily reactions, physical actions can help you control anger: try some deep breathing first.
- Try putting yourself in your instructor's shoes and seeing the situation from their point of view. Try to understand how grading is not a personal issue of "liking" you—that they are really doing something for your educational benefit.
- It's not your life that's being graded. Things outside your control can result in not doing well on a test or assignment, but the instructor can grade only on what you actually did on that test or assignment—not what you *could have done* or *are capable of doing*. Understanding this can help you accept what happened and not take a grade personally[1].

Finding a Mentor

A mentor is someone who is usually older and more experienced than you who becomes your trusted guide, advisor, and role model. A mentor is someone you may want to be like in your future career or profession—someone you look up to and whose advice and guidance you respect.

Finding a mentor can be one of the most fulfilling aspects of college. As a student, you think about many things and make many decisions, large and small, almost daily: What do you want to do in the future? How can you best balance your studies with your job? What should you major in? Should you take this course or that one? What should you do if you feel like you're failing a course? Where should you put your priorities as you prepare for a future career? How can you be a better student? The questions go on and on. We talk about things like this with our friends and often family members, but often they don't have the same experience or background to help us as a mentor can.

Most important, a mentor is someone who is willing to help you, to talk with you about decisions you face, to support you when things become difficult, and to guide you when you're feeling lost. A mentor can become a valuable part of your future network but also can help you in the here and now.

Many different people can become mentors: other students, family members, people you know through work, your boss. As a college student, however, your best mentor likely is someone involved in education: your advisor, a more experienced student, or an instructor. Finding a mentor is another reason to develop good relationships with your instructors, starting with class participation and communication outside of class.

A mentor is not like a good friend, exactly—you're not going to invite your instructor to a movie—but it does involve a form of friendship. Nor is a mentor a formal relationship: you don't ask an instructor to become your mentor. The mentor relationship is more informal and develops slowly, often without actively looking for a mentor. Here's an example of how one student "found" a mentor:

As a freshman taking several classes, Miguel particularly liked and admired one of his instructors, Professor Canton. Miguel spoke up more in Canton's class and talked with him sometimes during office hours. When it was time to register for the next term, Miguel saw that Canton was teaching another course he was interested in, so he asked him about that course one day during office hours. Miguel was pleased when Professor Canton said he'd like to have him in his class next term.

By the end of his first year of college, Miguel seemed to know Canton better than any of his other instructors and felt very comfortable talking with him outside of class. One day after talking about a reading assignment, Miguel said he was enjoying this class so much that he was thinking about majoring in this subject and asked Professor Canton what he thought about it. Canton suggested that he take a few more classes before making a decision, and he invited Miguel to sit in on a seminar of upper-level students he was holding.

In his second year, Miguel's interests turned in another direction as he began to think about his future job possibilities, but by then he felt comfortable enough talking with Canton that he occasionally he stopped by the professor's office even though he was not taking a class with him. Sometimes he was surprised how much Professor Canton knew about other departments and other faculty, and Canton often shared insights about other courses he might be interested in that his advisor had not directed him to. When Miguel learned about a summer internship in his field and was considering applying, Canton not only volunteered to write him a letter of recommendation but even offered to help Miguel with the essay part of the application if he wanted.

Some colleges have more formal mentoring programs, and you should become involved in one if you have this opportunity, but often a mentoring relationship occurs informally as you get to know an instructor or another person over time. In your first year, you don't go searching frantically for a mentor, but you should begin interacting with your instructors and other students in ways that may lead, over time, to developing that kind of relationship.

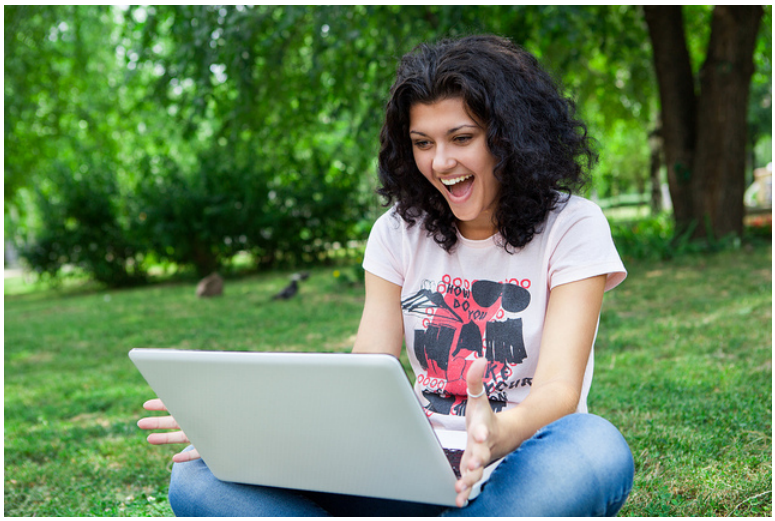
Similarly, your academic advisor or a college counselor might become a mentor for you if you share interests and you look up to that person as a role model and trusted guide. Your advisor is so important for your college success that if you feel you are not getting along well, you should ask the advising department to switch you to a different advisor. Take the time to build a good relationship with your advisor, the same as with instructors—following the same guidelines in this chapter for communication and interaction.

Relating to an Instructor of an Online Course

Online courses have grown tremendously in recent years, and most colleges now have at least some online courses. While online learning once focused on students at a distance from campus, now many students enrolled in regular classes also take some courses online. Online courses have a number of practical benefits but also pose special issues, primarily related to how students interact with other students and the instructor.

Some online courses do involve "face time" or live audio connections with the instructor and other students, via Webcasts or Webinars, but many are self-paced and asynchronous, meaning that you experience the course on your own time and communicate with others via messages back and forth rather than communicating in real time. All online courses include opportunities for interacting with the instructor, typically through e-mail or a bulletin board where you may see comments and questions from other students as well.

Figure 2.5



Online courses let you study when you want, where you want.

CollegeDegrees360 – Girl Using Laptop in park – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Many educators argue that online courses can involve *more* interaction between students and the instructor than in a large lecture class, not less. But two important differences affect how that interaction occurs and how successful it is for engaging students in learning. Most communication is written, with no or limited opportunity to ask questions face to face or during office hours, and students must take the initiative to interact beyond the requirements of online assignments.

Many students enjoy online courses, in part for the practical benefit of scheduling your own time. Some students who are reluctant to speak in class communicate more easily in writing. But other students may have less confidence in their writing skills or may never initiate interaction at all and end up feeling lost. Depending on your learning style, an online course may feel natural to you (if you learn well independently and through language skills) or more difficult (if you are a more visual or kinesthetic learner). Online courses have higher drop-out and failure rates due to some students feeling isolated and unmotivated.

Success in an online course requires commitment and motivation. Follow these guidelines:

- **Make sure you have the technology.** If you're not comfortable reading and writing on a computer, don't rush into an online course. If you have limited access to a computer or high-speed Internet connection, or have to arrange your schedule to use a computer elsewhere, you may have difficulty with the course.
- **Accept that you'll have to motivate yourself and take responsibility for your learning.** It's actually harder for some people to sit down at the computer on their own than to show up at a set time. Be sure you have enough time in your week for all course activities and try to schedule regular times online and for assignments. Evaluate the course requirements carefully before signing up.
- **Work on your writing skills.** If you are not comfortable writing, you may want to defer taking online courses until you have had more experience with college-level writing. When communicating with the instructor of an online course, follow the guidelines for effective e-mail outlined earlier.
- **Use critical thinking skills.** Most online courses involve assignments requiring problem solving and critical thinking. It's not as simple as watching video lectures and taking multiple-choice tests. You need to actively engage with the course material.
- **Take the initiative to ask questions and seek help.** Remember, your instructor can't see you to know if you're confused or feeling frustrated understanding a lecture or reading. You must take the first step to communicate your questions.
- **Be patient.** When you ask a question or seek help with an assignment, you have to wait for a reply from your instructor. You may need to continue with a reading or writing assignment before you receive a reply. If the instructor is online at scheduled times for direct contact, take advantage of those times for immediate feedback and answers.
- **Use any opportunity to interact with other students in the course.** If you can interact with other students online, do it. Ask questions of other students and monitor their communications. If you know another person taking the same course, try to synchronize your schedules so that you can study together and talk over assignments. Students who feel they are part of a learning community always do better than those who feel isolated and on their own.

Key Takeaways

- Additional benefits of getting to know and networking with instructors include receiving references and academic advice.
- Interacting with college instructors contributes to the growth and intellectual maturity that are part of what it means to be "educated."
- Prepare in advance before meeting with an instructor and communicate respectfully, honestly, and sincerely. Your efforts will be repaid.
- It is especially important for part-time and nontraditional students to make the effort to interact with instructors.
- Follow accepted guidelines for professional use of e-mail with instructors.
- It is worthwhile speaking with an instructor when you disagree about a grade because of what you will learn in this interaction.
- Finding a mentor can be one of the most fulfilling experiences in college. Getting to know your instructors may be the first step toward find a mentor.
- Online courses involve special issues for effective learning, but you must make the effort to interact with the instructor and other students in a way that encourages your success.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Name three benefits you might gain from talking with an instructor weeks or months after the course has ended.

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What should you do before going to see your instructor during office hours?

   _____

   _____

3. For each of the following statements, circle T for true or F for false:

		questions
T	F	The instructor of a large lecture course will recognize you even if you sit in the back and try not to be noticed.

T	F	The instructor of a large lecture course will recognize you even if you sit in the back and try not to be noticed.
T	F	Instructors appreciate it when you talk to them in the kind of language you use with your best friends.
T	F	Whining and complaining is the best way to convince an instructor to change your grade.
T	F	It is acceptable to ask an instructor if you can rewrite a paper or do extra-credit work to help make up for a poor grade.

4. Write an appropriate opening for an e-mail to an instructor.

   _____

5. Think for a few minutes about all the past instructors you have had. Would you like to get to know any one of them better, perhaps as a mentor? What personality traits does this person have that would make him or her your ideal mentor? (If no instructor you have met so far is your idea of a perfect mentor, write down the traits you hope to find in an instructor in the future.)

   _____

   _____

   _____

[1]Adapted from "How to Communicate and Problem Solve with Your Instructor," GPSLifePlan.org (accessed December 27, 2009).

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2.4: Public Speaking and Class Presentations

Public speaking—giving an oral presentation before a class or another group of people—is a special form of interaction common in education. You will likely be asked to give a presentation in one of your classes at some point, and your future career may also involve public speaking. It's important to develop skills for this form of communication.

Public speaking is like participating in class—sharing your thoughts, ideas, and questions with others in the group. In other ways, however, public speaking is very different. You stand in front of the class to speak, rather than from your usual seat—and for most students, that changes the psychology of the situation. You also have time outside of class to prepare your presentation, allowing you to plan it carefully—and, for many, giving more time to worry about it and experience even more anxiety!

Overcoming Anxiety

Although a few people seem to be natural public speakers, most of us feel some stage fright or anxiety about having to speak to a group, at least at first. This is completely normal. We feel like everyone is staring at us and seeing our every flaw, and we're sure we'll forget what we want to say or mess up. Take comfort from knowing that almost everyone else is dreading giving class presentations the same as you are! But you can learn to overcome your anxiety and prepare in a way that not only safely gets you through the experience but also leads to success in your presentation. The following are proven strategies for overcoming anxiety when speaking in public:

- **Understand anxiety.** Since stage fright is normal, don't try to deny that you're feeling anxious. A little anxiety can help motivate you to prepare and do your best. Accept this aspect of the process and work to overcome it. Anxiety is usually worst just before you begin and but eases up once you've begun.
- **Understand that your audience actually wants you to succeed.** They're not looking for faults or hoping you'll fail. Other students and your instructors are on your side, not your enemy. They likely won't even see your anxiety.
- **Reduce anxiety by preparing and practicing.** The next section discusses the preparation process in more detail. The more fully you prepare and the more often you have practice, the more your anxiety will go away.
- **Focus on what you're saying, not how you're saying it.** Keep in mind that you have ideas to share, and this is what your classmates and instructors are interested in. Don't obsess about speaking, but focus on the content of your presentation. Think, for example, of how easily you share your ideas with a friend or family member, as you naturally speak your mind. The same can work with public speaking if you focus on the ideas themselves.
- **Develop self-confidence.** As you prepare, you will make notes you can refer to during the presentation. You're not going to forget what you want to say. The more you practice, the more confident you'll become.

Guidelines for Presentations

Preparing and delivering a presentation in class (or in business or other settings) is a process involving learning, listening, remembering and even managing stress. The process breaks down into these six basic steps:

1. Analyze your audience and goals
2. Plan, research, and organize your content
3. Draft and revise the presentation
4. Prepare speaking notes
5. Practice the presentation
6. Deliver the presentation

Step 1: Analyze Your Audience and Goals

Who will see and hear your presentation—and why? Obviously, other students and the instructor. But you still need to think about what they already know, and don't know, about your topic. If your topic relates to subject matter in class lectures and readings, consider what background information they already have and be careful not to give a boring recap of things they already know. It may be important, however, to show how your specific topic fits in with subjects that have been discussed already in class, especially in the beginning of your presentation, but be sure to focus on your new topic.

New terms and concepts may become familiar to you while doing your research and preparation, but remember to define and explain them to other students. Consider how much explanation or examples will be needed for your audience to grasp your points.

If your topic involves anything controversial or may provoke emotion, consider your audience's attitudes and choose your words carefully. Thinking about your audience will help you find ways to get their attention and keep them interested.

Be sure you are clear about the goals for the presentation. Are you primarily presenting new information or arguing for a position? Are you giving an overview or a detailed report? Review the assignment and talk with the instructor if you're unsure. Your goals guide everything in the presentation: what you say, how much you say, what order you say it in, what visual aids you use, whether you use humor or personal examples, and so forth.

Step 2: Plan, Research, and Organize Your Content

Starting with the assignment and your goals, brainstorm your topic. Jot notes on specific topics that seem important. Often you'll do reading or research to gather more information. Take notes as you would with any reading. As you research the topic at this stage, don't worry at first about how much content you are gathering. It's better to know too much and then pick out the most important things to say than to rush ahead to drafting the presentation and then realize you don't have enough material.

Organizing a presentation is similar to organizing topics in a class paper and uses the same principles. Introduce your topic and state your main idea (thesis), go into more detail about specific ideas, and conclude your presentation. Look for a logical order for the specifics in the middle. Some topics work best in chronological (time) order or with a compare-and-contrast organization. If your goal is to persuade the audience, build up to the strongest reason. Put similar ideas together and add transitions between different ideas.

While researching your topic and outlining your main points, think about visual aids that may help the presentation.

Also start thinking about how much time you have for the presentation, but don't limit yourself yet in the outline stage.

Step 3: Draft and Revise the Presentation

Unless required by the assignment, you don't need to actually write out the presentation in full sentences and paragraphs. How much you write depends on your own learning and speaking style. Some students speak well from brief phrases written in an outline, while other students find it easier to write sentences out completely. There's nothing wrong with writing the presentation out fully like a script if that helps you be sure you will say what you intend to—just so you don't actually get up and read from the script.

You can't know for sure how long a presentation will last until you rehearse it later, but you can estimate the time while drafting it. On the average, it takes two to three minutes to speak what can be written on a standard double-spaced page—but with visual aids, pauses, and audience interaction, it may take longer. While this is only a rough guide, you can start out thinking of a ten-minute presentation as the equivalent of a three to four-page paper.

Never wait until the last minute to draft your presentation. Arrange your time to prepare the first draft and then come back to it a day or two later to ask these questions:

- Am I going on too long about minor points? Could the audience get bored?
- Do I have good explanations and reasons for my main points? Do I need more data or better examples? Where would visual aids be most effective?
- Am I using the best words for this topic and this audience? Should I be more or less informal in the way I talk?
- Does it all hold together and flow well from one point to the next? Do I need a better introduction or transition when I shift from one idea to another?

Visual Aids in Presentations

Except for very short informal presentations, most presentations gain from visuals—and visual aids are often expected. If encouraged or allowed to include visuals in your presentation, plan to do so. Consider all possible types:

- Charts or graphs
- Maps
- Photos or other images
- Video clips
- Handouts (only when necessary—they can be distracting)

Use the available technology, whether it's an overhead projector, PowerPoint slides, a flip chart, or posters. (Talk to your instructor about resources and software for designing your visuals.) Follow these guidelines:

- Design your visuals carefully. Here are some basic rules:
  - Use a simple, neutral background. A light-colored background with text in a dark color works best for words; a dark background used like matting works best for photos.
  - Minimize the amount of text in visuals—more than eight words per slide is usually too much. Avoid simply presenting word outlines of what you are saying. Make sure text is large enough for the audience to read.
  - Don't use more than two pictures in a slide, and use two only to make a direct comparison. Montages are hard to focus on and distract the viewer from what you're saying. Use images only when they support your presentation; don't use clip art just as decoration.
  - Don't put a table of numbers in a visual aid. If you need to illustrate numerical data, use a graph. (Microsoft Excel can make them for you easily.)
  - Don't use sound effects. Use a very brief recording only if directly related to your main points.
  - Don't use visual special effects such as dissolves, spins, box-outs, or other transitions. They are distracting. Use animation sparingly and only if it helps make a point.
- Don't use so many visuals or move through them so quickly that the audience gives all its attention to them rather than to you.
- Practice your presentation using your visual aids, because they affect your timing.
- Explain visuals when needed but not when they're obvious.
- Keep your eyes on your audience, only briefly glancing at visuals to stay in synch with them.
- Don't hand out a printout of your visuals. Your audience should keep their eyes on you instead of fiddling around with paper.

Step 4: Prepare Speaking Notes

As mentioned earlier, it's not a good idea to read your presentation from a written page rather than *deliver* it. To keep your audience's attention, it's important to make eye contact with them and to use a normal speaking voice—and you can't do this if you keep your eyes on a written script.

Speaking notes are a brief outline for your presentation. You might write them on index cards or sheets of paper. Include important facts and data as well as keywords for your main ideas, but don't write too much. (If you forget things later when you start practicing, you can always add more to your outline then.) Be sure to number your cards or pages to prevent a last-minute mix-up.

Think especially about how to open and close your presentation, because these two moments have the most impact of the whole presentation. Use the opening to capture the audience's attention, but be sure it is appropriate for your audience and the goals. Here are some possibilities for your opening:

- A striking fact or example (illustrating an issue or a problem)
- A brief interesting or humorous anecdote (historical, personal, or current event)
- A question to the audience
- An interesting quotation

Then relate the opening to your topic and your main point and move into the body of the presentation.

Your closing mirrors the opening. Transition from your last point to a brief summary that pulls your ideas together. You might end with a challenge to the audience, a strong statement about your topic, or a personal reflection on what you have been saying. Just make sure you have a final sentence planned so that you don't end up uncomfortably fumbling around at the end ("Well, I guess that ends my presentation").

Step 5: Practice the Presentation

Practice may be the most important step. It is also the best way to get over stage fright and gain confidence.

Practice first in an empty room where you imagine people sitting, so that you can move your eyes around the room to this "audience." The first time through, focus on putting your outlined notes into full sentences in your natural speaking voice. Don't read your notes aloud. Glance down at your notes only briefly and then look up immediately around the room. Practice two or three times just to find the right words to explain your points and feel more comfortable working with your notes. Time yourself, but don't obsess over your presentation being the exact length required. If your presentation is much too long, however, adjust it now in

your notes so that you don't start memorizing things that you might accidentally still say later on even though you cut them from your notes.

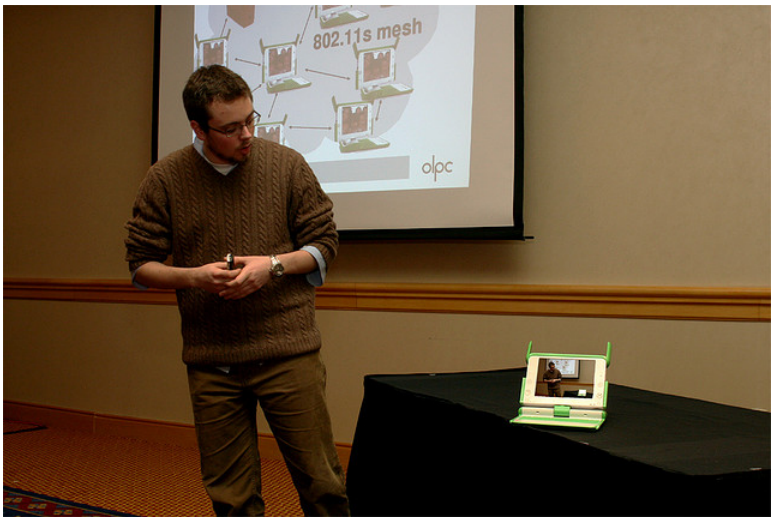
Once you feel good speaking from your notes, practice to add some more polish to your delivery. You might want to record or videotape your presentation or ask a friend or roommate to watch your presentation. Pay attention to these aspects of how you speak:

- Try to speak in your natural voice, not in a monotone as if you were just reading aloud. If you will be presenting in a large room without a microphone, you will need to speak louder than usual, but still try to use a natural voice.
- In usual conversation, we speed up and slow down and vary the intensity of our words to show how we feel about what we're saying. Practice changes in your delivery style to emphasize key points.
- Don't keep looking at your notes. It's fine if you use words that are different from those you wrote down—the more you rehearse without looking at your notes, the more natural sounding you will be.
- Be sure you can pronounce all new words and technical terms correctly. Practice saying them slowly and clearly to yourself until you can say them naturally.
- Don't forget transitions. Listeners need a cue when you're moving to a new idea. Practice phrases such as "*Another* important reason for this is…" or "Now let's move on to *why* this is so.…"
- Watch out for all those little "filler" words people use so often, such as "like," "you know," "well," and "uh." They're very distracting to most audiences. Listen to or watch your tape to see if you are using these fillers or ask your friend to point it out.
- Pay attention to body language when practicing. Stand up straight and tall in every practice session so that you become used to it. Unless you have to stand at a podium to use a fixed microphone in your presentation, practice moving around while you speak; this helps keep the audience watching you. Use hand and arm gestures if they are natural for you, but don't try to make up gestures for the presentation because they will look phony. Most important, keep your eyes moving over the audience. Practice smiling and pausing at key points.
- Finally, it's a good idea to be ready in case of an accident. Most likely your presentation will go smoothly, you'll stay on track with your notes, and your PowerPoint slides will work fine, but sometimes a mishap happens. Be ready to joke about it, rather than becoming flustered. If the computer fails and you lose your visuals, say something like, "Well, that's a shame, I had some really great photos to show you!" If you drop your index cards or notes, or accidentally skip ahead in your presentation and then have to backtrack, make a joke: "Sorry about that, I was so excited to get to my next point that I'm afraid I lost control there for a moment!" Let your audience laugh with you—they'll still be on your side, and you can defuse the incident and move on without becoming more nervous.

Step 6: Deliver the Presentation

Be sure to get enough sleep and eat a healthy breakfast. Don't drink too much caffeine or else you'll become hyper and nervous. Wear your favorite—and appropriate—clothing and comfortable shoes.

Figure 2.6



You may use computerized visual aids when you give a presentation to a class.

John Haynes Photography – OLPC – CC BY-ND 2.0.

Remember, your audience is on your side! If you're still nervous before your turn, take a few deep breaths. Rehearse your opening lines in your mind. Smile as you move to the front of the room, looking at your audience. You'll see some friendly faces smiling back encouragingly. As you start the presentation, move your eyes among those giving you a warm reception—and if you see some student looking bored or doing something else, just ignore them. But don't focus on any one person in the audience for too long, which could make them nervous or cause them to look away.

Don't keep looking at your watch or a clock: If your rehearsal times were close to your assigned time, your presentation will be also. If you do notice that you're running behind schedule, it may be that you're saying too much out of nervousness. Use your notes to get back on track and keep the pace moving. But it's better to deliver your presentation naturally and fluidly and be a bit long or short than to try to change your words and end up sounding unnatural.

At the closing, deliver your last line with confidence, sweeping your eyes over the audience. If appropriate, ask if there are any questions. When you're done, pause, smile, say "Thank you," and walk back to your seat.

Later on, ask other students and your instructor for comments. Be open minded—don't just ask for praise. If you hear a suggestion for improvement, file that in your memory for next time.

Group Presentations

You may be assigned to give a presentation in a small group. The six-step process discussed previously works for group presentations, too, although group dynamics often call for additional planning and shared responsibilities:

1. Schedule a group meeting as soon as possible to get started. Don't let another student put things off. Explain that you're too busy and won't have time at the last minute.
2. Begin by analyzing your audience and your goals together as a group to make sure everyone understands the assignment the same. Discuss who should do what. While everyone should talk about what content to include, from here onward, you will take on specialized roles. One or more may begin research and gathering information. Others who are good writers may volunteer to draft the presentation, while one or more others may develop the visual aids. Those who have public speaking experience may volunteer to do all or most of the speaking (unless the assignment requires everyone to have a speaking role). You also need a team leader to keep everyone on schedule, organize meetings, and so on. The best team leader is an even-tempered student with good social skills, who can motivate everyone to cooperate.
3. Steps 2 and 3 can likely be carried out individually with assigned tasks, but group members should stay in touch. For example, the person developing the visuals should be talking to those doing the researching and drafting to see what visuals are needed and get started finding or creating them.
4. Before preparing notes in step 4, meet again to go over the content and plan for visuals. Everyone should be comfortable with the plan so far. Make final decisions about who will do each section of the presentation. Set the time for each segment. Then speakers should prepare their own speaking notes. Let someone with strong speaking skills open or close the presentation (or both), with others doing the other parts.
5. The whole group should be present for practice sessions in step 5, even if not everyone is speaking. Those not speaking should take notes and give feedback. If one student is doing most of the presenting, an alternate should be chosen in case the first choice is sick on the scheduled day. The alternate also needs to practice.
6. During the delivery, especially if using technology for visual aids, one student should manage the visuals while others do the presenting. If several students present different segments, plan the transition from one to another so that the presentation keeps flowing without pauses.

Additional Resources

For Class Presentations

Using PowerPoint. A step-by-step illustrated tutorial for learning how to create effective visual presentations with PowerPoint. https://www.baruch.cuny.edu/tutorials/powerpoint/

"How to Give a Bad Talk." A humorous look (with some very good advice) on what *not* to do when preparing for and giving a class presentation. http://www.cs.berkeley.edu/~pattrsn/talks/BadTalk.pdf

Class presentations on YouTube. Search YouTube with the phrase "class presentation" and look for video examples of actual students giving class presentations. Observing and critiquing the presentations of other students are good ways to get started

preparing your own and learning from others. Here's a good example of a student group presentation on a topic we can all relate to (how body language works):

(click to see video)

In this presentation, take note of

- how students make good eye contact with the audience;
- the first student's natural speaking voice and tone, and how she did not have to use her note cards very often (obviously she practiced well);
- some differences among these students;
- the use of PowerPoint slides within the presentation (some better than others);
- the appropriate occasional use of humor;
- the division of presentation responsibilities within the student group;
- each presenter's interaction with the audience.

Key Takeaways

- Public speaking skills are important because you will likely give presentations in class and perhaps in a future job.
- Overcome anxiety about public speaking by understanding your feelings, preparing well and practicing your delivery, and focusing on your subject.
- Follow a six-step process to prepare and deliver a presentation:
  1. Analyze your audience and goals
  2. Plan, research, and organize your content
  3. Draft and revise the presentation
  4. Prepare speaking notes
  5. Practice the presentation
  6. Deliver the presentation and seek feedback
- Use visual aids to support a presentation, creating visuals that are relevant, attractive, and powerful.
- The success of a group presentation depends on effective group meetings, successful division of roles, and repeated group practices.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. If you have given a class presentation in the past, what worked best for you? (If you have not given a presentation yet as a student, what aspect do you think will be most difficult for you?)

   _____

   _____

2. Name the two most important things you can do to reduce anxiety about a class presentation you will have to give.

   _____

   _____

3. For each of the following statements about class presentations, circle T for true or F for false:

T	F	Although you are delivering the presentation to the class, your real audience is your instructor, so you don't need to waste time defining terms and concepts he or she already knows.
T	F	Organizing a presentation or speech is similar to organizing topics in a paper you write for class.

T	F	When creating visual aids, put as many photos as you can in each PowerPoint slide to have the strongest impact.
T	F	In case your memory goes blank while giving a presentation, write the full presentation out so that you can read it aloud.

4. Describe how best to use body language (facial expressions, eye movements, gestures, etc.) when giving a presentation.

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. If you were assigned along with three other students to give a group presentation in the class using this textbook, what would be your preferred role in the preparation stages? Your least preferred role? If you had to take your least preferred role, what single thing would you want to work hardest on to make the presentation successful?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

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2.5: Summary

Chapter Takeaways

Attending Class

1. **Punctuality**: Arriving on time shows respect for the instructor and fellow classmates and ensures you don't miss important information.
2. **Preparedness**: Bringing necessary materials (textbooks, notebooks, writing tools, etc.) and reviewing previous lessons beforehand.
3. **Attendance**: Regular attendance is crucial for understanding course content and staying engaged with the material.
4. **Active Listening**: Pay close attention to the lecture, take notes, and minimize distractions to fully absorb the information.
5. **Engagement**: Asking questions and participating in discussions helps reinforce learning and clarifies doubts.

Participating in Class

1. **Active Participation**: Contributing to discussions, asking questions, and sharing insights to enhance understanding and retention.
2. **Respectful Dialogue**: Listening to classmates, respecting diverse opinions, and engaging in constructive conversations.
3. **Teamwork**: Collaborating on group projects and assignments to develop teamwork and communication skills.
4. **Confidence**: Building confidence by speaking up in class and presenting ideas clearly and concisely.
5. **Critical Thinking**: Analyzing information critically and applying knowledge to real-world scenarios.

Interacting with Instructors

1. **Approachability**: Understanding that instructors are there to help and are approachable for questions and clarifications.
2. **Effective Communication**: Clearly articulating questions or concerns, and using appropriate channels (office hours, emails) to contact instructors.
3. **Feedback**: Seeking and using feedback constructively to improve academic performance and understanding.
4. **Professionalism**: Maintaining a professional demeanor in interactions, showing respect, and following course policies.
5. **Utilizing Resources**: Taking advantage of instructor-provided resources, such as office hours, review sessions, and supplementary materials.

Class Presentations

1. **Preparation**: Thoroughly researching the topic, organizing content logically, and practicing the presentation multiple times.
2. **Visual Aids**: Using visual aids (slides, charts, videos) effectively to enhance understanding and engagement.
3. **Public Speaking Skills**: Developing strong public speaking skills, such as clear articulation, confident body language, and maintaining eye contact.
4. **Time Management**: Adhering to the allotted time for the presentation and pacing the content appropriately.
5. **Audience Engagement**: Engaging the audience through interactive elements (questions, discussions) and responding to their queries effectively.

These key points aim to guide students in making the most out of their classroom experience, fostering a positive and productive learning environment.

Career Connection

- **Punctuality**: Arriving on time is crucial in nursing, where timely interventions can save lives. Developing this habit in class prepares you for the time-sensitive nature of clinical settings.
- **Preparedness**: Being prepared for class mirrors the need to be prepared for clinical shifts, where having the right tools and knowledge is essential for patient care.
- **Attendance**: Regular attendance ensures you don’t miss critical information, just as consistent presence in clinical practice ensures comprehensive patient care.
- **Active Listening**: Nursing requires attentive listening to understand patient needs and doctor’s orders. Practice this skill in class to become a more effective nurse.
- **Engagement**: Engaging in class discussions enhances your critical thinking and communication skills, which are vital in making informed clinical decisions.

- **Active Participation**: Nursing involves continuous learning and adapting. Active participation in class fosters a habit of lifelong learning and staying current with medical advancements.
- **Respectful Dialogue**: Respectful communication is key in healthcare teams. Developing this skill in class helps you collaborate effectively with colleagues and patients.
- **Teamwork**: Nursing is a team effort. Working in groups in class hones your ability to collaborate and delegate, essential for providing comprehensive patient care.
- **Confidence**: Confidence in class discussions translates to confidence in clinical practice, enabling you to advocate for patients and make sound clinical decisions.
- **Critical Thinking**: Nurses must think critically to assess situations and provide appropriate care. Engaging in analytical discussions in class builds this crucial skill.
- **Approachability**: Building rapport with instructors prepares you to interact with experienced healthcare professionals, seeking guidance and mentorship in clinical settings.
- **Effective Communication**: Clear communication with instructors mirrors the need for clear communication with patients and healthcare teams, ensuring effective care delivery.
- **Feedback**: Constructive feedback from instructors is akin to clinical feedback from supervisors, helping you improve your practice and patient outcomes.
- **Professionalism**: Maintaining professionalism in class interactions sets the foundation for professional conduct in clinical environments, fostering respect and trust.
- **Utilizing Resources**: Utilizing instructor resources mirrors accessing clinical resources, ensuring you have the necessary information and support to provide high-quality care.
- **Preparation**: Thorough preparation for presentations reflects the meticulous planning needed for patient care plans and procedures.
- **Visual Aids**: Effective use of visual aids in presentations parallels the use of charts and diagrams in patient education and team briefings.
- **Public Speaking Skills**: Public speaking skills are essential for patient education, presenting cases to healthcare teams, and participating in community health education.
- **Time Management**: Managing time during presentations teaches you to manage time efficiently during clinical shifts, ensuring all tasks are completed within the allotted time.
- **Audience Engagement**: Engaging your audience in presentations is similar to engaging patients and families, ensuring they understand health conditions and care plans.

Rethinking

College classes differ significantly from high school or other educational settings, requiring students to adopt a more mature and proactive approach to learning. Unlike high school, where teachers often guide students through the material, college demands greater independence and self-discipline. Attendance and punctuality become essential as lectures cover substantial content at a faster pace. Participation is not just encouraged but necessary for deeper understanding and skill development, particularly in fields like nursing, where collaboration and critical thinking are crucial. Interaction with instructors shifts from a dependent relationship to a professional one, mirroring future workplace dynamics. Presentations and projects in college classes are more rigorous, preparing students for the detailed and structured work expected in their careers. Overall, college classes cultivate a higher level of responsibility, critical thinking, and professional behavior, essential for success in demanding fields such as nursing.

ACTIVITY

This activity will help you gain a deeper understanding of how the habits and skills developed in college classes are directly applicable to your future role as a nurse, foster a more holistic and practical approach to your education and professional development.

Grab a journal and reflect on the following questions:

- Describe a specific instance in a college class where your punctuality or attendance positively impacted your learning experience.
- Reflect on a time when active participation in a class discussion or group project enhanced your understanding of a topic. How can this experience translate to patient care?

- Think about an interaction with an instructor that significantly helped you. How can you apply this approach to seeking guidance from experienced nurses or doctors in a clinical setting?
- Recall a class presentation you gave. What skills did you develop during that process, and how can these skills benefit you in educating patients or presenting case studies to colleagues?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Knowing Yourself as a Learner

3.1: Prelude to Knowing Yourself as a Learner
3.2: The Power to Learn
3.3: How You Learn
3.4: Setting Yourself Up for Success
3.5: The Motivated Learner
3.6: Are You Ready for Class?
3.7: Are You Really Listening?
3.8: It's All in the Mindset
3.9: Applying What You Know about Learning
3.10: The Hidden Curriculum
3.11: Summary

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3.1: Prelude to Knowing Yourself as a Learner

Learning Objectives

1. Analyze the relationship between learning styles and academic performance to identify personal strengths and areas for improvement.
2. Evaluate the impact of motivation and mindset on learning and academic success.
3. Develop personalized strategies to enhance learning, including active listening and class preparation techniques.
4. Apply self-regulation strategies to improve focus, time management, and readiness for class.
5. Examine the concept of the hidden curriculum and its influence on student success in the academic environment.



Figure 3.1: *The School of Athens* by Raphael, a fresco in the Vatican, is thought to depict many of the greatest figures in Greek philosophy, including Plato and Aristotle as well as Nicomachus and Averroes. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain)

Student Survey

How do you feel about your learning abilities? Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.” These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As you are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We’ll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed.

1. Learning for me is easy. I don’t even have to think about it.
2. I have a preferred learning style.
3. If I can't learn something right away, I have difficulty staying with it.
4. I think my teachers are the most significant aspect of my learning.

You can also take the Chapter 2 survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

“When I came to college, I was a great STEM student. I knew the best ways to study for understanding the complexity of cellular mechanisms, but I had no idea how to study for classes where I would need to draw upon political theory or even how to memorize vocabulary words for language classes. Since I am now a humanities student studying Russian, I learned the hard way that you cannot study for every class the same way.

“For my first Russian vocabulary quiz, I studied almost 14 hours because I could not remember the words no matter how hard I tried. I was studying the Russian textbook the same way that I would study for a Chemistry or Biology class: to simply read the chapter or vocabulary list over and over again. I knew that I could not afford to be this time-inefficient for the entire semester,

> so I asked my professor for some tips on how to study for her class. Now, I start studying three days before each quiz by making flash cards the first day, studying the words from Russian to English the second day, and then studying the words from English to Russian by writing them down the third day. This new method is not one that works well for every class, but that's the beauty of it! I am a better learner because I have found ways to use a more diverse range of studying tactics."
>
> **— Gabby Kennedy**, Baylor University

About This Chapter

In this chapter you will learn about the art of learning itself, as well as how to employ strategies that enable you to learn more efficiently.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Discover the different types of learning and your learning practices.
- Make informed and effective learning choices in regards to personal engagement and motivation.
- Identify and apply the learning benefits of a growth mindset.
- Evaluate and make informed decisions about learning styles and learning skills.
- Recognize how personality type models influence learning and utilize that knowledge to improve your own learning.
- Identify the impact of outside circumstances on personal learning experiences and develop strategies to compensate for them.
- Recognize the presence of the "hidden curriculum" and how to navigate it.

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3.2: The Power to Learn

Welcome to one of the most empowering chapters in this book! While each chapter focuses on showing you clear paths to success as a student, this one deals specifically with what is at the core of being a student: the act of learning.

We humans have been obsessed with how we learn and understand things since ancient times. Because of this, some of our earliest recorded philosophies have tried to explain how we take in information about the world around us, how we acquire new knowledge, and even how we can be certain what we learn is correct. This obsession has produced a large number of theories, ideas, and research into how we learn. There is a great deal of information out there on the subject—some of it is very good, and some of it, while well intentioned, has been a bit misguided.

Because of this obsession with learning, over the centuries, people have continually come up with new ideas about how we acquire knowledge. The result has been that commonly held "facts" about education have been known to change frequently. Often, what was once thought to be the newest, greatest discovery about learning was debunked later on. One well-known example of this is that of corporal punishment. For most of the time formal education has existed in our society, educators truly believed that beating students when they made a mistake actually helped them learn faster. Thankfully, *birching* (striking someone with a rod made from a birch tree) has fallen out of favor in education circles, and our institutions of learning have adopted different approaches. In this chapter, not only will you learn about current learning theories that are backed by neuroscience (something we did not have back in the days of birching), but you will also learn other learning theories that did not turn out to be as effective or as thoroughly researched as once thought. That does not mean those ideas about learning are useless. Instead, in these cases you find ways to separate the valuable parts from the myths to make good learning choices.

> "Research has shown that one of the most influential aids in learning is an understanding about learning itself."

What is the Nature of Learning?

To begin with, it is important to recognize that learning is work. Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is difficult, but there is always work involved. For many years people made the error of assuming that learning was a passive activity that involved little more than just absorbing information. Learning was thought to be a lot like copying and pasting words in a document; the student's mind was blank and ready for an instructor to teach them facts that they could quickly take in. As it turns out, learning is much more than that. In fact, at its most rudimentary level, it is an actual process that physically changes our brains. Even something as simple as learning the meaning of a new word requires the physical alteration of neurons and the creation of new paths to receptors. These new electrochemical pathways are formed and strengthened as we utilize, practice, or remember what we have learned. If the new skill or knowledge is used in conjunction with other things we have already learned, completely different sections of the brain, our nerves, or our muscles may be tied in as a part of the process. A good example of this would be studying a painting or drawing that depicts a scene from a story or play you are already familiar with. Adding additional connections, memories, and mental associations to things you already know something about expands your knowledge and understanding in a way that cannot be reversed. In essence, it can be said that every time we learn something new we are no longer the same.

In addition to the physical transformation that takes place during learning, there are also a number of other factors that can influence how easy or how difficult learning something can be. While most people would assume that the ease or difficulty would really depend on what is being learned, there are actually several other factors that play a greater role.

In fact, research has shown that one of the most influential factors in learning is a clear understanding about learning itself. This is not to say that you need to become neuroscientists in order to do well in school, but instead, knowing a thing or two about learning and how we learn in general can have strong, positive results for your own learning. This is called *metacognition* (i.e., thinking about thinking).

Some of the benefits to how we learn can be broken down into different areas such as

- attitude and motivation toward learning,
- types of learning,
- methods of learning, and
- your own preferences for learning.

In this chapter you will explore these different areas to better understand how they may influence your own learning, as well as how to make conscious decisions about your own learning process to maximize positive outcomes.

All Learning Is Not the Same

The first, fundamental point to understand about learning is that there are several types of learning. Different kinds of knowledge are learned in different ways. Each of these different types of learning can require different processes that may take place in completely different parts of our brain.

For example, simple memorization is a form of learning that does not always require deeper understanding. Children often learn this way when they memorize poems or verses they recite. An interesting example of this can be found in the music industry, where there have been several hit songs sung in English by vocalists who do not speak English. In these cases, the singers did not truly understand what they were singing, but instead they were taught to memorize the sounds of the words in the proper order.

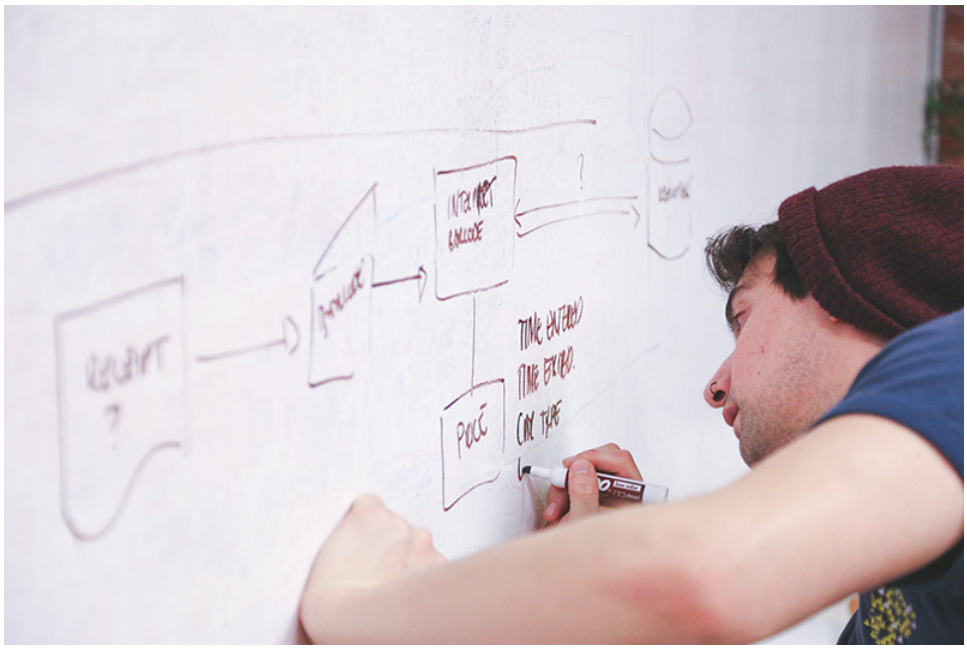


Figure 3.2: Learning has many levels and forms. For example, collaborative learning and showing your work require different skills and produce different results than reading or notetaking on your own. (Credit: StartUpStockPhotos / Pexels)

Memorizing sounds is a very different type of learning than, say, acquiring a deep understanding of Einstein's general theory of relativity.

Notice in the comparative examples of music and physics that the different levels of learning are being defined by what they allow you to know or do. When classifying learning in this way, people usually agree on six different levels of learning. In this next section we will take a detailed look at each of these.

In the table below, the cells in the left column each contain one of the main levels of learning, categorized by what the learning allows you to do. To the right of each category are the "skill acquired" and a set of real-world examples of what those skills might be as applied to a specific topic. This set of categories is called Bloom's Taxonomy, and it is often used as a guide for educators when they are determining what students should learn within a course.

Table 3.1

Category of Learning	Skill acquired	Example 1: Musical ability	Example 2: Historical information on Charles the Bald
Create	Produce new or original work	Compose a piece of music	Write a paper on Charles that draws a new conclusion about his reign
Evaluate	Justify or support an idea or decision	Make critical decisions about the notes that make up a melody—what works, what doesn't, and why	Make arguments that support the idea that Charles was a good ruler

Category of Learning	Skill acquired	Example 1: Musical ability	Example 2: Historical information on Charles the Bald
Analyze	Draw connections	Play the specific notes that are found in the key of A	Compare and contrast the historical differences between the reign of Charles and his grandfather, Charlemagne
Apply	Use information in new ways	Use knowledge to play several notes that sound good together	Use the information to write a historical account on the reign of Charles
Understand/ Comprehend	Explain ideas or concepts	Understand the relationship between the musical notes and how to play each on a musical instrument	Explain the historical events that enabled Charles to become Emperor
Remember	Recall facts and basic concepts	Memorize notes on a musical scale	Recall that Charles the Bald was Holy Roman Emperor from 875–877 CE

A review of the above table shows that actions in the left column (or what you will be able to do with the new knowledge) has a direct influence over what needs to be learned and can even dictate the type of learning approach that is best. For example, *remembering* requires a type of learning that allows the person basic memorization. In the case of Charles the Bald and his reign, it is simply a matter of committing the dates to memory. When it comes to *understanding and comprehension*, being able to explain how Charles came to power requires not only the ability to recall several events, but also for the learner to be able to understand the cause and effect of those events and how they worked together to make Charles emperor. Another example would be the ability to *analyze*. In this particular instance the information learned would not only be about Charles, but also about other rulers, such as Charlemagne. The information would have to be of such a depth that the learner could compare the events and facts about each ruler.

When you engage in any learning activity, take the time to understand what you will do with the knowledge once you have attained it. This can help a great deal when it comes to making decisions on how to go about it. Using flashcards to help memorize angles does not really help you solve problems using geometry formulas. Instead, practicing problem-solving with the actual formulas is a much better approach. The key is to make certain the learning activity fits your needs.

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3.3: How You Learn

One of the first steps for becoming a successful student is to understand the learning process itself. Certain characteristics of effective learning, including the four-step learning cycle, are true of all people. At the same time, people have different learning styles. Understanding these processes is important for maximizing your own learning while in college.

The Learning Cycle: Four Steps to Learning

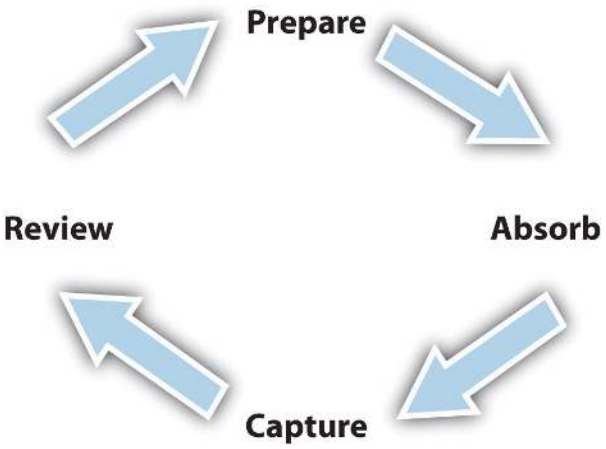
Adult learning is different from learning in primary and secondary school. In high school, teachers often take much of the responsibility for how students learn—encouraging learning with class discussions, repeating key material, creating study guides, and looking over students' shoulders to make sure no one falls behind. In college, most of the responsibility for learning falls on the student. You're free to fail—or succeed—as you choose. This applies as well to how well you learn.

Learning an academic subject means really understanding it, being able to think about it in meaningful ways and to apply that understanding in new situations. This is very different from simply memorizing something and repeating it back on a test. Academic learning occurs most effectively in a cycle of four steps:

1. Preparing
2. Absorbing
3. Capturing
4. Reviewing

Think first about the different situations in which you learn. Obviously you learn during class, whether by listening to the instructor speak or in class discussions in which you participate. But you also learn while reading your textbooks and other materials outside of class. You learn when you talk with an instructor during office hours. You learn by talking with other students informally in study groups. You learn when you study your class notes before an exam. All of these different learning situations involve the same four-step process.

Figure 3.6 The Learning Cycle



Prepare

One student rolls out of bed a few minutes before class and dashes across campus and grabs the last seat in the hall just as the instructor begins a lecture; it takes him a few minutes to find the right notebook in his backpack, and then he can't find a pencil. He's thinking about how he should've set his alarm a little earlier so he'd have had time to grab a cup of coffee, since he's having trouble waking up. Finally he settles in his seat and starts listening, but now he can't figure out what the instructor is talking about. He starts jotting down phrases in his notes anyway, thinking he'll figure it out later.

Another student looks over his notes from the previous class and quickly glances back at passages he'd highlighted in the textbook reading. He arrives at class a few minutes early, sits up front where he can hear well, and has his notebook open and pencil out. While waiting for the instructor to arrive, he talks to another student about her ideas for the paper due next week in this class.

It's obvious which of these students will learn more during today's class lecture. One has prepared and the other has not, and they will experience a huge difference in their understanding of today's topic. Preparing to learn is the first step for learning. The same

is true when you sit down to read your textbook, to study for an exam, or to work on an out-of-class project. Partly you are putting yourself in the right mind-set to learn. But when you review yesterday's notes to prepare for today's class, you are also solidifying yesterday's learning.

Absorb

"Absorbing" refers to the actual taking in of new ideas, information, or experience. This is what happens at the moment a student listens to a class lecture or reads a textbook. In high school, this is sometimes the only learning step taken by some students. They listened to what the instructor said and "regurgitated" it back on the test. But this won't work in college because learning now requires *understanding* the topic, not just repeating facts or information. In coming chapters you'll get tips for improving in this step.

Capture

"Capturing" refers to taking notes. No matter how good your memory, you need to take good notes in college simply because there is so much to learn. Just hearing something once is seldom enough. You have to go back over the material again, sometimes several times again, thinking about it and seeing how it all fits together.

The more effective your note-taking skills, the better your learning abilities. Take notes also when reading your textbooks. You'll learn methods for taking good notes in later chapters.

Review

The step of reviewing—your class notes, your textbook reading and notes, and any other course materials possibly including recordings, online media, podcasts, and so on—is the next step for solidifying your learning and reaching a real understanding of the topic. Reviewing is also a way to prepare for new information and ideas. That's why this is a learning cycle: the end of the process loops back to the beginning as you prepare for additional learning.

Reviewing is also the step in which you discover whether you really understand the material. If you do not understand something fully, you may need to reread a section of the book, talk it over with a friend in the class, or go see your instructor.

What's Your Learning Style?

Different people have different learning styles. Style refers to a student's specific learning preferences and actions. One student may learn more effectively from listening to the instructor. Another learns more effectively from reading the textbook, while another student benefits most from charts, graphs, and images the instructor presents during a lecture.

Learning style is important in college. Each different style, described later in more detail, has certain advantages and disadvantages compared with other styles. None is "right" or "wrong." You can learn to use your own style more effectively.

College instructors also have different teaching styles, which may or may not match up well with your learning style. Although you may personally learn best from a certain style of teaching, you cannot expect that your instructors will use exactly the style that is best for you. Therefore it is important to know how to adapt to teaching styles used in college.

Different systems have been used to describe the different ways in which people learn. Some describe the differences between how extroverts (outgoing, gregarious, social people) and introverts (quiet, private, contemplative people) learn. Some divide people into "thinkers" and "feelers." A popular theory of different learning styles is Howard Gardner's "multiple intelligences," based on eight different types of intelligence:

1. Verbal (prefers words)
2. Logical (prefers math and logical problem solving)
3. Visual (prefers images and spatial relationships)
4. Kinesthetic (prefers body movements and doing)
5. Rhythmic (prefers music, rhymes)
6. Interpersonal (prefers group work)
7. Intrapersonal (prefers introspection and independence)
8. Naturalist (prefers nature, natural categories)

The multiple intelligences approach recognizes that different people have different ways, or combinations of ways, of relating to the world.

Another approach to learning styles is called the VARK approach, which focuses on learning through different senses (**V**isual, **A**ural, **R**eading/Writing, and **K**inesthetic):

- Visual learners prefer images, charts, and the like.
- Aural learners learn better by listening.
- Reading/writing learners learn better through written language.
- Kinesthetic learners learn through doing, practicing, and acting.

You can take a free, self-scored online assessment of your VARK learning style at VARK(opens in new window) [www.businessballs.com].

There are still more systems used by educators to describe the various ways in which people learn. All of these systems can help you learn more about how **you as an individual person and college student learn best.** You can use the online assessment in the "Outside the Book" section at the end of this chapter to learn more about your style.

Just knowing your style, however, doesn't automatically provide a solution for how to do your best in your college courses. For example, although you may be a kinesthetic learner, you'll likely still have textbook reading assignments (verbal learning) as well as lecture classes (listening). All students need to adapt to other ways of learning.

The Truth about Learning Styles

In many ways these ideas about learning styles made some sense. Because of this, educators encouraged students to find out about their own learning styles. They developed tests and other techniques to help students determine which particular sense they preferred to use for learning, and in some cases learning materials were produced in multiple ways that focused on each of the different senses. That way, each individual learner could participate in learning activities that were tailored to their specific preferences.

While it initially seemed that dividing everyone by learning styles provided a leap forward in education, continued research began to show that the fixation on this new model might not have been as effective as it was once thought. In fact, in some cases, the way learning styles were actually being used created roadblocks to learning. This was because the popularization of this new idea brought on a rush to use learning styles in ways that failed to take into account several important aspects that are listed below:

- A person does not always prefer the same learning style all the time or for each situation. For example, some learners might enjoy lectures during the day but prefer reading in the evenings. Or they may prefer looking at diagrams when learning about mechanics but prefer reading for history topics.
- There are more preferences involved in learning than just the three that became popular. These other preferences can become nearly impossible to make use of within certain styles. For example, some prefer to learn in a more social environment that includes interaction with other learners. Reading can be difficult or restrictive as a group effort. Recognized learning styles beyond the original three include: **social** (preferring to learn as a part of group activity), **solitary** (preferring to learn alone or using self-study), or **logical** (preferring to use logic, reasoning, etc.).
- Students that thought they were limited to a single preferred learning style found themselves convinced that they could not do as well with content that was presented in a way that differed from their style.[8] For example, a student that had identified as a visual learner might feel they were at a significant disadvantage when listening to a lecture. Sometimes they even believed they had an even greater impairment that prevented them from learning that way at all.
- Some forms of learning are extremely difficult in activities delivered in one style or another. Subjects like computer programming would be almost impossible to learn using an aural learning style. And, while it is possible to read about a subject such as how to swing a bat or how to do a medical procedure, actually applying that knowledge in a learning environment is difficult if the subject is something that requires a physical skill.

The following sections look at the key ways in which learning occurs in college classes and offer some suggestions about how to adapt your strengths for success.

Reading

Reading skills are critically important in college. Most classes involve reading assignments. Although many instructors may cover some of the textbook's content in lectures or class discussions, students cannot skip the reading assignments and expect to do well.

If your personal learning style is verbal and independent—that is, if you learn well by sitting alone and reading—then you will likely not have difficulty with your college reading. Here are some tips to help maximize your learning:

- Underline and highlight key ideas when reading.
- Take good notes on your reading, using your own words.
- Write descriptions that summarize information presented in nonverbal modes, such as through charts and graphs.
- Do all optional and supplemental readings.
- Take good notes in class, as you may remember more from your written words than from the instructor's spoken words.
- If a class involves significant nonreading learning, such as learning hands-on physical processes, study with other students who are kinesthetic or "doing" learners.

If you have a different learning style, then you may need to give more attention to your reading skills. Always allow plenty of time for reading assignments—rushing makes it harder to understand what you are reading. Do your reading at times of the day when you are most alert. Find a quiet, comfortable place conducive to reading.

Try also to maximize your learning through your personal style. If you learn better by listening, for example, sit up front in lecture classes where you can see and hear the instructor better. If needed, ask if you can tape-record an instructor's lectures and then listen again at a convenient time, such as when commuting to class or work. If you are more of a visual learner, sit in class where you can see PowerPoint slides and other visual presentations most clearly. Check out whether video podcasts may be available for reviewing lectures. Try to relate all of these visual images to the textbook's content when you're reading an assignment. In addition, pay special attention to illustrations and diagrams in the book, which will further help you understand the written ideas and information. If you are more of an interpersonal learner, form a study group with other students and talk with others about the course topics. Take advantage of your instructors' office hours to help clarify your understanding after reading assignments.

Listening

Listening skills are as important in college as reading skills. College students are expected to listen to their instructors in class and remember and understand what is said. In discussion classes, listening is important also for participating well in discussions.

Figure 3.7



Many college classes involve lectures.

Chatham House – The Whitehead Lecture: Jack Straw – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

If your personal learning style favors listening, then you may already be good at understanding class lectures. Vanderbilt University provides tips to help you pay close attention, take good notes, and recall the information and ideas you have heard. Here are some more tips:

Figure 3.8



Instructors often use visual aids to help explain concepts and ideas. This helps students with visual learning styles.

Jill Watson – Caviar Instruction – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

- Sit where you can best hear the instructor, away from other distractions.
- Study with other students and listen to what they say about the course material. Hearing them talk from their class notes may be more helpful than reviewing your own written notes.
- Record lectures and listen to them again later when reviewing material before a test.
- When studying, read your notes aloud. Review previous tests by reading the questions aloud and speaking your answers. If a section in your textbook seems confusing, read it aloud.
- Talk with your instructor if you feel you are not understanding course readings.
- Use rhymes or acronyms to recall verbal information.
- Explore supplemental learning aids, such as audio and video podcasts (even from other colleges and universities) on the course's subject matter.

Seeing

A "seeing" learner learns more effectively through seeing than through reading or listening. Some college courses include demonstrations and physical processes that can be observed. If you are a visual learner, work on developing your reading and listening skills, too, because you will need to learn in these ways as well. Here are some tips to improve learning related to seeing:

- Pay special attention in class to visual presentations, such as charts, diagrams, and images.
- Take lecture notes using a visual approach. Do the same when taking notes on class readings. Use diagrams, different colors, lists, and sketches to help you remember.
- Use video podcasts or other visual aids for reviewing lectures.
- Pay special attention to your textbooks' illustrations and diagrams.
- If your instructor or textbook uses few visuals to help you understand and recall information and ideas, try to imagine how you would present this information visually to others if you were giving a class presentation. In your notes, create sketches for a PowerPoint slideshow capturing the highlights of the material.
- Study with other students who may learn better by reading or listening, and watch how they explain the material.

Doing

People who learn best by doing are often attracted to careers with a strong physical or hands-on component, which can vary from athletics to engineering. But these students may need to use other learning skills as well. Here are some tips to help maximize your learning related to doing:

- Try to engage all your senses when learning. Even when reading about something, try to imagine what it would feel like if you touched it, how it might smell, how you could physically manipulate it, and so forth.
- Think about how you yourself would teach the topic you are presently learning. What visuals could you make to demonstrate the idea or information? Imagine a class lecture as a train of boxcars and think about what things you would put in those cars to represent the lecture topics.

- When it becomes difficult to concentrate when reading while sitting in a quiet place, get up and move around while studying; make gestures as you read aloud.
- Use your hands to create a range of study aids rather than just taking notes: make charts, posters, flash cards, and so on.
- When taking notes, sketch familiar shapes around words and phrases to help you remember them. Try to associate abstract ideas with concrete examples.
- The act of writing—handwriting more than typing at a keyboard—may increase retention; write key things several times.
- Study with other students who may learn better by reading or listening.

Feeling

Feeling learners focus on the emotional side of information and learn through personal connections. Too often they may feel that a college textbook or a class is “dry” or “boring” if it focuses exclusively on written information. In addition to improving their reading and listening skills, students with this style can enrich their learning by focusing on what they and others feel about the information and ideas being learned. Here are some tips to help maximize your learning related to feeling:

- Try to establish an emotional connection with the topic you are learning. In a history class, for example, imagine yourself as someone living in the period you are studying: what would you feel about the forces at work in your life? In a science class, think about what the implications of a particular scientific principle or discovery might mean for you as a person or how you yourself might have felt if you had been the scientist making that discovery.
- Talk with your instructor during office hours. Express your enthusiasm and share your feelings about the subject. Even instructors who may seem “dry” in a lecture class often share their feelings toward their subject in conversation.
- Do supplemental reading about the people involved in a subject you’re studying. For example, reading an online biographical sketch of a historical figure, scientist, or theorist may open your eyes to a side of the subject you hadn’t seen before and increase your learning.
- Study with other students who may learn better by reading or listening. Talk with them in a personal way about what the material means to them. Try teaching them about the topic while explaining your feelings about it.
- Also try the strategies listed for the “doing” learning style.

Your Style, Your Instructor’s Style

Many college classes tend to focus on certain learning styles. Instructors in large lecture classes, for example, generally emphasize listening carefully and reading well. Don’t worry, however, if these are not your particular strengths, for much of this book focuses on learning study skills and other college skills related to these activities. Take responsibility for your own learning, rather than expecting the instructor to help you through the subject in your own personal way. For example, if you are a visual learner but your instructor simply stands at a podium and lectures, then provide your own visual stimulation by sketching concept maps in your notes or by visualizing how information being presented might look in a pie chart or graph.

As you move further into your college curriculum, you will likely have more small classes with class discussions, demonstrations, group presentations, and other learning activities. Once you are in classes closely related to a career path that interests you, you will find your personal style more relevant to the kinds of material you will be learning.

Much learning in college also comes from interactions with others, who often have different learning styles. Be open to interacting with other students and instructors who are different from you, and you will find yourself learning in ways that may be new to you.

Finally, if a genuine mismatch is occurring between your learning style and your instructor’s teaching style to the extent that you may not succeed in a course, talk to your instructor privately during office hours. You can explain how you best learn and ask for suggestions about other resources that may help you.

What about Students with Disabilities?

Students with disabilities are sometimes the most informed when it comes to making decisions about their own learning. They should understand that it is in their best interest to take ownership of their own approach to education, especially when it comes to leveraging resources and opportunities. In this section, you will learn about the laws that regulate education for students with disabilities as well as look at some resources that are available to them.

Just like anyone else, under the law, qualified students with disabilities are entitled to the same education colleges and universities provide to students without disabilities. Even though a particular disability may make attending college more difficult, awareness on the part of the government, learning institutions, and the students themselves has brought about a great deal of change over the

years. Now, students with disabilities find that they have available appropriate student services, campus accessibility, and academic resources that can make school attendance and academic success possible.

Due to this increased support and advocacy, colleges have seen an increase of students with disabilities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2012, 11.1 percent of the total undergraduate population in the United States was made up of people with disabilities.[9]

The Legal Rights of Students with Disabilities

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects students "with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities."[10] Learning definitely falls within the definition of major life activities.

In addition to Section 504, another set of laws that greatly help learners with disabilities is the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (also known as ADA). Both of these acts have been driving forces in making certain that students with disabilities have equal access to higher education, and they have been instrumental in helping educators looking for new ways and resources to provide services that do just that.

What follows is a list of services that schools commonly provide to help students with disabilities. These are often referred to as *ADA accommodations* and are named after the American with Disabilities Act:

- Recordings of class lectures or lecture transcription by in-class note takers
- Text readers or other technologies that can deliver content in another format
- Test or assessment accommodations
- Interpreter services and Braille transcriptions
- Physical access accommodations
- Accommodations of time and due dates

Most colleges will have policies and staff that are designated to help arrange for these types of accommodations. They are often found within the Department of Student Services or in related departments within your college campus. If you are a student with disabilities protected under these acts, it is in your best interest to contact the person responsible for ADA accommodations at your school. Even if you decide that you do not need accommodations, it is a good idea to find out about any services and policies the school has in place.

Organizations

In addition to the accommodations that schools commonly provide, there are also a number of national and local organizations that can provide assistance and advice when it comes to being a student with a disability. If you fit into this category, it is recommended that you make contact with one or more of these organizations in order to find out how they can help. These can be tremendously beneficial resources that offer everything from information and support to simple social connections that can make pursuing a formal education easier.

Footnotes

- Harold Pashler, Mark McDaniel, Doug Rohrer and Robert Bjork. *Learning Styles: Concepts and Evidence.* Psychological Science in the Public Interest, Vol. 9, No. 3 (December 2008).
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2017* (2018-070), Chapter 3.
- U.S. Department of Education. Protecting Students with Disabilities: Frequently Asked Questions at Ed.gov [www2.ed.gov]

Key Takeaways

- People learn through a four-step process, and you can maximize your learning by conscientiously applying all steps throughout college.
- The first step of the learning cycle is to prepare in advance for classes, reading, tests, and other learning.
- The second step is to absorb information and ideas effectively during classes, reading, and other learning experiences.
- The third step, capturing, typically involves taking notes on the learning experience to increase understanding and retention.
- The fourth step is to review your notes, to help solidify the learning and to prepare for repeating the cycle in the next class or reading assignment.
- People have natural learning preferences, affecting how they learn best, such as learning by reading, by listening, by seeing, by doing, and by feeling.

- Students should learn how to use their own learning style to their best advantage while also becoming flexible and working to develop other learning styles.
- Because your learning style may not match your instructor's teaching style, you need to be flexible and work to develop new learning strategies essential for college success.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Number each the following actions to put them in the correct order of the four steps of the learning cycle:
   - ___ Review your class notes to make sure you understand.
   - ___ Listen carefully to what your instructor says.
   - ___ Prepare for today's class by looking over your notes on the reading you did for today.
   - ___ Take effective notes.
2. How would you describe your personal learning style?

   _____

   Name an activity from which you generally learn very well.

   _____

   Name a type of learning experience you may have difficulty with.

   _____

   For the activity above, list at least two strategies you can use to improve your learning effectiveness when in that situation next time.

   _____

   _____
3. If you experience a situation in which your personal learning style seems to clash hopelessly with an instructor's teaching style, what is your best course of action?
   1. Ask the instructor to teach in a different way.
   2. Drop the class.
   3. Adapt your style or study with other students.
   4. Complain to the dean.

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3.4: Setting Yourself Up for Success

Too many students try to get the grade just by going to class, maybe a little note taking, and then cramming through the text right before an exam they feel unprepared for. Sound familiar? This approach may have worked for you in high school where tests and quizzes were more frequent and teachers prepared study guides for you, but colleges require you to take responsibility for your learning and to be better prepared.

Most students simply have not learned how to study and don't understand how learning works. Learning is actually a cycle of four steps: preparing, absorbing, capturing, and reviewing. When you get in the habit of paying attention to this cycle, it becomes relatively easy to study well. But you must use all four steps.

This chapter focuses on listening, a key skill for learning new material, and note taking, the most important skill in the capturing phase of the cycle. These skills are closely related. Good listening skills make you a better note taker, and taking good notes can help you listen better. Both are key study skills to help you do better in your classes.

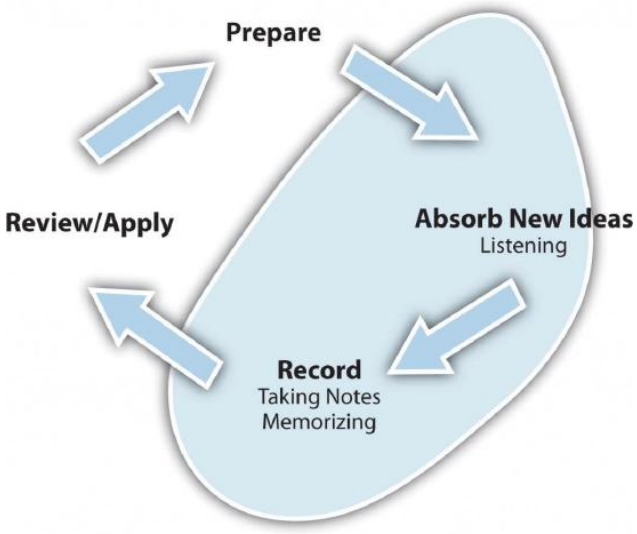


Figure 3.10: The Learning Cycle

Key Takeaways

- College is very different from high school.
- You must take personal responsibility for your learning.
- Time management is crucial.
- Learning is a cycle of four steps: preparing, absorbing, capturing, and reviewing.

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3.5: The Motivated Learner

In this section, you will continue to increase your ability as an informed learner. Here you will explore how much of an influence motivation has on learning, as well as how to use motivation to purposefully take an active role in any learning activity. Rather than passively attempting to absorb new information, you will learn how to make conscious decisions about the methods of learning you will use (based on what you intend to do with the information), how you will select and use learning materials that are appropriate for your needs, and how persistent you will be in the learning activity.

There are three main motivation concepts that have been found to directly relate to learning. Each of these has been proven to mean the difference between success and failure. You will find that each of these is a strong tool that will enable you to engage with learning material in a way that not only suits your needs, but also gives you ownership over your own learning processes.

Resilience and Grit

While much of this chapter will cover very specific aspects about the act of learning, in this section, we will present different information that may at first seem unrelated. Some people would consider it more of a personal outlook than a learning practice, and yet it has a significant influence on the ability to learn.

What we are talking about here is called grit or resilience. Grit can be defined as personal perseverance toward a task or goal. In learning, it can be thought of as a trait that drives a person to keep trying until they succeed. It is not tied to talent or ability, but is simply a tendency to not give up until something is finished or accomplished.



Figure 3.10: U.S. Army veteran and captain of the U.S. Invictus team, Will Reynolds, races to the finish line. (Credit: DoD News / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

> **The study showed that grit and perseverance were better predictors of academic success and achievement than talent or IQ.**

This personality trait was defined as “grit” by the psychologist Angela Duckworth.[1] In a 2007 study Duckworth and colleagues found that individuals with high grit were able to maintain motivation in learning tasks despite failures. The study examined a cross section of learning environments, such as GPA scores in Ivy League universities, dropout rates at West Point, rankings in the National Spelling Bee, and general educational attainment for adults. What the results showed was that grit and perseverance were better predictors of academic success and achievement than talent or IQ.

Applying Grit

The concept of grit is an easy one to dismiss as something taken for granted. In our culture, we have a number of sayings and aphorisms that capture the essence of grit: “If at first you do not succeed, try, try again,” or the famous quote by Thomas Edison: “Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration.”

The problem is we all understand the concept, but actually applying it takes work. If the task we are trying to complete is a difficult one, it can take a lot of work.

The first step in applying grit is to adopt an attitude that looks directly to the end goal as the only acceptable outcome. With this attitude comes an acceptance that you may not succeed on the first attempt—or the nineteenth attempt. Failed attempts are viewed

as merely part of the process and seen as a very useful way to gain knowledge that moves you toward success. An example of this would be studying for an exam. In your first attempt at studying you simply reread the chapters of your textbook covered in the exam. You find that while this reinforces some of the knowledge you have gained, it does not ensure you have all the information you will need to do well on the test. You know that if you simply read the chapters yet again, there is no guarantee you are going to be any more successful. You determine that you need to find a different approach. In other words, your first attempt was not a complete failure, but it did not achieve the end goal, so you try again with a different method.

On your second try, you copy down all of the main points onto a piece of paper using the section headlines from the chapters. After a short break you come back to your list and write down a summary of what you know about each item on your list. This accomplishes two things: first, you are able to immediately spot areas where you need to learn more, and second, you can check your summaries against the text to make certain what you know is correct and adequate. In this example, while you may not have yet achieved complete success, you will have learned what you need to do next.

In true grit fashion, for your next try, you study those items on your list where you found you needed a bit more information, and then you go through your list again. This time you are able to write down summaries of all the important points, and you are confident you have the knowledge you need to do well on the exam. After this, you still do not stop, but instead you change your approach to use other methods that keep what you have learned fresh in your mind.

Keeping Grit in Mind: Grit to GRIT

The concept of grit has been taken beyond the original studies of successful learning. While the concept of grit as a personality trait was originally recognized as something positive in all areas of activity, encouraging grit became very popular in education circles as a way to help students become more successful. In fact, many of those that were first introduced to grit through education have begun applying it to business, professional development, and their personal lives. Using a grit approach and working until the goal is achieved has been found to be very effective in not only academics, but in many other areas.[2]

The *New York Times* best-selling author Paul G. Stoltz has taken grit and turned it into an acronym (GRIT) to help people remember and use the attributes of a grit mindset.[3] His acronym is Growth, Resilience, Instinct, and Tenacity. Each of these elements is explained in the table below.

Table 3.2 The GRIT acronym as outlined by Paul G. Stoltz

Growth	Your propensity to seek and consider new ideas, additional alternatives, different approaches, and fresh perspectives
Resilience	Your capacity to respond constructively and ideally make use of all kinds of adversity
Instinct	Your gut-level capacity to pursue the right goals in the best and smartest ways
Tenacity	The degree to which you persist, commit to, stick with, and go after whatever you choose to achieve

There is one other thing to keep in mind when it comes to applying grit (or GRIT) to college success. The same sort of persevering approach can not only be used for individual learning activities, but can be applied to your entire degree. An attitude of tenacity and "sticking with it" until you reach the desired results works just as well for graduation as it does for studying for an exam.

How Do You Get Grit?

A quick Internet search will reveal that there are a large number of articles out there on grit and how to get it. While these sources may vary in their lists, most cover about five basic ideas that all touch upon concepts emphasized by Duckworth. What follows is a brief introduction to each. Note that each thing listed here begins with a verb. In other words, it is an activity for you to do and keep doing in order to build grit.

1. Pursue what interests you.

Personal interest is a great motivator! People tend to have more grit when pursuing things that they have developed an interest in.

2. Practice until you can do it, and then keep practicing.

The idea of practicing has been applied to every skill in human experience. The reason everyone seems to be so fixated with practice is because it is effective and there is no “grittier” activity.

3. Find a purpose in what you do.

Purpose is truly the driver for anything we pursue. If you have a strong purpose in any activity, you have reason to persist at it. Think in terms of end goals and why doing something is worth it. Purpose answers the question of “Why should I accomplish this?”

4. Have hope in what you are doing.

Have hope in what you are doing and in how it will make things different for you or others. While this is somewhat related to purpose, it should be viewed as a separate and positive overall outlook in regard to what you are trying to achieve. Hope gives value to purpose. If purpose is the goal, hope is why the goal is worth attaining at all.

5. Surround yourself with gritty people.

Persistence and tenacity tend to rub off on others, and the opposite does as well. As social creatures we often adopt the behaviors we find in the groups we hang out with. If you are surrounded by people that quit early, before achieving their goals, you may find it acceptable to give up early as well. On the other hand, if your peers are all achievers with grit, you will tend to exhibit grit yourself.

Application

Get a Grit Partner

It is an unfortunate statistic that far too many students who begin college never complete their degree. Over the years a tremendous amount of research has gone into why some students succeed while others do not. After reading about grit, you will probably not be surprised to learn that the research has shown it to not only be a major contributor of learning but to be one of the strongest factors contributing to student graduation.

While that may seem obvious since, by definition, grit is a tendency to keep going until you reach your goal, there was something very significant that turned up in the details of a study conducted by American College Testing (also known as ACT). ACT is a nonprofit organization that administers the college admissions test by the same name, and they have been looking at over 50 years of student persistence data to figure out why some students complete college while others do not. What they have found is that the probability a student will stay in college is tied directly to social connections.[4] In other words, students that found someone they connected with and that provided a sense of accountability dramatically increased their grit. It did not matter if the person was another student, an instructor, or someone else. What did matter is that they felt a strong motivation to keep working, even when their college experience was at its most difficult. It has been surmised that from a psychological perspective, the extra grit comes from not wanting to disappoint the person they have connected with. Regardless of the reason, the data show that having a grit partner is one of the most effective ways to statistically increase your chances of graduation.

A grit partner does not have to be a formal relationship. Your partner can simply be a classmate—someone that you can talk with. It can be an instructor you admire or someone else that you establish a connection with. It can even be a family member who will encourage you—someone you do not want to disappoint. What you are looking for is someone who will help motivate you, either by their example or by their willingness to give you a pep talk when you need it. The key is that it is someone you respect and who will encourage you to do well in school.

Right now, think about someone who could be your grit partner. Keep in mind that you may not have the same grit partner throughout your entire college experience. You may begin with another classmate but later find that a school staff member steps into the role. Later, as you near graduation, you may find that your favorite instructor motivates you more to do well in school than anyone else. Regardless, the importance of finding the social connection that helps your grit is important.

Uses and Gratification Theory and Learning

In the middle of the last century, experts held some odd beliefs that we might find exceptionally strange in our present age. For example, many scholars were convinced that not only was learning a passive activity, but that mass media such as movies, television, and newspapers held significant control over us as individuals. The thinking at that time was that we were helpless to

think for ourselves or make choices about learning or the media we consumed. The idea was that we just simply ingested information fed to us and we were almost completely manipulated by it.

What changed this way of thinking was a significant study on audience motivations for watching different political television programs.[5] The study found that not only did people make decisions about what information they consumed, but they also had preferences in content and how it was delivered. In other words, people were active in their choices about information. What is more important is that the research began to show that our own needs, goals, and personal opinions are bigger drivers for our choices in information than anything else. This gave rise to what became known as the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT).

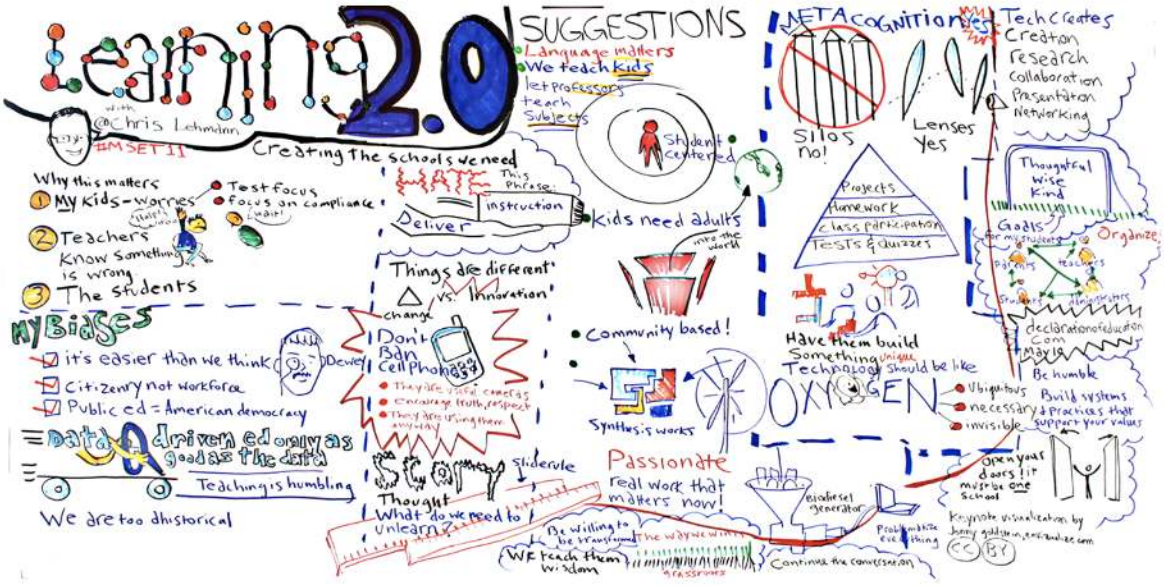


Figure 2.4 Concept maps, or idea clusters, are used to gather and connect ideas. The exercise of creating, recreating, and improving them can be an excellent way to build and internalize a deeper knowledge of subjects. (Credit: Johnny Goldstien / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

At first, personal choices about television programs might seem a strange topic for a chapter on learning, but if you think about it, learning at its simplest is the consumption of information to meet a specific need. You choose to learn something so you can attain certain goals. This makes education and UGT a natural fit.

Applying UGT to education is a *learner-centered* approach that focuses on helping you take control of how and what you learn. Not only that, but it gives you a framework as an informed learner and allows you to choose information and learning activities with the end results in mind. The next section examines UGT a little more closely and shows how it can be directly applied to learning.

The Uses and Gratification Model

The Uses and Gratification model is how people are thought to react according to UGT. It considers individual behavior and motivation as the primary driver for media consumption. In education this means that the needs of the learner are what determine the interaction with learning content such as textbooks, lectures, and other information sources. Since any educational program is essentially content and delivery (the same as with any media), the Uses and Gratification model can be applied to meet student needs, student satisfaction, and student academic success. This is something that is not recognized in many other learning theories since they begin with the premise that it is learning content and how it is delivered that influences the learner more than the learner's own wants and expectations.

The main assumption of the Uses and Gratification model is that media consumers will seek out and return to specific media sources based on a personal need. For learners this is exceptionally useful since it gives an insight and the ability to positively influence their own motivations, expectations, and the perceived value of their education.



Figure 2.5 The Uses and Gratification model indicates that people will actively seek out and integrate specific media into their lives. (Credit: Garry Knight / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

If you understand the key concepts of the Uses and Gratification model, you can make informed decisions about your own learning: how you learn, which materials you use to learn, and what motivates you to learn. An illustration of this was found in the example given in the previous section on grit. There, a series of exam study activities were presented—first reading the appropriate chapters, then making a list of chapter concepts and reviewing what was known, then returning to learn the information needed to fill the gaps. Each activity was chosen by the learner based on how well it fit their needs to help reach the goal of doing well on an exam.

Here we should offer a brief word of caution about being wary when choosing materials and media. There is a great deal of misleading and inaccurate information presented via the Internet and social media. Making informed decisions about your learning and the material you consume includes checking sources and avoiding information that is not credible.

> **"We are able to consciously make learning choices based on our own identified needs and what we hope to gain by that learning."**

In his book *Key Themes in Media Theory*,[6] Dan Laughey presents the UGT model according to its original authors as a single sentence that divides each area of influence into the following concerns:

1. Social and psychological origins of …
2. needs, which generate …
3. expectations of …
4. the mass media or other sources, which lead to …
5. differential patterns of media exposure, resulting in …
6. needs gratification and …
7. other unintended consequences.

Taken as a list or a single sentence, this can be a bit overwhelming to digest. There are many things being said at the same time, and they may not all be immediately clear. To better understand what each of the “areas of concern” are and how they can impact learning, each has been separated and explained in the table below.

Table 3.3

Area of Concern	What it means for you	How it applies to learning	Real-world example

Area of Concern	What it means for you	How it applies to learning	Real-world example
1. Social and psychological origins of …	Your motivations, not only as a student but as a person, and both the social and psychological factors that influence you	This can be everything from the original motivation behind enrolling in school in the first place, down to more specific goals like why you want to learn to write and communicate well.	A drive to be self-supporting and to take on a productive role in society.
2. needs, which generate …	Better job, increased income, satisfying career, prestige	This can include the area of study you select and the school you choose to attend.	Pursuing a degree to seek a career in a field you enjoy.
3. expectations of …	Expectation and perception (preconceived and continuing) of educational material	What you expect to learn to fulfill goals and meet needs.	Understanding what you need to accomplish the smaller goals. An example would be “study for an exam.”
4. the mass media or other sources, which lead to…	The content and learning activities of the program	Selection of content aimed at fulfilling needs. Results are student satisfaction, perceived value, and continued enrollment.	Choosing which learning activities to use (e.g., texts, watch videos, research alternative content, etc.).
5. differential patterns of media exposure, resulting in …	Frequency and level of participation	How you engage with learning activities and how often. Results are student satisfaction and perceived value, and continued enrollment.	When, how often, and how much time you spend in learning activities.
6. needs gratification and …	Better job, increased income, satisfying career, prestige, more immediate goals like pass an exam, earn a good grade, etc.	Needs fulfillment and completion of goals.	Learning activities that meet your learning needs, including fulfillment of your original goals.
7. other unintended consequences.	Increased skills and knowledge, entertainment, social involvement and networking	Causes positive loop-back into 4, 5, and 6, reinforcing those positive outcomes.	Things you learn beyond your initial goals.

What to Do with UGT

On the surface, UGT may seem overly complex, but this is due to its attempt to capture everything that influences how and why we take in information. At this point in your understanding, the main thing to focus on is the bigger idea that our motivations, our end goals, and our expectations are what drive us to learn. If we are aware of these motivations, we can use them to make influential decisions about what we learn and how we learn.

One of the things that will become apparent as you continue reading this chapter and doing the included activities is that all of it fits within the UGT model. Everything about learning styles, your own attitude about learning, how you prefer to learn, and what you get out of it are covered in UGT. Being familiar with it gives you a way to identify and apply everything else you will learn about learning. As you continue in this chapter, rather than looking at each topic as a stand-alone idea, think about where each fits in the Uses and Gratification model. Does it influence your motivations, or does it help you make decisions about the way you learn? This way UGT can provide a way for you to see the value and how to apply everything you learn from this point forward and for every learning experience along the way.

If you were going to define how UGT applies to learning with a few quick statements, it would look something like this:

UGT asks:

- What is it that motivates you to learn something?
- What need does it fulfill?
- What do you expect to have happen with certain learning activities?
- How can you choose the right learning activities to better ensure you meet your needs and expectations?
- What other things might result from your choices?

Analysis Question

Take a moment to think about your own choices when it comes to consuming media. Are there certain sources you prefer? Why? What needs or gratifications do those particular sources fulfill in a way that others do not? Now, use the same process to analyze your current college experience. Are there certain classes or activities you like more than others? Why? Do any of your reasons have to do with the needs or gratifications the classes or learning activities fulfill?

After you have answered those questions, you can always step beyond mere analysis and determine what you could change to make the classes or activities you enjoy less better fulfill your needs.

Combating Negative Bias

In addition to being a motivated learner through the use of grit and UGT, there is a third natural psychological tendency you should be aware of. It is a tendency that you should guard against. Ignoring the fact that it exists can not only adversely affect learning, but it can set up roadblocks that may prevent you from achieving many goals. This tendency is called *negative bias.*

Negative bias is the psychological trait of focusing on the negative aspects of a situation rather than the positive. An example of this in a learning environment would be earning a 95 percent score on an assignment but obsessing over the 5 percent of the points that were missed. Another example would be worrying and thinking negative thoughts about yourself over a handful of courses where you did not do as well as in others—so much so that you begin to doubt your abilities altogether.



Figure 3.11: Some level of worry and concern is natural, but an overwhelming amount of negative thoughts about yourself, including doubt in your abilities and place in school, can impede your learning and stifle your success. You can develop strategies to recognize and overcome these feelings. (Credit: Inzmam Kahn / Pexels)

Unfortunately, this is a human tendency that can often overwhelm a student. As a pure survival mechanism it does have its usefulness in that it reminds us to be wary of behaviors that can result in undesirable outcomes. Imagine that as a child playing outside, you have seen dozens if not hundreds of bees over the years. But once, out of all those other times, you were stung by a single bee. Now, every time you see a bee you recall the sting, and you now have a negative bias toward bees in general. Whenever possible you avoid bees altogether.

It is easy to see how this psychological system could be beneficial in those types of situations, but it can be a hindrance in learning since a large part of the learning process often involves failure on early attempts. Recognizing this is a key to overcoming negative bias. Another way to combat negative bias is to purposefully focus on successes and to acknowledge earlier attempts that fail as just a part of the learning.

What follows are a few methods for overcoming negative bias and negative self-talk. Each focuses on being aware of any negative attitude or emphasizing the positive aspects in a situation.

- **Be aware of any negative bias.** Keep an eye out for any time you find yourself focusing on some negative aspect, whether toward your own abilities or on some specific situation. Whenever you recognize that you are exhibiting a negative bias toward

something, stop and look for the positive parts of the experience. Think back to what you have learned about grit, how any lack of success is only temporary, and what you have learned that gets you closer to your goal.

- **Focus on the positive before you begin.** While reversing the impact of negative bias on your learning is helpful, it can be even more useful to prevent it in the first place. One way to do this is to look for the positives before you begin a task. An example of this would be receiving early feedback for an assignment you are working on. To accomplish this, you can often ask your instructor or one of your classmates to look over your work and provide some informal comments. If the feedback is positive then you know you are on the right track. That is useful information. If the feedback seems to indicate that you need to make a number of corrections and adjustments, then that is even more valuable information, and you can use it to greatly improve the assignment for a much better final grade. In either case, accurate feedback is what you really want most, and both outcomes are positive for you.
- **Keep a gratitude and accomplishment journal.** Again, the tendency to recall and overemphasize the negative instances while ignoring or forgetting about the positive outcomes is the nature of negative bias. Sometimes we need a little help remembering the positives, and we can prompt our memories by keeping a journal. Just as in a diary, the idea is to keep a flowing record of the positive things that happen, the lessons you learned from instances that were “less than successful,” and all accomplishments you make toward learning. In your journal you can write or paste anything that you appreciated or that has positive outcomes. Whenever you are not feeling up to a challenge or when negative bias is starting to wear on you, you can look over your journal to remind yourself of previous accomplishments in the face of adversity.

Analysis Question

Building the Foundation

In this section you read about three major factors that contribute to your motivation as a learner: grit and perseverance, your own motivations for learning (UGT), and the pitfalls of negative bias. Now it is time to do a little self-analysis and reflection.

Which of these three areas do you feel strongest in? Are you a person that naturally has grit, or do you better understand your own motivations for learning (using UGT)? Do you struggle with negativity bias, or is it something that you rarely have to deal with?

Determine in which of these areas you are strongest, and think about what things make you so strong. Is it a positive attitude (you always see the glass as half full as opposed to half empty), or do you know exactly why you are in college and exactly what you expect to learn?

After you have analyzed your strongest area, then do the same for the two weaker ones. What makes you susceptible to challenges in these areas? Do you have a difficult time sticking with things or possibly focus too much on the negative? Look back at the sections on your two weakest areas, and put together a plan for overcoming them. For each one, choose a behavior you intend to change and think of some way you will change it.

Footnotes

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3.6: Are You Ready for Class?

A professional athlete wouldn't take the field without warming up first. An effective student won't go to a class without preparing for it first. To get the most out of a class, you need to get yourself in the right frame of mind. This does not take a lot of time, but it greatly increases your ability to listen actively and take good notes.

Like a good athlete, first you need to get psyched. Clearly visualize your goals. Thinking about the following questions may help:

- What do I want to get out of the class?
- What is the main idea the class will cover?
- How will today's class help me do better in this course?

Go to class with confidence. The best way to achieve this is to start early and be sure you've completed any assignment the instructor gave you in the last class. Think about how today's material will tie into what you've already learned. You should also review the course syllabus to see what the instructor expects to cover in the class and how it relates to what you have learned so far.

Be physically prepared, too:

- Make sure you are getting enough sleep and eating nutritious meals, including breakfast. It's hard to focus on learning when you're hungry.
- Make sure you have all materials you'll need for class (paper, pens, laptop, books, etc.).
- Be punctual. Give yourself plenty of time to get into your seat and organize your space. If you are late, you'll struggle to get into the right mind-set for listening, and you won't feel in control of your learning as you try to catch up with the class. If you're tardy, you also create a distraction for your classmates—and the instructor, who will take notice!
- Clear away all other distractions before the instructor starts. Remember that putting your cell phone on "vibrate" may still distract you—so turn it off, all the way off.

Now, take a deep breath, focus on the instructor, and listen and learn!

Key Takeaways

- To get the most out of a class, get yourself in the right frame of mind.
- Clearly visualize your goals and approach the class with confidence.
- Be physically prepared: rested, punctual, and not distracted.

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3.7: Are You Really Listening?

Are you a good listener? Most of us like to think we are, but when we really think about it, we recognize that we are often only half listening. We're distracted, thinking about other things, or formulating what we are going to say in reaction to what we are hearing before the speaker has even finished. Effective listening is one of the most important learning tools you can have in college. And it is a skill that will benefit you on the job and help your relationships with others. Listening is nothing more than purposefully focusing on what a speaker is saying with the objective of understanding.

This definition is straightforward, but there are some important concepts that deserve a closer look. "Purposefully focusing" implies that you are actively processing what the speaker is saying, not just letting the sounds of their voice register in your senses. "With the objective of understanding" means that you will learn enough about what the speaker is saying to be able to form your own thoughts about the speaker's message. Listening is an active process, as opposed to hearing, which is passive.

You listen to others in many situations: to interact with friends, to get instructions for a task, or to learn new material. There are two general types of listening situations: where you will be able to interact freely with the speaker (everyday conversations, small discussion classes, business meetings) and where interaction is limited (lectures and Webcasts).

In interactive situations, you should apply the basic principles of active listening (see "Principles of Active Listening"). These are not hard to understand, but they are hard to implement and require practice to use them effectively.

Principles of Active Listening

1. Focus on what is being said. Give the speaker your undivided attention. Clear your mind of anything else. Don't prejudge. You want to understand what the person is saying; you don't need to agree with it.
2. Repeat what you just heard. Confirm with the speaker that what you heard is what he or she said.
3. Ask speaker to expand or clarify. If you are unsure you understand, ask questions; don't assume.
4. Look for nonverbal signals as well as the words used. Nonverbal messages come from facial expressions, body positioning, arm gestures, and tone of voice. Confirm these body language messages just as you would verbal messages by saying, for example, "You seem very excited about this idea."
5. Listen for requests. A speaker will often hide a request as a statement of a problem. If a friend says, "I hate math!" this may mean, "Can you help me figure out a solution to this problem?"

Activity: Listening with Your Whole Body

Think of a person you consider an excellent listener. Picture that person clearly in your mind. Focus on what she does, not what they she is saying. Describe what actions and postures she uses to show she is listening. Put this list on the left-hand side of the page.

Think of a person you consider a poor listener. Picture that person clearly in your mind. Focus on what he does, not what he is saying. Describe what actions and postures he uses to show he is not listening. Put this list on the right-hand side of the page.

Now compare these lists with your own behavior. How many of the body language signals from each side do you think you exhibit? How can you add more of the left column's attitudes and actions to your own behaviors? How can you control those behaviors you recognize in yourself from the right column?

Listening in a classroom or lecture hall to learn can be challenging because you are limited by how—and how much—you can interact with an instructor during the class. The following strategies help make listening at lectures more effective and learning more fun.

1. **Get your mind in the right space.** Prepare yourself mentally to receive the information the speaker is presenting by following the previous prep questions and by doing your assignments (instructors build upon work presented earlier).
2. **Get yourself in the right space.** Sit toward the front of the room where you can make eye contact with the instructor easily. Most instructors read the body language of the students in the front rows to gauge how they are doing and if they are losing the class. Instructors also believe students who sit near the front of the room take their subject more seriously and are more willing to give them help when needed or to give them the benefit of the doubt when making a judgment call while assigning grades.
3. **Focus on what is being said.** Eliminate distractions. Turn your cell phone off and pack it away in your backpack. If you are using your laptop for notes, close all applications except the one that you use to take notes. Clear your mind and keep quiet.

Listen for new ideas. Think like an investigative reporter: you don't just want to accept what is being said passively—you want to question the material and be convinced that it makes sense.

4. **Look for signals.** Each instructor has a different way of telling you what is important. Some will repeat or paraphrase an idea; others will raise (or lower) their voices; still others will write related words on the board. Learn what signals your instructors tend to use and be on the lookout for them. When they use that tactic, the idea they are presenting needs to go in your notes and in your mind—and don't be surprised if it appears on a test or quiz!
5. **Listen for what is not being said.** If an instructor doesn't cover a subject, or covers it only minimally, this signals that that material is not as important as other ideas covered in greater length.
6. **Sort the information.** Decide what is important and what is not, what is clear and what is confusing, and what is new material and what is review. This mental organizing will help you remember the information, take better notes, and ask better questions.
7. **Take notes.** We cover taking notes in much greater detail later in this chapter, but for now think about how taking notes can help recall what your instructor said and how notes can help you organize your thoughts for asking questions.
8. **Ask questions.** Asking questions is one of the most important things you can do in class. Most obviously it allows you to clear up any doubts you may have about the material, but it also helps you take ownership of (and therefore remember) the material. Good questions often help instructors expand upon their ideas and make the material more relevant to students. Thinking through the material critically in order to prepare your questions helps you organize your new knowledge and sort it into mental categories that will help you remember it.

A note about tape-recording lectures: You may want to record a lecture to double-check what you heard in class, but it's usually not a good idea. Depending on a recording may lead you to listen less effectively and think less actively. Additionally, many instructors do not allow students to record their lectures, so recording is usually not even an option.

Dealing with Special Listening Challenges

What to Do If…

- **Your instructor speaks too fast.** Crank up your preparation. The more you know about the subject, the more you'll be able to pick up from the instructor. Exchange class notes with other students to fill in gaps in notes. Visit the instructor during office hours to clarify areas you may have missed. You might ask the instructor—very politely, of course—to slow down, but habits like speaking fast are hard to break!
- **Your instructor has a heavy accent.** Sit as close to the instructor as possible. Make connections between what the instructor seems to be saying and what he or she is presenting on the board or screen. Ask questions when you don't understand. Visit the instructor during office hours; the more you speak with the instructor the more likely you will learn to understand the accent.
- **Your instructor speaks softly or mumbles.** Sit as close to the instructor as possible and try to hold eye contact as much as possible. Check with other students if they are having problems listening, too; if so, you may want to bring the issue up with the instructor. It may be that the instructor is not used to the lecture hall your class is held in and can easily make adjustments.

Now That's a Good Question…

Are you shy about asking questions? Do you think that others in the class will ridicule you for asking a dumb question? Students sometimes feel this way because they have never been taught how to ask questions. Practice these steps, and soon you will be on your way to customizing each course to meet *your* needs and letting the instructor know you value the course.

- **Be prepared.** Doing your assignments for a class or lecture will give you a good idea about the areas you are having trouble with and will help you frame some questions ahead of time.
- **Position yourself for success.** Sit near the front of the class. It will be easier for you to make eye contact with the instructor as you ask the question. Also, you won't be intimidated by a class full of heads turning to stare at you as you ask your question.
- **Don't wait.** Ask your questions as soon as the instructor has finished a thought. Being one of the first students to ask a question also will ensure that your question is given the time it deserves and won't be cut short by the end of class.
- **In a lecture class, write your questions down.** Make sure you jot your questions down as they occur to you. Some may be answered in the course of the lecture, but if the instructor asks you to hold your questions until the end of class, you'll be glad you have a list of the items you need the instructor to clarify or expand on.
- **Ask specific questions.** "I don't understand" is a statement, not a question. Give the instructor guidance about what you are having trouble with. "Can you clarify the use of the formula for determining velocity?" is a better way of asking for help. If you ask your question at the end of class, give the instructor some context for your question by referring to the part of the

lecture that triggered the question. For example, “Professor, you said the Union troops were emboldened by Lincoln’s leadership. Was this throughout the Civil War, or only after Gettysburg?”

- **Don’t ask questions for the sake of asking questions.** If your question is not thought out, or if it appears that you are asking the question to try to look smart, instructors will see right through you!

Key Takeaways

- In all interactive learning situations, apply the basic principles of active listening.
- Focus on what is being said, confirm that you heard the right message, ask for any clarification you need, watch for nonverbal messages, and listen for requests.
- Specific strategies are helpful for listening well in a lecture hall.
- Be ready to compensate if your instructor speaks too fast, has a heavy accent that makes understanding difficult for you, or speaks too softly.
- Don’t be shy about asking questions. Asking questions is easier when you are prepared and positioned for success.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. List two things you should do before the class to prepare yourself for active listening.

   _____

   _____

2. Where should you sit in the classroom? Why?

   _____

   _____

3. What are some of the ways instructors signal important material?

   _____

   _____

   _____

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3.8: It's All in the Mindset

In the previous sections of this chapter you have focused on a number of concepts and models about learning. One of the things they all have in common is that they utilize different approaches to education by presenting new ways to think about learning. In each of these, the common element has been a better understanding of yourself as a learner and how to apply what you know about yourself to your own learning experience. If you were to distill all that you have learned in this chapter so far down to a single factor, it would be about using your mindset to your best advantage. In this next section, you will examine how all of this works in a broader sense by learning about the significance of certain mindsets and how they can hinder or promote your own learning efforts.



Figure 3.11: Many fields of study and work create intersections of growth and fixed mindset. People may feel great ability to grow and learn in some areas, like art and communication, but feel more limited in others, such as planning and financials. Recognizing these intersections will help you approach new topics and tasks. (Credit: mentatdgt / Pexels)

Performance vs. Learning Goals

As you have discovered in this chapter, much of our ability to learn is governed by our motivations and goals. What has not yet been covered in detail has been how sometimes hidden goals or mindsets can impact the learning process. In truth, we all have goals that we might not be fully aware of, or if we are aware of them, we might not understand how they help or restrict our ability to learn. An illustration of this can be seen in a comparison of a student that has *performance*-based goals with a student that has *learning*-based goals.

If you are a student with strict performance goals, your primary psychological concern might be to appear intelligent to others. At first, this might not seem to be a bad thing for college, but it can truly limit your ability to move forward in your own learning. Instead, you would tend to play it safe without even realizing it. For example, a student who is strictly performance-goal-oriented will often only says things in a classroom discussion when they think it will make them look knowledgeable to the instructor or their classmates. For example, a performance-oriented student might ask a question that she knows is beyond the topic being covered (e.g., asking about the economics of Japanese whaling while discussing the book *Moby Dick* in an American literature course). Rarely will they ask a question in class because they actually do not understand a concept. Instead they will ask questions that make them look intelligent to others or in an effort to “stump the teacher.” When they do finally ask an honest question, it may be because they are more afraid that their lack of understanding will result in a poor performance on an exam rather than simply wanting to learn.

If you are a student who is driven by learning goals, your interactions in classroom discussions are usually quite different. You see the opportunity to share ideas and ask questions as a way to gain knowledge quickly. In a classroom discussion you can ask for clarification immediately if you don’t quite understand what is being discussed. If you are a person guided by learning goals, you are less worried about what others think since you are there to learn and you see that as the most important goal.

Another example where the difference between the two mindsets is clear can be found in assignments and other coursework. If you are a student who is more concerned about performance, you may avoid work that is challenging. You will take the “easy A” route by relying on what you already know. You will not step out of your comfort zone because your psychological goals are based on approval of your performance instead of being motivated by learning.

This is very different from a student with a learning-based psychology. If you are a student who is motivated by learning goals, you may actively seek challenging assignments, and you will put a great deal of effort into using the assignment to expand on what you already know. While getting a good grade is important to you, what is even more important is the learning itself.

If you find that you sometimes lean toward performance-based goals, do not feel discouraged. Many of the best students tend to initially focus on performance until they begin to see the ways it can restrict their learning. The key to switching to learning-based goals is often simply a matter of first recognizing the difference and seeing how making a change can positively impact your own learning.

What follows in this section is a more in-depth look at the difference between performance- and learning-based goals. This is followed by an exercise that will give you the opportunity to identify, analyze, and determine a positive course of action in a situation where you believe you could improve in this area.

What Students Say

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. In the past, did you feel like you had control over your own learning?
    a. No. Someone has always dictated how and what I learned.
    b. Yes. I always look for ways to take control of what and how I learned.
    c. I am uncertain. I never thought about it before.
2. Have you ever heard of learning styles or do you know your own learning style?
    a. No. I have never heard of learning styles.
    b. Yes. I have heard of learning styles and know my own.
    c. Yes. I have heard of learning styles, but I don't think they're accurate or relate to me.
3. Which factors other than intelligence do you think have the greatest influence on learning?
    a. Motivation
    b. Perseverance
    c. Understanding how I learn
    d. Good teachers and support

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say(opens in new window) surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

In the past, did you feel like you had control over your own learning?

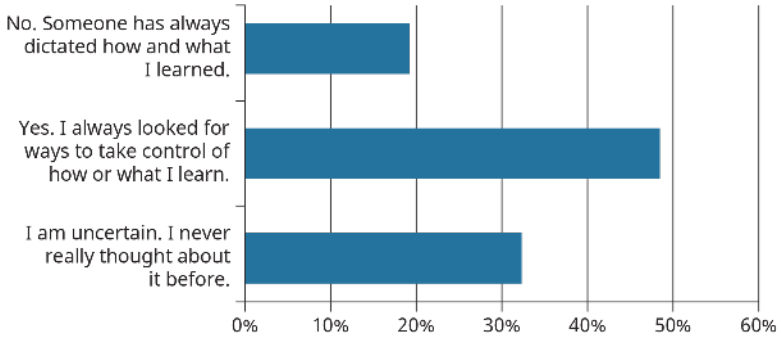


Figure 3.12

Have you ever heard of learning styles or do you know your own learning style?

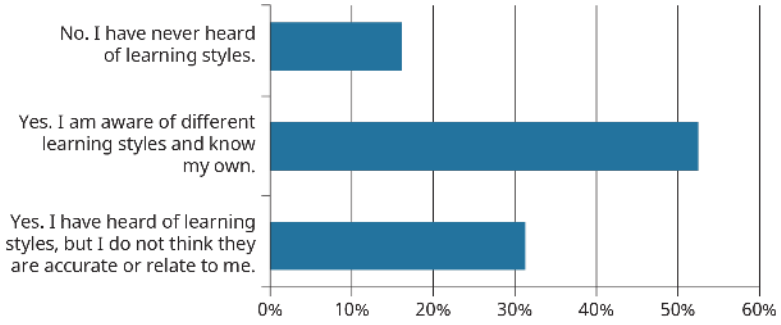


Figure 3.13

Which factors other than intelligence do you think have the greatest influence on learning?

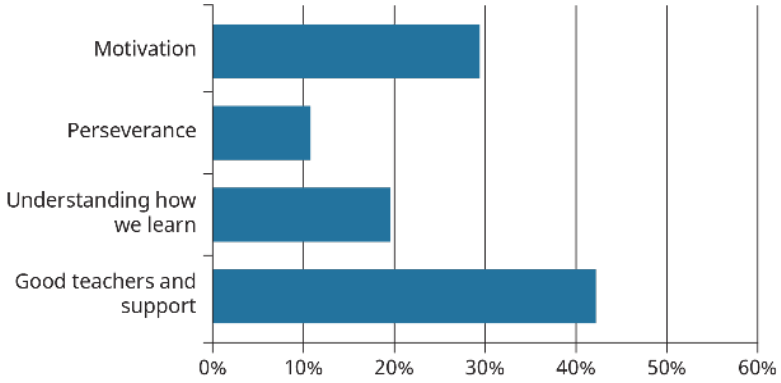


Figure 3.14

Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

The research-based model of these two mindsets and their influence on learning was presented in 1988 by Carol Dweck.[7] In Dr. Dweck's work, she determined that a student's perception about their own learning accompanied by a broader goal of learning had a significant influence on their ability to overcome challenges and grow in knowledge and ability. This has become known as the Fixed vs. Growth Mindset model. In this model, the *performance*-goal-oriented student is represented by the *fixed* mindset, while the *learning*-goal-oriented student is represented by the *growth* mindset.

In the following graphic, based on Dr. Dweck's research, you can see how many of the components associated with learning are impacted by these two mindsets.

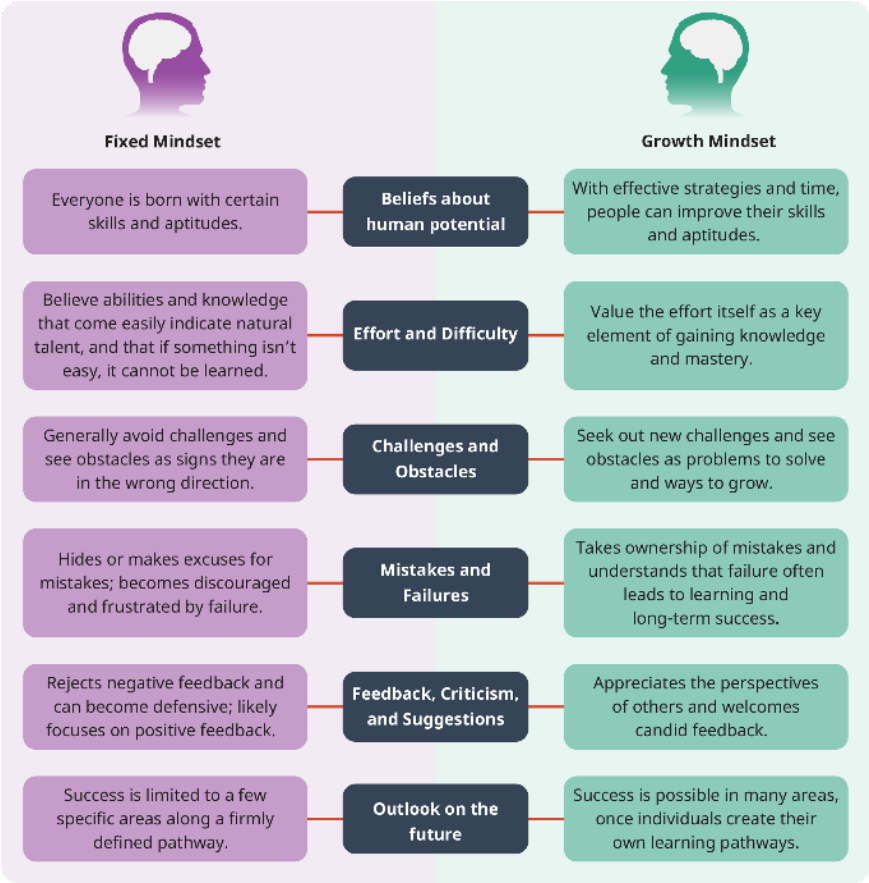


Figure 3.15: The differences between fixed and growth mindset are clear when aligned to key elements of learning and personality. (Credit: Based on work by Dr. Carol Dweck)

The Growth Mindset and Lessons About Failing

Something you may have noticed is that a growth mindset would tend to give a learner grit and persistence. If you had learning as your major goal, you would normally keep trying to attain that goal even if it took you multiple attempts. Not only that, but if you learned a little bit more with each try you would see each attempt as a success, even if you had not achieved complete mastery of whatever it was you were working to learn.

With that in mind, it should come as no surprise that Dr. Dweck found that those people who believed their abilities could change through learning (growth vs. a fixed mindset) readily accepted learning challenges and persisted despite early failures.

Improving Your Ability to Learn

As strange as it may seem, research into fixed vs. growth mindsets has shown that if you believe you can learn something new, you greatly improve your ability to learn. At first, this may seem like the sort of feel-good advice we often encounter in social media posts or quotes that are intended to inspire or motivate us (e.g., *believe in yourself!*), but in looking at the differences outlined between a fixed and a growth mindset, you can see how each part of the growth mindset path would increase your probability of success when it came to learning.

ACTIVITY

Very few people have a strict fixed or growth mindset all of the time. Often we tend to lean one way or another in certain situations. For example, a person trying to improve their ability in a sport they enjoy may exhibit all of the growth mindset traits and characteristics, but they find themselves blocked in a fixed mindset when they try to learn something in another area like computer programming or arithmetic.

In this exercise, do a little self-analysis and think of some areas where you may find yourself hindered by a fixed mindset. Using the outline presented below, in the far right column, write down how you can change your own behavior for each of the parts of the learning process. What will you do to move from a fixed to a growth mindset? For example, say you were trying to

learn to play a musical instrument. In the *Challenges* row, you might pursue a growth path by trying to play increasingly more difficult songs rather than sticking to the easy ones you have already mastered. In the *Criticism* row, you might take someone's comment about a weakness in timing as a motivation for you to practice with a metronome. For *Success of others* you could take inspiration from a famous musician that is considered a master and study their techniques.

Whatever it is that you decide you want to use for your analysis, apply each of the Growth characteristics to determine a course of action to improve.

Table 3.4

Parts of the learning process	Growth characteristic	What will you do to adopt a growth mindset?
Challenges	Embraces challenges	
Obstacles	Persists despite setbacks	
Effort	Sees effort as a path to success	
Criticism	Learns from criticism	
Success of Others	Finds learning and inspiration in the success of others	

Footnotes

- Dweck, C.S. & Leggett, E.L. (1988). A Social-Cognitive Approach to Motivation and Personality

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3.9: Applying What You Know about Learning

Another useful part of being an informed learner is recognizing that as a college student you will have many choices when it comes to learning. Looking back at the Uses and Gratification model, you'll discover that your motivations as well as your choices in how you interact with learning activities can make a significant difference in not only what you learn, but how you learn. By being aware of a few learning theories, students can take initiative and tailor their own learning so that it best benefits them and meets their main needs.

Student Profile

"My seating choice significantly affects my learning. Sitting at a desk where the professor's voice can be heard clearly helps me better understand the subject; and ensuring I have a clear view helps me take notes. Therefore, sitting in the front of the classroom should be a "go to" strategy while attending college. It will keep you focused and attentive throughout the lecture. Also, sitting towards the front of the classroom limits the tendency to be on check my phone."

—Luis Angel Ochoa, Westchester Community College

Making Decisions about Your Own Learning

As a learner, the kinds of materials, study activities, and assignments that work best for you will derive from your own experiences and needs (needs that are both short-term as well as those that fulfill long-term goals). In order to make your learning better suited to meet these needs, you can use the knowledge you have gained about UGT and other learning theories to make decisions concerning your own learning. These decisions can include personal choices in learning materials, how and when you study, and most importantly, taking ownership of your learning activities as an active participant and decision maker. In fact, one of the main principles emphasized in this chapter is that students not only benefit from being involved in planning their instruction, but learners also gain by continually evaluating the actual success of that instruction. In other words: *Does this work for me? Am I learning what I need to by doing it this way?*

While it may not always be possible to control every component of your learning over an entire degree program, you can take every opportunity to influence learning activities so they work to your best advantage. What follows are several examples of how this can be done by making decisions about your learning activities based on what you have already learned in this chapter.

Make Mistakes Safe

Create an environment for yourself where mistakes are safe and mistakes are expected as just another part of learning. This practice ties back to the principles you learned in the section on grit and persistence. The key is to allow yourself the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them *before* they become a part of your grades. You can do this by creating your own learning activities that you design to do just that. An example of this might be taking practice quizzes on your own, outside of the more formal course activities. The quizzes could be something you find in your textbook, something you find online, or something that you develop with a partner. In the latter case you would arrange with a classmate for each of you to produce a quiz and then exchange them. That particular exercise would serve double learning duty, since to create a good quiz you would need to learn the main concepts of the subject, and answering the questions on your partner's quiz might help you identify areas where you need more knowledge.

The main idea with this sort of practice is that you are creating a safe environment where you can make mistakes and learn from them before those mistakes can negatively impact your success in the course. Better to make mistakes on a practice run than on any kind of assignment or exam that can heavily influence your final grade in a course.

Make Everything Problem Centered

When working through a learning activity, the practical act of problem-solving is a good strategy. Problem-solving, as an approach, can give a learning activity more meaning and motivation for you, as a learner. Whenever possible it is to your advantage to turn an assignment or learning task into a problem you are trying to solve or something you are trying to accomplish.

In essence, you do this by deciding on some purpose for the assignment (other than just completing the assignment itself). An example of this would be taking the classic college term paper and writing it in a way that solves a problem you are already interested in.

Typically, many students treat a term paper as a collection of requirements that must be fulfilled—the paper must be on a certain topic; it should include an introduction section, a body, a closing, and a bibliography; it should be so many pages long, etc. With this approach, the student is simply completing a checklist of attributes and components dictated by the instructor, but other than that, there is no reason for the paper to exist.

Instead, writing it to solve a problem gives the paper purpose and meaning. For example, if you were to write a paper with the purpose of informing the reader about a topic they knew little about, that purpose would influence not only how you wrote the paper but would also help you make decisions on what information to include. It would also influence how you would structure information in the paper so that the reader might best learn what you were teaching them. Another example would be to write a paper to persuade the reader about a certain opinion or way of looking at things. In other words, your paper now has a purpose rather than just reporting facts on the subject. Obviously, you would still meet the format requirements of the paper, such as number of pages and inclusion of a bibliography, but now you do that in a way that helps to solve your problem.

Make It Occupation Related

Much like making assignments problem centered, you will also do well when your learning activities have meaning for your profession or major area of study. This can take the form of simply understanding how the things you are learning are important to your occupation, or it can include the decision to do assignments in a way that can be directly applied to your career. If an exercise seems pointless and possibly unrelated to your long-term goals, you will be much less motivated by the learning activity.

An example of understanding how a specific school topic impacts your occupation future would be that of a nursing student in an algebra course. At first, algebra might seem unrelated to the field of nursing, but if the nursing student recognizes that drug dosage calculations are critical to patient safety and that algebra can help them in that area, there is a much stronger motivation to learn the subject.

In the case of making a decision to apply assignments directly to your field, you can look for ways to use learning activities to build upon other areas or emulate tasks that would be required in your profession. Examples of this might be a communication student giving a presentation in a speech course on how the Internet has changed corporate advertising strategies, or an accounting student doing statistics research for an environmental studies course. Whenever possible, it is even better to use assignments to produce things that are much like what you will be doing in your chosen career. An example of this would be a graphic design student taking the opportunity to create an infographic or other supporting visual elements as a part of an assignment for another course. In cases where this is possible, it is always best to discuss your ideas with your instructor to make certain what you intend will still meet the requirements of the assignment.

Managing Your Time

One of the most common traits of college students is the constraint on their time. As adults, we do not always have the luxury of attending school without other demands on our time. Because of this, we must become efficient with our use of time, and it is important that we maximize our learning activities to be most effective. In fact, time management is so important that there is an entire chapter in this text dedicated to it. When you can, refer to that chapter to learn more about time management concepts and techniques that can be very useful.

Instructors as Learning Partners

In K-12 education, the instructor often has the dual role of both teacher and authority figure for students. Children come to expect their teachers to tell them what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. College learners, on the other hand, seem to work better when they begin to think of their instructors as respected experts that are partners in their education. The change in the relationship for you as a learner accomplishes several things: it gives you ownership and decision-making ability in your own learning, and it enables you to personalize your learning experience to best fit your own needs. For the instructor, it gives them the opportunity to help you meet your own needs and expectations in a rich experience, rather than focusing all of their time on trying to get information to you.

The way to develop learning partnerships is through direct communication with your instructors. If there is something you do not understand or need to know more about, go directly to them. When you have ideas about how you can personalize assignments or explore areas of the subject that interest you or better fit your needs, ask them about it. Ask your instructors for guidance and recommendations, and above all, demonstrate to them that you are taking a direct interest in your own learning. Most instructors are thrilled when they encounter students that want to take ownership of their own learning, and they will gladly become a resourceful guide for you.

Application

Applying What You Know about Learning to What You Are Doing: In this activity, you will work with an upcoming assignment from one of your courses—preferably something you might be dreading or are at least less than enthusiastic about working on. You will see if there is anything you can apply to the assignment from what you know about learning that might make it more interesting.

In the table below are several attributes that college students generally prefer in their learning activities, listed in the far left column. As you think about your assignment, consider whether or not it already possesses the attribute. If it does, go on to the next row. If it does not, see if there is some way you can approach the assignment so that it does follow preferred learning attributes; write that down in the last column, to the far right.

Table 3.5

Does it …?	Yes	No	What you can do to turn the assignment into something that is better suited to you as a learner?
Does it allow you to make decisions about your own learning?			In essence, you are doing this right now. You are making decisions on how you can make your assignment more effective for you.
Does it allow you to make mistakes without adversely affecting your grade?			Hints: *Are there ways for you to practice? Can you create a series of drafts for the assignment and get feedback?*
Is it centered on solving a problem?			Hint: *Can you turn the assignment into something that solves a problem? An example would be making a presentation that actually educated others rather than just covered what you may have learned.*
Is it related to your chosen occupation in any way?			Hint: *Can you turn the assignment into something you might actually do as a part of your profession or make it about your profession? Examples might be creating an informative poster for the workplace or writing a paper on new trends in your profession.*
Does it allow you to manage the time you work on it?			*More than likely the answer here will be "yes," but you can plan how you will do it. For more information on this, see the chapter on time management.*

Does it …?	Yes	No	What you can do to turn the assignment into something that is better suited to you as a learner?
Does it allow interaction with your instructor as a learning partner?			Hint: *Talking to your instructor about the ideas you have for making this assignment more personalized accomplishes this exact thing.*

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3.10: The Hidden Curriculum

The *hidden curriculum* is a phrase used to cover a wide variety of circumstances at school that can influence learning and affect your experience. Sometimes called the invisible curriculum, it varies by institution and can be thought of as a set of unwritten rules or expectations.

Situation: According to your syllabus, your history professor is lecturing on the chapter that covers the stock market crash of 1929 on Tuesday of next week.

Sounds pretty straightforward and common. Your professor lectures on a topic and you will be there to hear it. However, there are some unwritten rules, or hidden curriculum, that are not likely to be communicated. Can you guess what they may be?

- What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing before attending class?
- What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing in class?
- What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing after class?
- What is an unwritten rule if you are not able to attend that class?

Some of your answers could have included the following:

Table 3.6

Before class:	*read the assigned chapter, take notes, record any questions you have about the reading*
During class:	*take detailed notes, ask critical thinking or clarifying questions, avoid distractions, bring your book and your reading notes*
After class:	*reorganize your notes in relation to your other notes, start the studying process by testing yourself on the material, make an appointment with your professor if you are not clear on a concept*
Absent:	*communicate with the professor, get notes from a classmate, make sure you did not miss anything important in your notes*

The expectations before, during, and after class, as well as what you should do if you miss class, are often unspoken because many professors assume you already know and do these things or because they feel you should figure them out on your own. Nonetheless, some students struggle at first because they don't know about these habits, behaviors, and strategies. But once they learn them, they are able to meet them with ease.

While the previous example may seem obvious once they've been pointed out, most instances of the invisible curriculum are complex and require a bit of critical thinking to uncover. What follows are some common but often overlooked examples of this invisible curriculum.

One example of a hidden curriculum could be found in the beliefs of your professor. Some professors may refuse to reveal their personal beliefs to avoid your writing toward their bias rather than presenting a cogent argument of your own. Other professors may be outspoken about their beliefs to force you to consider and possibly defend your own position. As a result, you may be influenced by those opinions which can then influence your learning, but not as an official part of your study.

Other examples of how this hidden curriculum might not always be so easily identified can be found in classroom arrangements or even scheduling. To better understand this, imagine two different classes on the exact same subject and taught by the same instructor. One class is held in a large lecture hall and has over 100 students in it, while the other meets in a small classroom and has fewer than 20 students. In the smaller class, there is time for all of the students to participate in discussions as a learning activity, and they receive the benefit of being able to talk about their ideas and the lessons through direct interaction with each other and the professor. In the larger class, there is simply not enough time for all 100 students to each discuss their thoughts. On the flip side, most professors who teach lecture classes use technology to give them constant feedback on how well students understand a given subject. If the data suggests more time should be spent, these professors discover this in real time and can adapt the class accordingly.

Another instance where class circumstances might heavily influence student learning could be found in the class schedule. If the class was scheduled to meet on Mondays and Wednesdays and the due date for assignments was always on Monday, those students

would benefit from having the weekend to finalize their work before handing it in. If the class met on a different day, students might not have as much free time just before handing in the assignment. The obvious solution would be better planning and time management to complete assignments in advance of due dates, but nonetheless, conditions caused by scheduling may still impact student learning.

Working Within the Hidden Curriculum

The first step in dealing with the hidden curriculum is to recognize it and understand how it can influence your learning. After any specific situation has been identified, the next step is to figure out how to work around the circumstances to either take advantage of any benefits or to remove any roadblocks.

To illustrate this, here are some possible solutions to the situations given as examples earlier in this section:

Prevailing Opinions—Simply put, you are going to encounter instructors and learning activities that you sometimes agree with and sometimes do not. The key is to learn from them regardless. In either case, take ownership of your learning and even make an effort to learn about other perspectives, even if it is only for your own education on the matter. There is no better time to expose yourself to other opinions and philosophies than in college. In fact, many would say that this is a significant part of the college experience. With a growth mindset, it is easy to view everything as a learning opportunity.

Classroom Circumstances—These kinds of circumstances often require a more structured approach to turn the situation to your advantage, but they also usually have the most obvious solutions. In the example of the large class, you might find yourself limited in the ability to participate in classroom discussions because of so many other students. The way around that would be to speak to several classmates and create your own discussion group. You could set up a time to meet, or you could take a different route by using technology such as an online discussion board, a Skype session, or even a group text. Several of the technologically based solutions might even be better than an in-class discussion since you do not all have to be present at the same time. The discussion can be something that occurs all week long, giving everyone the time to think through their ideas and responses.

Again, the main point is to first spot those things in the hidden curriculum that might put your learning at a disadvantage and devise a solution that either reduces the negative impact or even becomes a learning advantage.

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3.11: Summary

Chapter Takeaways

The purpose of this chapter is to help make you a motivated learner and empower you to make informed choices about your own learning. Throughout the chapter, you were introduced to ideas, research, and popular models on learning and given examples of how to use each of these as an effective part of your own learning experience.

Most importantly, you were able to explore how things like motivation, grit, and mindset are the most influential aspects of successful learning.

Career Connection

Watch this TEDx video(opens in new window) on learning styles and the importance of critical thinking. After you have watched the video, consider some of the reflective points below.

The concept of personalized learning styles has been popular for almost half a century. Given the information presented in this video, why do you think people are attracted to the idea of personal learning styles even though evidence shows they do not actually exist?

If you were going to devise an experiment to prove or disprove the idea of personalized learning styles, what would you do?

Rethinking

Recall the four statements that you evaluated at the beginning of this chapter (see below). Have you changed your mind about any of them, or do you intend to work on changing any of them? If you answered no to either or both, why do you feel no change is needed?

1. Learning for me is easy. I don’t even have to think about it.
2. I have a preferred learning style.
3. If I can't learn something right away, I have difficulty staying with it.
4. I think my teachers are the most significant aspect of my learning.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Managing Your Time and Priorities with Goal Setting

4.1: Prelude to Managing Your Time and Priorities...Start Now!
4.2: The Benefits of Time Management
4.3: Time Management in College
4.4: Organizing Your Time
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
4.7: Goal Setting and Motivation
4.8: Summary

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4.1: Prelude to Managing Your Time and Priorities...Start Now!

Learning Objectives

1. Analyze the impact of effective time management on academic success by evaluating personal habits and study routines.
2. Develop strategies to organize time and prioritize tasks based on academic, personal, and career goals.
3. Examine the relationship between procrastination and academic performance to identify methods for overcoming procrastination.
4. Apply principles of goal setting and prioritization to improve focus and self-management.
5. Evaluate the role of motivation in achieving long-term goals and managing daily tasks efficiently.



Figure 4.1: Our devices can be helpful tools for managing time, but they can also lead to distraction.

Student Survey

How do you feel about your time management abilities? Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.” These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As you are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We’ll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed.

1. I regularly procrastinate completing tasks that don't interest me or seem challenging.
2. I use specific time management strategies to complete tasks.
3. I find it difficult to prioritize tasks because I am not sure what is really important.
4. I am pleased with my ability to manage my time.

You can also take the Chapter 4 survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

"Before I started college, I had heard that the amount of work would be overwhelming, and that it would be much harder than high school. That was true, but after being in college for a couple of weeks, I felt that people made it seem scarier than it actually was. I had some homework assignments here, some essays, some hard classes, but it wasn't that bad..until Midterms and Finals came knocking. I had so much to study and so little time. The pressure was unimaginable. And since there was so much material to learn, I kept procrastinating. The nights before the exams were a disaster.

"After the semester, I realized that I needed to do something differently. Instead of crashing before midterms and finals, I would study throughout the semester. I would review notes after class, do a few practice problems in the book even if

> homework wasn't assigned, and try to ask professors questions during their office hours if I was confused. This continual effort helped me do better on exams because I built up my understanding and was able to get a good night's sleep before the big test. I still studied hard, but the material was in reach and understanding it became a reasonable goal, not an impossibility. I also felt more confident going into the exams, because I knew that I had a deeper knowledge — I could recall things more easily. Most importantly, I now had peace of mind throughout the day and during the tests themselves, since I knew that I was better prepared."
>
> **—Nachum Sash**, Actuarial Science Major, City University of New York

About This Chapter

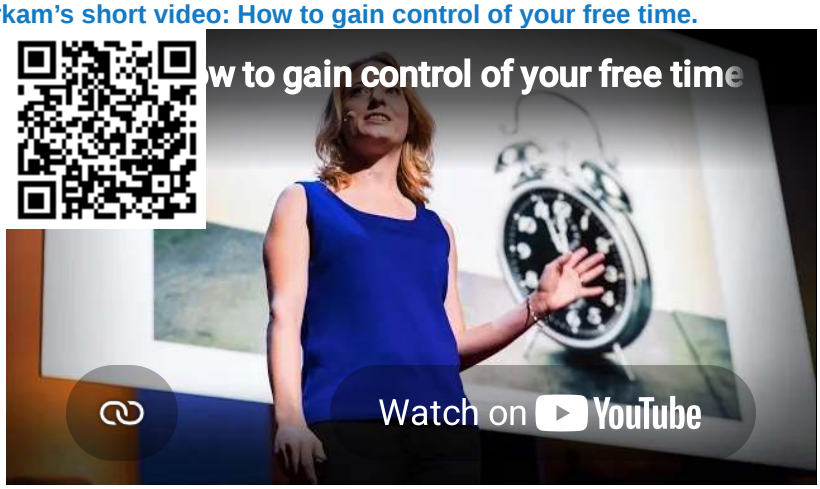
In this chapter you will learn about two of the most valuable tools used for academic success: prioritizing and time management. By the time you complete this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Articulate the ways in which time management differs from high school to college.
- Outline reasons and effects of procrastination, and provide strategies to overcome it.
- Describe ways to evaluate your own time management skills.
- Discuss the importance and the process of prioritization.
- Articulate the importance of goal setting and motivation.
- Detail strategies and specific tactics for managing your time.
- Identify how you are currently spending time in a typical week.
- Prioritize weekly activities into categories.
- Reflect on a one-week time audit and make adjustments as necessary.

HOW TO GAIN CONTROL OF YOUR TIME

Learning to manage your time is an important and powerful skill to learn in college. How you manage your time shapes your life's path. Your use of time can be the difference between meeting your long-term goals and missing the mark. Focusing your attention and time on the things that matter most ensures you are achieving the life you want. This chapter aims to help you accomplish that!

Watch Lauren Vanderkam's short video: How to gain control of your free time.



Video 4.1

Notes for Student Success:

This exercise will help you prioritize your time so when you are in 12 hour clinicals in nursing school, you will easily be able to manage your time!

How are you spending your 168 hours each week?

How you are currently spending your time? Understanding your use of time allows you to re-prioritize so that the things that are most important to you are getting appropriate

attention. This is best done before you start planning your course schedule each semester, but you can do this any time you want better control over your use of time.

4.1 Activity: One-Week Time Audit

Complete the following activity to explore your schedule:

Track your schedule for one week using the time audit workbook provided. Save the workbook as you will need to refer to it again later:

One_Week_Time_Audit_Workbook(opens in new window)

Follow these steps:

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: UTA Pressbooks [uta.pressbooks.pub]

Section 1 Review Questions

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: UTA Pressbooks [uta.pressbooks.pub]

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- **3.0: Prelude to Managing Your Time and Priorities** by OpenStax is licensed CC BY 4.0. Original source: https://openstax.org/details/books/college-success.

4.2: The Benefits of Time Management

> **"Poor time management can set into motion a series of events that can seriously jeopardize a student's success."**

A very unfortunate but all-too-common situation in higher education is the danger students face from poor time management. Many college administrators that work directly with students are aware that a single mishap or a case of poor time management can set into motion a series of events that can seriously jeopardize a student's success. In some of the more extreme instances, the student may even fail to graduate because of it.

To better understand how one instance of poor time management can trigger a cascading situation with disastrous results, imagine that a student has an assignment due in a business class. She knows that she should be working on it, but she isn't quite in the mood. Instead she convinces herself that she should think a little more about what she needs to complete the assignment and decides to do so while looking at social media or maybe playing a couple more rounds of a game on her phone. In a little while, she suddenly realizes that she has become distracted and the evening has slipped away. She has little time left to work on her assignment. She stays up later than usual trying to complete the assignment but cannot finish it. Exhausted, she decides that she will work on it in the morning during the hour she had planned to study for her math quiz. She knows there will not be enough time in the morning to do a good job on the assignment, so she decides that she will put together what she has and hope she will at least receive a passing grade.

At this point in our story, an evening of procrastination has not only resulted in a poorly done business class assignment, but now she is going to take a math quiz that she has not studied for. She will take the quiz tired from staying up too late the night before. Her lack of time management has now raised potential issues in two courses. Imagine that each of these issues also causes additional problems, such as earning low scores on *both* the assignment and the quiz. She will now have to work harder in both courses to bring her grades up. Any other problems she has with future assignments in either course could cause a domino effect of circumstances that begins to overwhelm her.

In our imagined situation, you can see how events set into motion by a little procrastination can quickly spiral out of control. You can probably think of similar experiences in your own life, when one small bit of poor time management set off a chain of events that threatened to cause big problems.

The High Cost of Poor Time Management

It's not just your academic performance that can be affected by cascading events that have a domino effect on your college path. And dropping out of school is not your only danger. There are other consequences that affect the financial cost to you as a student if your lack of time management skills causes you to delay when you finish college.

Based on independent research, a *Washington Post* article details the financial impact delaying graduation by two semesters can have on a student.[1] (Spending a Few Extra Years in College May Cost You More Than You Think, Danielle Douglas-Gabriel, June 21, 2016)

According to the article, there is a significant cost associated with delaying graduation from college by only one year (by dropping and retaking courses, taking less than a full credit load, etc.). Not only will you pay for additional tuition, textbooks, and other fees associated with going to school, but if you are using student loans, you will also accumulate interest on those loans. On average this would come to an extra $12,557 in actual costs and $6,040 in interest at a public university, or $18,992 in tuition and fees and $7,823 in interest (over 10 years) at a private school. That's a lot of extra cost to you!

> **"In the long run, just two extra semesters of college can cost you almost $150,000."**

While a loss of $26,815 may seem like a lot of money, it pales in comparison to the other financial areas impacted by a single extra year in school. The *Washington Post* article estimates that one year's delay of graduation would cost you an additional $46,355 based on average lost earnings. To make matters worse, like the story of the student that procrastinates finishing her business assignment, there is a spiraling effect that takes place with loss of income when it comes to retirement investments. The figure cited by the *Washington Post* as lost retirement earnings for taking five years instead of four years to graduate is $82,074. That brings the average total cost for only two extra semesters to over $150,000. Measured by the financial cost to you, even a slight delay of graduation can have a serious impact.

Table 4.1 Credit: Washington Post. Note the numbers in the table below have been averaged between the two scenarios described.

Average Cost of an Additional Year of College	
Tuition, textbooks, and fees	$15,774
Interest on student loans	$6,932
Lost wages	$46,335
Lost retirement earnings	$82,074
Average total loss:	$151,115

It is worth noting that any situation that brings about a delay in graduation has the potential to increase the cost of college. This also includes attending school on a part-time basis. While in some instances responsibilities may make it impossible to go to school full-time, from a financial perspective you should do all you can to graduate as soon as you can.

While it may not be possible to prevent life challenges while you are in college, you can do a great deal to prevent the chaos and the chain reaction of unfortunate events that they can cause. This can be accomplished through thoughtful prioritization and time management efforts.

What follows in the rest of this chapter is a close look at the nature of time management and prioritization in ways that can help keep you on track to graduate college on time.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Can you identify any areas in your life that might be a potential problem if there were a temporary setback (e.g., temporary loss of transportation, temporary loss of housing, an illness that lasted more than a week, etc.)? What could you do for a backup plan if something did happen?

Footnotes

- 1 Washington Post [www.washingtonpost.com]

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4.3: Time Management in College

Questions to consider:

- Is time management different in college from what I am used to?
- How different is college schoolwork from high school work?

You may find that time management in college is very different from anything you have experienced previously. For the last 12 years, almost all your school time was managed by educators and your parents. What you did and when you did it was controlled by others. In many cases, even after-school time was set by scheduled activities (such as athletics) and by nightly homework that was due the next day.

In the workplace, the situation is not very different, with activities and time on task being monitored by the company and its management. This is so much a part of the working environment that many companies research how much time each task should take, and they hold employees accountable for the time spent on these job functions. In fact, having these skills will help you stand out on the job and in job interviews.

Differences between K12 and College

K–12	College
Many class activities are planned.	Class time is given to receiving information.
Homework is often similar for each student.	You may have freedom in homework choices.
Time is managed by others more often.	Time is managed by the student.

Table 4.2 Differences between K-12 to College

In college, there is a significant difference because a great deal of time management is left up to you. While it is true that there are assignment due dates and organized classroom activities, learning at the college level requires more than just the simple completion of work. It involves decision-making and the ability to evaluate information. This is best accomplished when you are an active partner in your own learning activities.



Figure 4.2: Students may set aside specific times and specific places to study.

As an example of how this works, think about a college assignment that involves giving a classroom presentation. To complete the assignment, you are given time to research and reflect on the information found. As a part of the assignment, you must reach your own conclusions and determine which information that you have found is best suited for the presentation. While the date of the actual presentation and how long it will last are usually determined by the instructor, how much time you spend gathering information, the sources you use, and how you use them are left to you.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. How difficult is it for you to keep track of multiple tasks over the course of a term?
    a. Extremely easy
    b. Somewhat easy
    c. Somewhat difficult
    d. Extremely difficult
2. Do you use a particular app to help you manage your time?
    a. I use Google calendar
    b. I use the calendar on my phone
    c. I use a paper/notebook planner
    d. I use the calendar on my learning management system
    e. I use another app or system
    f. I don't use any type of planner or app
3. Rank the following in terms of what you would most like to improve regarding your time management skills.
    a. My ability to predict how much time my tasks will take.
    b. My ability to balance various obligations.
    c. My ability to avoid procrastination.
    d. My ability to limit distractions.

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say(opens in new window) surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

How difficult is it for you to keep track of multiple tasks over the course of a term?

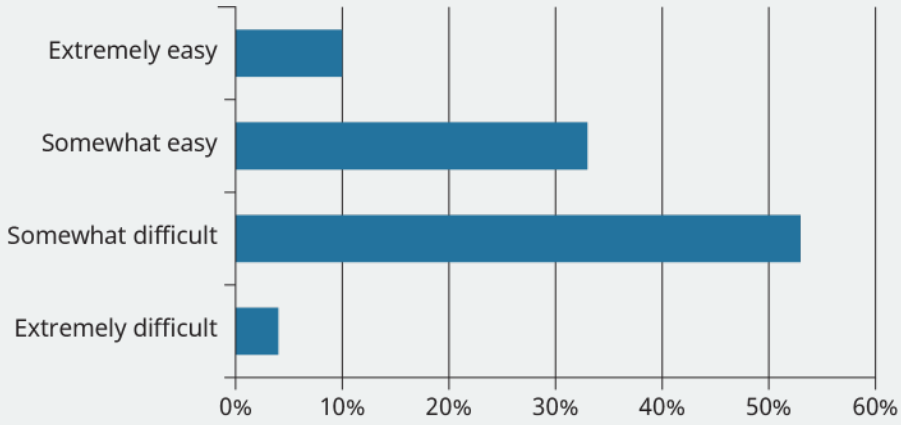


Figure 4.3

Do you use a particular app to help you manage your time?

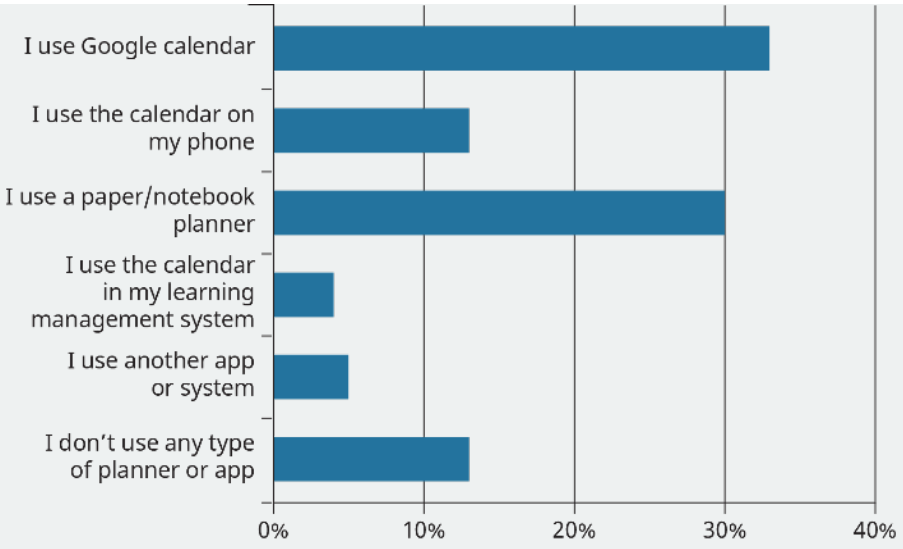


Figure 4.4

Rank the following in terms of what you would most like to improve regarding your time management skills.

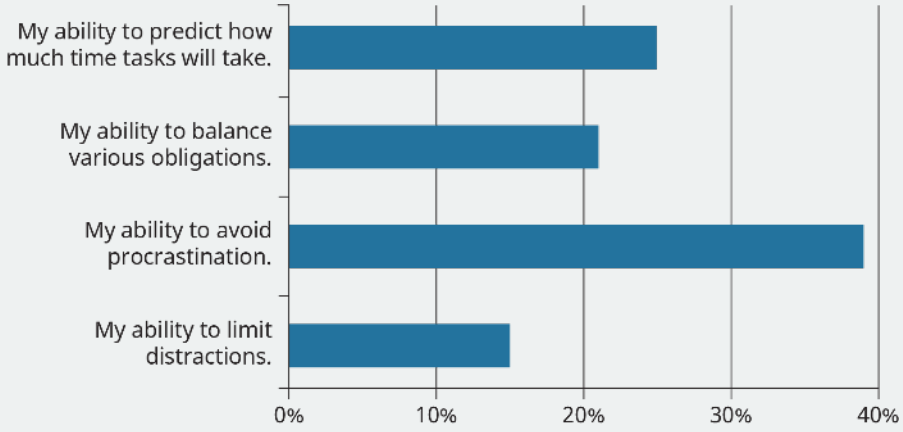


Figure 4.5

You Have Lots of Time to Manage

For college-level learning, this approach is important enough that you can expect to spend much more time on learning activities outside the classroom than you will in the classroom. In fact, the estimated time you should spend will be at least two hours of outside learning for every one hour of lecture. Some weeks may be more intense, depending on the time of the semester and the courses you are taking. If those hours are multiplied over several courses in a given session, you can see how there is a significant amount of time to manage. Unfortunately, many students do not always take this into consideration, and they spend far less time than is needed to be successful. The results of poor time management are often a shock to them.

> **"In college, as an active participant in your own education, what you do and when you do it is largely determined by you."**

The Nature of What You Have to Do Has Changed

Returning to our example of the classroom-presentation assignment, you can see that the types of learning activities in college can be very different from what you have experienced previously. While there may have been similar assignments in high school, such as presentations or written papers, the level of expectation with length and depth is significantly different in college. This point is made very clear when comparing facts about the requirements of high school work to the type of work students produce in college. One very strong statistic that underscores this comes from a study conducted by the Pew Research Center. They found that 82 percent of teens report that their typical high school writing assignments were only a single paragraph to one page in length.[2] (Writing Technology and Teens, 2004, Pew Research Center) This is in stark contrast to a number of sources that say that writing

assignments in lower-level college courses are usually 5–7 pages in length, while writing assignments in upper-level courses increase to 15–20 pages.

It is also interesting to note that the amount of writing done by a college student can differ depending on their program of study. The table below indicates the estimated average amount of writing assigned in several disciplines. To estimate the number of pages of assigned writing, the average number of writing assignments of a given page length was multiplied by an approximate number of pages for the assignment type (see **Estimating Number of Pages Written** for calculation details).

Table 4.3 Credit: Updated NSSE (Since 2013)

Writing Assignments Vary in Length	
Discipline	**Number of Pages Assigned in Introductory Course**
Arts & Humanities	49
Biological Sciences, Agriculture, & Natural Resources	47
Physical Sciences, Mathematics, & Computer Science	44
Social Sciences	52
Business	48
Communications, Media, & Public Relations	50
Education	46
Engineering	46
Health Professions	43
Social Service Professions	47

High school homework often consists of worksheets or tasks based on reading or classroom activities. In other words, all the students are doing the same tasks, at relatively the same time, with little autonomy over their own education.

Using the earlier example of the presentation assignment, not only will what you do be larger in scale, but the depth of understanding and knowledge you will put into it will be significantly more than you may have encountered in previous assignments. This is because there are greater expectations required of college graduates in the workplace. Nearly any profession that requires a college degree has with it a level of responsibility that demands higher-level thinking and therefore higher learning. An often-cited example of this is the healthcare professional. The learning requirements for that profession are strict because we depend on those graduates for our health and, in some cases, our lives. While not every profession may require the same level of study needed for healthcare, most do require that colleges maintain a certain level of academic rigor to produce graduates who are competent in their fields.

Footnotes

- 2 Pew: Writing, Technology and Teens [www.pewinternet.org]
- 3 https://openstax.org/books/college-s...#footnote-ref2

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4.4: Organizing Your Time

This is the most important part of this chapter. When you know what you want to do, why not just sit down and get it done? The millions of people who complain frequently about "not having enough time" would love it if it were that simple!

Time management isn't actually difficult, but you do need to learn how to do it well.

Time and Your Personality

People's attitudes toward time vary widely. One person seems to be always rushing around but actually gets less done than another person who seems unconcerned about time and calmly goes about the day. Since there are so many different "time personalities," it's important to realize how you approach time. Start by trying to figure out how you spend your time during a typical week. People who estimate too high often feel they don't have enough time. They may have time anxiety and often feel frustrated. People at the other extreme, who often can't account for how they use all their time, may have a more relaxed attitude. They may not actually have any more free time, but they may be wasting more time than they want to admit with less important things. Yet they still may complain about how much time they spend studying, as if there's a shortage of time.

People also differ in how they respond to schedule changes. Some go with the flow and accept changes easily, while others function well only when following a planned schedule and may become upset if that schedule changes. If you do not react well to an unexpected disruption in your schedule, plan extra time for catching up if something throws you off. This is all part of understanding your time personality.

Another aspect of your time personality involves time of day. If you need to concentrate, such as when writing a class paper, are you more alert and focused in the morning, afternoon, or evening? Do you concentrate best when you look forward to a relaxing activity later on, or do you study better when you've finished all other activities? Do you function well if you get up early—or stay up late—to accomplish a task? How does that affect the rest of your day or the next day? Understanding this will help you better plan your study periods.

While you may not be able to change your "time personality," you can learn to manage your time more successfully. The key is to be realistic. How accurate is the number of hours you spend on activities each week? The best way to know how you spend your time is to record what you do all day in a time log, every day for a week, and then add that up. You might be surprised that you spend a lot more time than you thought just hanging out with friends—or surfing the Web or playing around with Facebook or any of the many other things people do. You might find that you study well early in the morning even though you thought you are a night person, or vice versa. You might learn how long you can continue at a specific task before needing a break.

If you have work and family responsibilities, you may already know where many of your hours go. Although we all wish we had "more time," the important thing is what we do with the time we have. Time management strategies can help us better use the time we do have by creating a schedule that works for our own time personality.

Time Management

Time management for successful college studying involves these factors:

- Determining how much time you need to spend studying
- Knowing how much time you actually have for studying and increasing that time if needed
- Being aware of the times of day you are at your best and most focused
- Using effective long- and short-term study strategies
- Scheduling study activities in realistic segments
- Using a system to plan ahead and set priorities
- Staying motivated to follow your plan and avoid procrastination

For every hour in the classroom, college students should spend, on average, about two hours on that class, counting reading, studying, writing papers, and so on. If you're a full-time student with fifteen hours a week in class, then you need another thirty hours for rest of your academic work. That forty-five hours is about the same as a typical full-time job. If you work part time, time management skills are even more essential. These skills are still more important for part-time college students who work full time and commute or have a family. To succeed in college, virtually everyone has to develop effective strategies for dealing with time.

As you schedule your day, do you have two hours of study time for every hour in class? Many students begin college not knowing this much time is needed, so don't be surprised if you underestimated this number of hours. Remember this is just an average

amount of study time—you may need more or less for your own courses. To be safe, and to help ensure your success, add another five to ten hours a week for studying. To reserve this study time, you may need to adjust how much time you spend in other activities.

With appropriate scheduling and planning, most college students find that they do actually have plenty of time for their studies without losing sleep or giving up their social life. But you may have less time for discretionary activities than in the past. *Something, somewhere has to give.* That's part of time management—and why it's important to keep your goals and priorities in mind. The other part is to learn how to use the hours you do have as effectively as possible, especially the study hours. For example, if you're a typical college freshman who plans to study for three hours in an evening but then procrastinates, gets caught up in a conversation, loses time to checking e-mail and text messages, and listens to loud music while reading a textbook, then maybe you actually spent four hours "studying" but got only two hours of actual work done. So you end up behind and feeling like you're still studying way too much. The goal of time management is to actually get three hours of studying done in three hours and have time for your life as well.

Special note for students who work. You may have almost *no* discretionary time at all left in Activity 3 after all your "must-do" activities. If so, you may have overextended yourself—a situation that inevitably will lead to problems. You can't sleep two hours less every night for the whole school year, for example, without becoming ill or unable to concentrate well on work and school. It is better to recognize this situation now rather than set yourself up for a very difficult term and possible failure. If you cannot cut the number of hours for work or other obligations, see your academic advisor right away. It is better to take fewer classes and succeed than to take more classes than you have time for and risk failure.

Time Management Strategies for Success

Following are some strategies you can begin using immediately to make the most of your time:

- **Prepare to be successful.** When planning ahead for studying, think yourself into the right mood. Focus on the positive. "When I get these chapters read tonight, I'll be ahead in studying for the next test, and I'll also have plenty of time tomorrow to do X." *Visualize* yourself studying well!
- **Use your best—and most appropriate—time of day.** Different tasks require different mental skills. Some kinds of studying you may be able to start first thing in the morning as you wake, while others need your most alert moments at another time.
- **Break up large projects into small pieces.** Whether it's writing a paper for class, studying for a final exam, or reading a long assignment or full book, students often feel daunted at the beginning of a large project. It's easier to get going if you break it up into stages that you schedule at separate times—and then begin with the first section that requires only an hour or two.
- **Do the most important studying first.** When two or more things require your attention, do the more crucial one first. If something happens and you can't complete everything, you'll suffer less if the most crucial work is done.
- **If you have trouble getting started, do an easier task first.** Like large tasks, complex or difficult ones can be daunting. If you can't get going, switch to an easier task you can accomplish quickly. That will give you momentum, and often you feel more confident tackling the difficult task after being successful in the first one.
- **If you're feeling overwhelmed and stressed because you have too much to do, revisit your time planner.** Sometimes it's hard to get started if you keep thinking about other things you need to get done. Review your schedule for the next few days and make sure everything important is scheduled, then relax and concentrate on the task at hand.
- **If you're really floundering, talk to someone.** Maybe you just don't understand what you should be doing. Talk with your instructor or another student in the class to get back on track.
- **Take a break.** We all need breaks to help us concentrate without becoming fatigued and burned out. As a general rule, a short break every hour or so is effective in helping recharge your study energy. Get up and move around to get your blood flowing, clear your thoughts, and work off stress.
- **Use unscheduled times to work ahead.** You've scheduled that hundred pages of reading for later today, but you have the textbook with you as you're waiting for the bus. Start reading now, or flip through the chapter to get a sense of what you'll be reading later. Either way, you'll save time later. You may be amazed how much studying you can get done during downtimes throughout the day.
- **Keep your momentum.** Prevent distractions, such as multitasking, that will only slow you down. Check for messages, for example, only at scheduled break times.
- **Reward yourself.** It's not easy to sit still for hours of studying. When you successfully complete the task, you should feel good and deserve a small reward. A healthy snack, a quick video game session, or social activity can help you feel even better about your successful use of time.

- **Just say no.** Always tell others nearby when you're studying, to reduce the chances of being interrupted. Still, interruptions happen, and if you are in a situation where you are frequently interrupted by a family member, spouse, roommate, or friend, it helps to have your "no" prepared in advance: "No, I *really* have to be ready for this test" or "That's a great idea, but let's do it tomorrow—I *just can't* today." You shouldn't feel bad about saying no—especially if you told that person in advance that you needed to study.
- **Have a life.** Never schedule your day or week so full of work and study that you have no time at all for yourself, your family and friends, and your larger life.
- **Use a calendar planner and daily to-do list.** We'll look at these time management tools in the next section.

Battling Procrastination

Procrastination is a way of thinking that lets one put off doing something that should be done now. This can happen to anyone at any time. It's like a voice inside your head keeps coming up with these brilliant ideas for things to do right now other than studying: "I really ought to get this room cleaned up before I study" or "I can study anytime, but tonight's the only chance I have to do X." That voice is also very good at rationalizing: "I really don't need to read that chapter now; I'll have plenty of time tomorrow at lunch.…"

Procrastination is very powerful. Some people battle it daily, others only occasionally. Most college students procrastinate often, and about half say they need help avoiding procrastination. Procrastination can threaten one's ability to do well on an assignment or test.

People procrastinate for different reasons. Some people are too relaxed in their priorities, seldom worry, and easily put off responsibilities. Others worry constantly, and that stress keeps them from focusing on the task at hand. Some procrastinate because they fear failure; others procrastinate because they fear success or are so perfectionistic that they don't want to let themselves down. Some are dreamers. Many different factors are involved, and there are different styles of procrastinating.

Just as there are different causes, there are different possible solutions for procrastination. Different strategies work for different people. The time management strategies described earlier can help you avoid procrastination. Because this is a psychological issue, some additional psychological strategies can also help:

- Since procrastination is usually a habit, accept that and work on breaking it as you would any other bad habit: one day at a time. Know that every time you overcome feelings of procrastination, the habit becomes weaker—and eventually you'll have a new habit of being able to start studying right away.
- Schedule times for studying using a daily or weekly planner. Carry it with you and look at it often. Just being aware of the time and what you need to do today can help you get organized and stay on track.
- If you keep thinking of something else you might forget to do later (making you feel like you "must" do it now), write yourself a note about it for later and get it out of your mind.
- Counter a negative with a positive. If you're procrastinating because you're not looking forward to a certain task, try to think of the positive future results of doing the work.
- Counter a negative with a worse negative. If thinking about the positive results of completing the task doesn't motivate you to get started, think about what could happen if you keep procrastinating. You'll have to study tomorrow instead of doing something fun you had planned. Or you could fail the test. Some people can jolt themselves right out of procrastination.
- On the other hand, fear causes procrastination in some people—so don't dwell on the thought of failing. If you're studying for a test, and you're so afraid of failing it that you can't focus on studying and you start procrastinating, try to put things in perspective. Even if it's your most difficult class and you don't understand *everything* about the topic, that doesn't mean you'll fail, even if you may not receive an A or a B.
- Study with a motivated friend. Form a study group with other students who are motivated and won't procrastinate along with you. You'll learn good habits from them while getting the work done now.
- Keep a study journal. At least once a day write an entry about how you have used your time and whether you succeeded with your schedule for the day. If not, identify what factors kept you from doing your work. (Use the form at the end of this chapter.) This journal will help you see your own habits and distractions so that you can avoid things that lead to procrastination.
- Get help. If you really can't stay on track with your study schedule, or if you're always putting things off until the last minute, see a college counselor. They have lots of experience with this common student problem and can help you find ways to overcome this habit.

Calendar Planners and To-Do Lists

Calendar planners and to-do lists are effective ways to organize your time. Many types of academic planners are commercially available (check your college bookstore), or you can make your own. Some people like a page for each day, and some like a week at a time. Some use computer calendars and planners. Almost any system will work well if you use it consistently.

Some college students think they don't need to actually write down their schedule and daily to-do lists. They've always kept it in their head before, so why write it down in a planner now? Some first-year students were talking about this one day in a study group, and one bragged that she had never had to write down her calendar because she never forgot dates. Another student reminded her how she'd forgotten a preregistration date and missed taking a course she really wanted because the class was full by the time she went online to register. "Well," she said, "except for that time, I never forget anything!" Of course, none of us ever forgets anything—until we do.

Calendars and planners help you look ahead and write in important dates and deadlines so you don't forget. But it's just as important to use the planner to schedule *your own time*, not just deadlines. For example, you'll learn later that the most effective way to study for an exam is to study in several short periods over several days. You can easily do this by choosing time slots in your weekly planner over several days that you will commit to studying for this test. You don't need to fill every time slot, or to schedule every single thing that you do, but the more carefully and consistently you use your planner, the more successfully will you manage your time.

But a planner cannot contain every single thing that may occur in a day. We'd go crazy if we tried to schedule every telephone call, every e-mail, every bill to pay, every trip to the grocery store. For these items, we use a to-do list, which may be kept on a separate page in the planner.

Check the example of a weekly planner form in Figure 4.6 "Weekly Planner". (You can copy this page and use it to begin your schedule planning. By using this first, you will find out whether these time slots are big enough for you or whether you'd prefer a separate planner page for each day.) Fill in this planner form for next week. First write in all your class meeting times; your work or volunteer schedule; and your usual hours for sleep, family activities, and any other activities at fixed times. Don't forget time needed for transportation, meals, and so on. Your first goal is to find all the blocks of "free time" that are left over.

Remember that this is an **academic planner**. Don't try to schedule in everything in your life—this is to plan ahead to use your study time most effectively.

Next, check the syllabus for each of your courses and write important dates in the planner. If your planner has pages for the whole term, write in all exams and deadlines. Use red ink or a highlighter for these key dates. Write them in the hour slot for the class when the test occurs or when the paper is due, for example. (If you don't yet have a planner large enough for the whole term, use Figure 4.6 "Weekly Planner" and write any deadlines for your second week in the margin to the right. You need to know what's coming *next* week to help schedule how you're studying *this* week.)

Figure 4.6 Weekly Planner

HOURS	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
6–7 AM							
7–8							
8–9							
9–10							
10–11							
11–12 PM							
12–1							
1–2							
2–3							
3–4							
4–5							
5–6							
6–7							
7–8							
8–9							
9–10							
10–11							
11–12 AM							
12–1							
1–2							
2–3							
3–4							
4–5							
5–6							

Remember that for every hour spent in class, plan an average of two hours studying outside of class. These are the time periods you now want to schedule in your planner. These times change from week to week, with one course requiring more time in one week because of a paper due at the end of the week and a different course requiring more the next week because of a major exam. Make sure you block out enough hours in the week to accomplish what you need to do. As you choose your study times, consider what times of day you are at your best and what times you prefer to use for social or other activities.

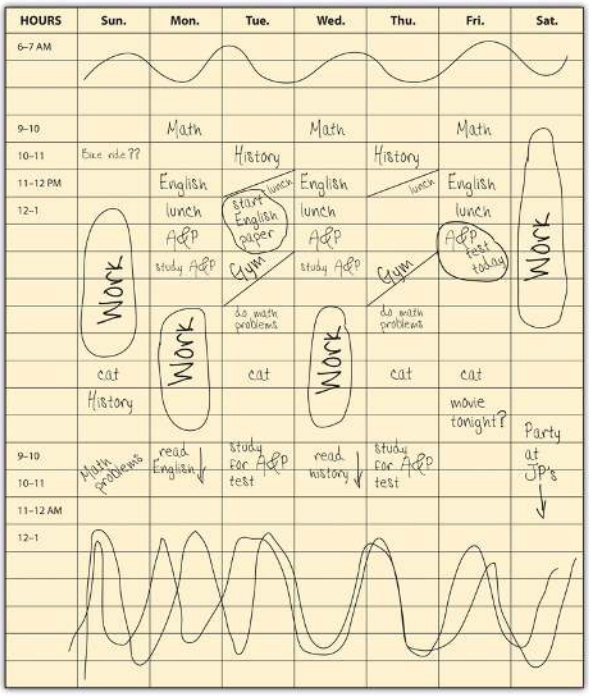
Don’t try to micromanage your schedule. Don’t try to estimate exactly how many minutes you’ll need two weeks from today to read a given chapter in a given textbook. Instead, just choose the blocks of time you will use for your studies. Don’t yet write in the exact study activity—just reserve the block. Next, look at the major deadlines for projects and exams that you wrote in earlier. Estimate how much time you may need for each and work backward on the schedule from the due date. For example,

You have a short paper due on Friday. You determine that you’ll spend ten hours total on it, from initial brainstorming and planning through to drafting and revising. Since you have other things also going on that week, you want to get an early start; you might choose to block an hour a week ahead on Saturday morning, to brainstorm your topic, and jot some preliminary notes. Monday evening is a good time to spend two hours on the next step or prewriting activities. Since you have a lot of time open Tuesday afternoon, you decide that’s the best time to reserve to write the first draft; you block out three or four hours. You make a note on the schedule to leave time open that afternoon to see your instructor during office hours in case you have any questions on the paper; if not, you’ll finish the draft or start revising. Thursday, you schedule a last block of time to revise and polish the final draft due tomorrow.

If you’re surprised by this amount of planning, you may be the kind of student who used to think, “The paper’s due Friday—I have enough time Thursday afternoon, so I’ll write it then.” What’s wrong with that? First, college work is more demanding than many first-year students realize, and the instructor expects higher-quality work than you can churn out quickly without revising. Second, if you are tired on Thursday because you didn’t sleep well Wednesday night, you may be much less productive than you hoped—and without a time buffer, you’re forced to turn in a paper that is not your best work.

Figure 4.7 “Example of a Student’s Weekly Planner Page with Class Times and Important Study Sessions” shows what one student’s schedule looks like for a week. This is intended only to show you one way to block out time—you’ll quickly find a way that works best for you.

Figure 4.7 Example of a Student’s Weekly Planner Page with Class Times and Important Study Sessions



Here are some more tips for successful schedule planning:

- Studying is often most effective immediately after a class meeting. If your schedule allows, block out appropriate study time after class periods.
- Be realistic about time when you make your schedule. If your class runs to four o'clock and it takes you twenty minutes to wrap things up and reach your study location, don't figure you'll have a full hour of study between four o'clock and five o'clock.
- Don't overdo it. Few people can study four or five hours nonstop, and scheduling extended time periods like that may just set you up for failure.
- Schedule social events that occur at set times, but just leave holes in the schedule for other activities. Enjoy those open times and recharge your energies!
- Try to schedule some time for exercise at least three days a week.
- Plan to use your time between classes wisely. If three days a week you have the same hour free between two classes, what should you do with those three hours? Maybe you need to eat, walk across campus, or run an errand. But say you have an average forty minutes free at that time on each day. Instead of just frittering the time away, use it to review your notes from the previous class or for the coming class or to read a short assignment. Over the whole term, that forty minutes three times a week adds up to a lot of study time.
- If a study activity is taking longer than you had scheduled, look ahead and adjust your weekly planner to prevent the stress of feeling behind.
- If you maintain your schedule on your computer or smartphone, it's still a good idea to print and carry it with you. Don't risk losing valuable study time if you're away from the device.
- If you're not paying close attention to everything in your planner, use a colored highlighter to mark the times blocked out for really important things.
- When following your schedule, pay attention to starting and stopping times. If you planned to start your test review at four o'clock after an hour of reading for a different class, don't let the reading run long and take time away from studying for the test.

Your Daily To-Do List

People use to-do lists in different ways, and you should find what works best for you. As with your planner, consistent use of your to-do list will make it an effective habit.

Some people prefer not to carry their planner everywhere but instead copy the key information for the day onto a to-do list. Using this approach, your daily to-do list starts out with your key scheduled activities and then adds other things you hope to do today.

Some people use their to-do list only for things not on their planner, such as short errands, phone calls or e-mail, and the like. This still includes important things—but they're not scheduled out for specific times.

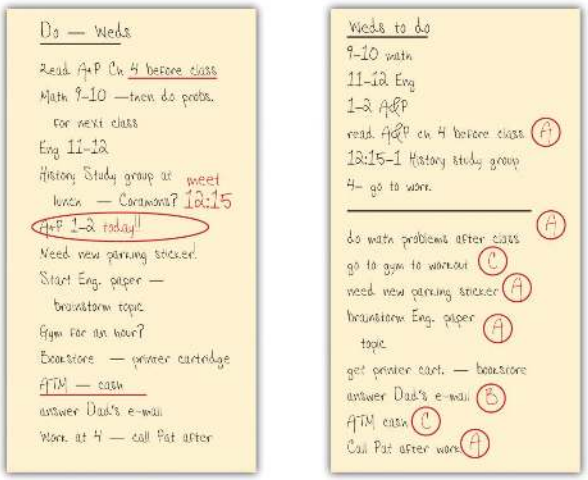
Although we call it a daily list, the to-do list can also include things you may not get to today but don't want to forget about. Keeping these things on the list, even if they're a low priority, helps ensure that eventually you'll get to it.

Start every day with a fresh to-do list written in a special small notebook or on a clean page in your planner. Check your planner for key activities for the day and check yesterday's list for items remaining.

Some items won't require much time, but other activities such as assignments will. Include a time estimate for these so that later you can do them when you have enough free time. If you finish lunch and have twenty-five minutes left before your next class, what things on the list can you do now and check off?

Finally, use some system to prioritize things on your list. Some students use a 1, 2, 3 or A, B, C rating system for importance. Others simply highlight or circle items that are critical to get done today. Figure 4.8 "Examples of Two Different Students' To-Do Lists" shows two different to-do lists—each very different but each effective for the student using it.

Figure 4.8 Examples of Two Different Students' To-Do Lists



Use whatever format works best for you to prioritize or highlight the most important activities.

Here are some more tips for effectively using your daily to-do list:

- Be specific: "Read history chapter 2 (30 pages)"—not "History homework."
- Put important things high on your list where you'll see them every time you check the list.
- Make your list at the same time every day so that it becomes a habit.
- Don't make your list overwhelming. If you added *everything* you eventually need to do, you could end up with so many things on the list that you'd never read through them all. If you worry you might forget something, write it in the margin of your planner's page a week or two away.
- *Use* your list. Lists often include little things that may take only a few minutes to do, so check your list any time during the day you have a moment free.
- Cross out or check off things after you've done them—doing this becomes rewarding.
- Don't use your to-do list to procrastinate. Don't pull it out to find something else you just "have" to do instead of studying!

Time Management Tips for Students Who Work

If you're both working and taking classes, you seldom have large blocks of free time. Avoid temptations to stay up very late studying, for losing sleep can lead to a downward spiral in performance at both work and school. Instead, try to follow these guidelines:

- If possible, adjust your work or sleep hours so that you don't spend your most productive times at work. If your job offers flex time, arrange your schedule to be free to study at times when you perform best.
- Try to arrange your class and work schedules to minimize commuting time. If you are a part-time student taking two classes, taking classes back-to-back two or three days a week uses less time than spreading them out over four or five days. Working

four ten-hour days rather than five eight-hour days reduces time lost to travel, getting ready for work, and so on.

- If you can't arrange an effective schedule for classes and work, consider online courses that allow you to do most of the work on your own time.
- Use your daily and weekly planner conscientiously. Any time you have thirty minutes or more free, schedule a study activity.
- Consider your "body clock" when you schedule activities. Plan easier tasks for those times when you're often fatigued and reserve alert times for more demanding tasks.
- Look for any "hidden" time potentials. Maybe you prefer the thirty-minute drive to work over a forty-five-minute train ride. But if you can read on the train, that's a gain of ninety minutes every day at the cost of thirty minutes longer travel time. An hour a day can make a huge difference in your studies.
- Can you do quick study tasks during slow times at work? Take your class notes with you and use even five minutes of free time wisely.
- Remember your long-term goals. You need to work, but you also want to finish your college program. If you have the opportunity to volunteer for some overtime, consider whether it's really worth it. Sure, the extra money would help, but could the extra time put you at risk for not doing well in your classes?
- Be as organized on the job as you are academically. Use your planner and to-do list for work matters, too. The better organized you are at work, the less stress you'll feel—and the more successful you'll be as a student also.
- If you have a family as well as a job, your time is even more limited. In addition to the previous tips, try some of the strategies that follow.

Time Management Tips for Students with Family

Living with family members often introduces additional time stresses. You may have family obligations that require careful time management. Use all the strategies described earlier, including family time in your daily plans the same as you would hours spent at work. Don't assume that you'll be "free" every hour you're home, because family events or a family member's need for your assistance may occur at unexpected times. Schedule your important academic work well ahead and in blocks of time you control. See also the earlier suggestions for controlling your space: you may need to use the library or another space to ensure you are not interrupted or distracted during important study times.

Students with their own families are likely to feel time pressures. After all, you can't just tell your partner or kids that you'll see them in a couple years when you're not so busy with job and college! In addition to all the planning and study strategies discussed so far, you also need to manage your family relationships and time spent with family. While there's no magical solution for making more hours in the day, even with this added time pressure there are ways to balance your life well:

- Talk everything over with your family. If you're going back to school, your family members may not have realized changes will occur. Don't let them be shocked by sudden household changes. Keep communication lines open so that your partner and children feel they're together with you in this new adventure. Eventually you will need their support.
- Work to enjoy your time together, whatever you're doing. You may not have as much time together as previously, but cherish the time you do have—even if it's washing dishes together or cleaning house. If you've been studying for two hours and need a break, spend the next ten minutes with family instead of checking e-mail or watching television. Ultimately, the important thing is *being together*, not going out to movies or dinners or the special things you used to do when you had more time. Look forward to being with family and appreciate every moment you are together, and they will share your attitude.

Figure 4.9



Make the most of your time with family, since you'll also need time alone for studying.

Lee Ruk – 2015 July 01,Family visit – CC BY-SA 2.0.

- Combine activities to get the most out of time. Don't let your children watch television or play video games off by themselves while you're cooking dinner, or you may find you have only twenty minutes family time together while eating. Instead, bring the family together in the kitchen and give everyone something to do. You can have a lot of fun together and share the day's experiences, and you won't feel so bad then if you have to go off and study by yourself.
- Share the load. Even children who are very young can help with household chores to give you more time. Attitude is everything: try to make it fun, the whole family pulling together—not something they "have" to do and may resent, just because Mom or Dad went back to school. (Remember, your kids will reach college age someday, and you want them to have a good attitude about college.) As they get older, they can do their own laundry, cook meals, and get themselves off to school, and older teens can run errands and do the grocery shopping. They will gain in the process by becoming more responsible and independent.
- Schedule your study time based on family activities. If you face interruptions from young children in the early evening, use that time for something simple like reviewing class notes. When you need more quiet time for concentrated reading, wait until they've gone to bed.
- Be creative with child care. Usually options are available, possibly involving extended family members, sitters, older siblings, cooperative child care with other adult students, as well as child-care centers. After a certain age, you can take your child along to campus when you attend an evening course, if there is somewhere the child can quietly read. At home, let your child have a friend over to play with. Network with other older students and learn what has worked for them. Explore all possibilities to ensure you have time to meet your college goals. And don't feel guilty: "day care babies" grow up just as healthy psychologically as those raised in the home full time.

Time Management Tips for Student Athletes

Student athletes often face unique time pressures because of the amount of time required for training, practice, and competition. During some parts of the year, athletics may involve as many hours as a full-time job. The athletic schedule can be grueling, involving weekend travel and intensive blocks of time. You can be exhausted after workouts or competitions, affecting how well you can concentrate on studies thereafter. Students on athletic scholarships often feel their sport is their most important reason for being in college, and this priority can affect their attitudes toward studying. For all of these reasons, student athletes face special time management challenges. Here are some tips for succeeding in both your sport and academics:

- Realize that even if your sport is more important to you, you risk everything if you don't also succeed in your academics. Failing one class in your first year won't get you kicked out, but you'll have to make up that class—and you'll end up spending more time on the subject than if you'd studied more to pass it the first time.
- It's critical to plan ahead. If you have a big test or a paper due the Monday after a big weekend game, start early. Use your weekly planner to plan well in advance, making it a goal, for example, to have the paper done by Friday—instead of thinking you can magically get it done Sunday night after victory celebrations. Working ahead will also free your mind to focus better on your sport.

- Accept that you have two priorities—your sport and your classes—and that both come before your social life. That's just how it is—what you have accepted in your choice to be a college athlete. If it helps, think of your classes as your job; you have to "go to study" the same as others "go to work."
- Use your planner to take advantage of any downtime you have during the day between classes and at lunch. Other students may seem to have the luxury of studying during much of the afternoon when you're at practice, and maybe they can get away with hanging out between classes, but you don't have that time available, at least not during the season. You need to use all the time you can find to keep up with your studying.
- Stay on top of your courses. If you allow yourself to start slipping behind, maybe telling yourself you'll have more time later on to catch up, just the opposite will happen. Once you get behind, you'll lose momentum and find it more difficult to understand what's going on the class. Eventually the stress will affect your athletic performance also.
- Get help when you need it. Many athletic departments offer tutoring services or referrals for extra help. But don't wait until you're at risk for failing a class before seeking help. A tutor won't take your test or write your paper for you—they can only help you focus in to use your time productively in your studies. You still have to want to succeed.

Key Takeaways

- People "use" time very differently. To develop strategies for managing your time, discover your time personality and observe how much time you spend in different activities in the course of a week.
- Plan your schedule with two hours of study time for each hour in class. Use your most alert times of day, break up large tasks into smaller pieces and stages, take breaks to help you stay focused, avoid distractions, and reward yourself for successful accomplishments.
- Procrastination has many different causes for different people but is a problem for most students. Different techniques can help you battle procrastination so you can get the job done.
- Use a weekly calendar planner to block out study times and plan well ahead for examinations and key assignments to achieve success in school.
- Use a daily to-do list along with your weekly planner to avoid overlooking even smaller tasks and to make the most of your time throughout the day.
- Students who work, live with family, or are athletes often face significant time pressures and must make a special effort to stay organized and plan ahead for efficient studying.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. What time(s) of day are you at your most alert?

   _____

   What time(s) of day are you at your least alert?

   _____

2. What category of *discretionary* activity (not sleeping, working, studying, etc.) represents your largest use of time?

   _____

   Can you reduce the time you spend in that activity if you need more time for your coursework?

   _____

3. For each of the following statements about time management, circle T for true or F for false:

Checkpoint Exercises

T	F	Think yourself into a positive mood before starting to study.
T	F	Always study just before going to sleep so that you'll dream about the topic.
T	F	Break up larger projects into smaller parts and stages.

T	F	Think yourself into a positive mood before starting to study.
T	F	Get everything done on your to-do list before studying so that you're not distracted.
T	F	When feeling stressed by a project, put it off until tomorrow.
T	F	Talk with your instructor or another student if you're having difficulty.
T	F	Try to study at least three hours at a time before taking a break.
T	F	Reward yourself for successfully completing a task.
T	F	Avoid studying at times not written in on your weekly planner; these are all free times just for fun.
T	F	Whenever interrupted by a friend, use that opportunity to take a break for up to thirty minutes.
T	F	Turn off all electronic devices when reading an assignment except for your laptop if you use it to take notes.
T	F	Since people procrastinate when they're distracted by other things that need doing, it's best to delay studying until you've done everything else first.
T	F	Studying with a friend is a sure way to waste time and develop poor study habits.
T	F	Use a study journal to observe how you use your time and determine what things are keeping you from getting your work done.
T	F	There's no reason to keep a weekly calendar if all your instructors have provided you with a syllabus that gives the dates for all assignments and tests.
T	F	Studying for a particular class is most effective immediately after that class meets.

4. Without looking at your planner, to-do list, or anything else in writing, quickly write a list of everything you need to do in the next few days. Then look through your planner, to-do list, and any other class notes for anything you missed. What might you have forgotten or delayed if you weren't keeping a planner and to-do list?
5. Without looking at your weekly or daily schedule, think about your typical week and the times you have free when not in class, working, studying, eating, socializing, and so on. List at least three "downtimes" when you don't usually study that you can use for coursework when necessary.

_____

_____

_____

_____

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4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within

Questions to consider:

- Why do we procrastinate?
- What are the effects of procrastination?
- How can we avoid procrastination?



Figure 4.10: We can think of many creative ways to procrastinate, but the outcome is often detrimental. (Credit: University of the Fraser Valley / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

Simply put, procrastination is the act of delaying some task that needs to be completed. It is something we all do to greater and lesser degrees. For most people, a little minor procrastination is not a cause for great concern. But there are situations where procrastination can become a serious problem with a lot of risk. These include: when it becomes a chronic habit, when there are a number of tasks to complete and little time, or when the task being avoided is very important.

Because we all procrastinate from time to time, we usually do not give it much thought, let alone think about its causes or effects. Ironically, many of the psychological reasons for why we avoid a given task also keep us from using critical thinking to understand why procrastination can be extremely detrimental, and in some cases difficult to overcome.

To succeed at time management, you must understand some of the hurdles that may stand in your way. Procrastination is often one of the biggest. What follows is an overview of procrastination with a few suggestions on how to avoid it.

The Reasons behind Procrastination

There are several reasons we procrastinate, and a few of them may be surprising. On the surface we often tell ourselves it is because the task is something we do not want to do, or we make excuses that there are other things more important to do first. In some cases this may be true, but there can be other contributors to procrastination that have their roots in our physical well-being or our own psychological motivations.

Lack of Energy

Sometimes we just do not feel up to a certain task. It might be due to discomfort, an illness, or just a lack of energy. If this is the case, it is important to identify the cause and remedy the situation. It could be something as simple as a lack of sleep or improper diet. Regardless, if a lack of energy is continually causing you to procrastinate to the point where you are beginning to feel stress over not getting things done, you should definitely assess the situation and address it.

Lack of Focus

Much like having low physical energy, a lack of mental focus can be a cause of procrastination. This can be due to mental fatigue, being disorganized, or allowing yourself to be distracted by other things. Again, like low physical energy, this is something that may have farther-reaching effects in your life that go beyond the act of simply avoiding a task. If it is something that is recurring, you should properly assess the situation.

Fear of Failure

This cause of procrastination is not one that many people are aware of, especially if they are the person avoiding tasks because of it. To put it in simple words, it is a bit of trickery we play on ourselves by avoiding a situation that makes us psychologically uncomfortable. Even though they may not be consciously aware of it, the person facing the task is afraid that they cannot do it or will not be able to do it well. If they fail at the task, it will make them appear incompetent to others or even to themselves. Where the self-trickery comes in is by avoiding the task. In the person's mind, they can rationalize that the reason they failed at the task was because they ran out of time to complete it, not that they were incapable of doing it in the first place.

It is important to note that a fear of failure may not have anything to do with the actual ability of the person suffering from it. They could be quite capable of doing the task and performing well, but it is the fear that holds them back.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Consider something right now that you may be procrastinating about. Are you able to identify the cause?

The Effects of Procrastination

In addition to the causes of procrastination, you must also consider what effects it can have. Again, many of these effects are obvious and commonly understood, but some may not be so obvious and may cause other issues.

Loss of Time

The loss of time as an effect of procrastination is the easiest to identify since the act of avoiding a task comes down to not using time wisely. Procrastination can be thought of as using the time you have to complete a task in ways that do not accomplish what needs to be done.

Loss of Goals

Another of the more obvious potentially adverse effects of procrastination is the loss of goals. Completing a task leads to achieving a goal. These can be large or small (e.g., from doing well on an assignment to being hired for a good job). Without goals you might do more than delay work on a task—you may not complete it at all. The risk for the loss of goals is something that is very impactful.

Loss of Self-Esteem

Often, when we procrastinate we become frustrated and disappointed in ourselves for not getting important tasks completed. If this continues to happen, we can begin to develop a low opinion of ourselves and our own abilities. We begin to suffer from low self-esteem and might even begin to feel like there is something wrong with us. This can lead to other increasingly negative mental factors such as anger and depression. As you can see, it is important for our own well-being to avoid this kind of procrastination effect.

Stress

Procrastination causes stress and anxiety, which may seem odd since the act of procrastination is often about avoiding a task we think will be stressful in itself! Anyone who has noticed that nagging feeling when they know there is something else they should be doing is familiar with this.

On the other hand, some students see that kind of stress as a boost of mental urgency. They put off a task until they feel that surge of motivation. While this may have worked in the past, they quickly learn that procrastinating when it comes to college work almost always includes an underestimation of the tasks to be completed— sometimes with disastrous results.

Strategies for Psyching Ourselves Out and Managing Procrastination

Now that you understand a few of the major problems procrastination can produce, let's look at methods to manage procrastination and get you on to completing the tasks, no matter how unpleasant you think they might be.

Get Organized

Much of this chapter is dedicated to defining and explaining the nature of time management. The most effective way to combat procrastination is to use time and project management strategies such as schedules, goal setting, and other techniques to get tasks accomplished in a timely manner.

Put Aside Distractions

Several of the methods discussed in this chapter deal specifically with distractions. Distractions are time-killers and are the primary way people procrastinate. It is too easy to just play a video game a little while longer, check out social media, or finish watching a movie when we are avoiding a task. Putting aside distractions is one of the primary functions of setting priorities.

Reward Yourself

Rewarding yourself for the completion of tasks or meeting goals is a good way to avoid procrastination. An example of this would be rewarding yourself with the time to watch a movie you would enjoy a*fter* you have finished the things you need to do, rather than using the movie to keep yourself from getting things done.

Be Accountable—Tell Someone Else

A strong motivational tool is to hold ourselves accountable by telling someone else we are going to do something and when we are going to do it. This may not seem like it would be very effective, but on a psychological level we feel more compelled to do something if we tell someone else. It may be related to our need for approval from others, or it might just serve to set a level of commitment. Either way, it can help us stay on task and avoid procrastination—especially if we take our accountability to another person seriously enough to warrant contacting that person and apologizing for not doing what we said we were going to do.

Adapted from- University 101: Study, Strategize and Succeed by Kwantlen Polytechnic

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, the learner will:

- Understand what procrastination is and why we do it.
- Strategize how to deal with procrastination so that it does not impede progress toward set goals.

Escape the procrastination trap

What is procrastination?

Definition: To delay an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay (Steel, 2007). The nature of procrastination: A meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure.

Why do we procrastinate?

Procrastination is not a “one size fits all” problem. We procrastinate for a variety of different reasons. The first step in tackling procrastination is to do some detective work – to figure out – without judgment – why it might be that you procrastinate.

Reasons for Procrastination

People procrastinate for a variety of different reasons:

1. Not being sure of how to do the task at hand. If a task seems difficult, or if you’re not sure you know how to complete it, it is natural to avoid tackling it.
2. The task to be done doesn’t interest you, and it seems preferable to work on tasks (e.g. other courses) that are more in line with your personal interests. You may lack motivation to work on the task.
3. Fear of not doing well on the task. Trying hard at a task and failing might seem worse than failing because you didn’t try. Often a root cause of this type of procrastination is perfectionism.
4. Or, you might fear the opposite. Some people fear being too successful, because the result of this success is that people will expect more of you the next time.

Identifying the cause of procrastination can help you move towards a solution. Here are some suggested solutions for each of the four causes mentioned above:

Table

I'm not sure I know how to do it	Look for ways to develop your skills in the areas where you feel unsure of your ability to be successful. For example: • Make an appointment with a math or accounting tutor to learn how to solve a difficult type of problem • Make an appointment with a writing tutor to develop an outline for your paper • Learn from library staff how to use the research tools that are available • Make an appointment with a learning strategist to learn how to read more effectively Rather than procrastinating, you can empower yourself to be successful. The skills you gain will help you not only on one task, but on other related tasks in the future.
I'm not interested in this task/it isn't motivating for me	• Choose to "just do it", and complete the task, allowing yourself guilt free time after it is done. Consider how continuing to dread the task might be taking away from future enjoyment of other things. • Consider your attitude towards things that are uninteresting – is your attitude preventing you from finding the motivation you need? Is it realistic to expect that you will always have interesting or enjoyable tasks? • Consider how the task at hand relates to your long-term goals. For example, perhaps the course is not interesting to you, but it will help you achieve your goal of finishing your degree, and obtaining employment in an area that interests you.
I'm afraid of failing/I'm afraid of what success might mean	• Consider whether you have developed unrealistic standards for yourself. How can you set realistic goals for what it means to be successful?

Getting Started

The good news is that the approaches that do not work very well or do not really help in managing time do not get passed along very often. But others, those which people find of value, do. What follows here are three unique strategies that have become staples of time management. While not everyone will find that all three work for them in every situation, enough people have found them beneficial to pass them along with high recommendations.

Daily Top Three

The idea behind the *daily top three* approach is that you determine which three things are the most important to finish that day, and these become the tasks that you complete. It is a very simple technique that is effective because each day you are finishing tasks and removing them from your list. Even if you took one day off a week and completed no tasks on that particular day, a *daily top three* strategy would have you finishing 18 tasks in the course of a single week. That is a good amount of things crossed off your list.

analysis question

Analysis: Think about what would be your top three tasks for today? What would you have on the list tomorrow?

Pomodoro Technique



Figure 4.11: The Pomodoro Technique is named after a type of kitchen timer, but you can use any clock or countdown timer. (Marco Verch /Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

The Pomodoro Technique was developed by Francesco Cirillo. The basic concept is to use a timer to set work intervals that are followed by a short break. The intervals are usually about 25 minutes long and are called *pomodoros*, which comes from the Italian word for tomato because Cirillo used a tomato-shaped kitchen timer to keep track of the intervals.

In the original technique there are six steps:

1. Decide on the task to be done.
2. Set the timer to the desired interval.
3. Work on the task.
4. When the timer goes off, put a check mark on a piece of paper.
5. If you have fewer than four check marks, take a short break (3–5 minutes), then go to Step 1 or 2 (whichever is appropriate).
6. After four pomodoros, take a longer break (15–30 minutes), reset your check mark count to zero, and then go to Step 1 or 2.

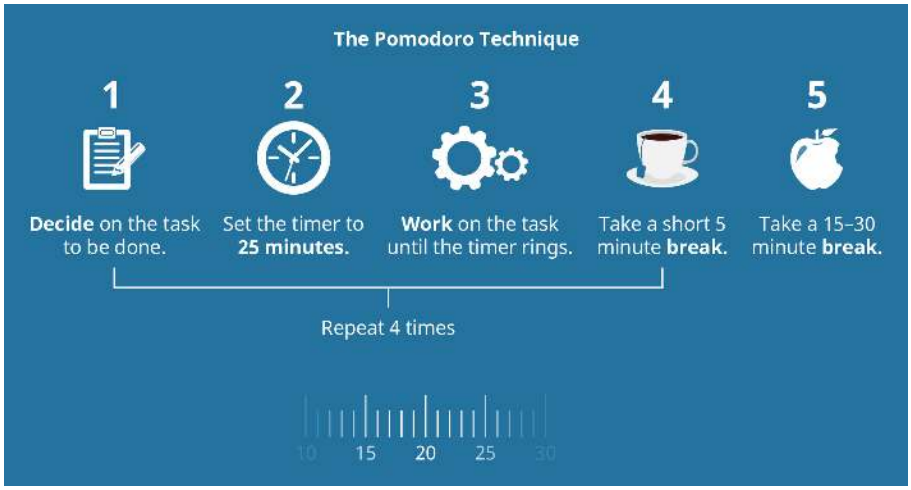


Figure 4.12: The Pomodoro Technique contains five defined steps.

There are several reasons this technique is deemed effective for many people. One is the benefit that is derived from quick cycles of work and short breaks. This helps reduce mental fatigue and the lack of productivity caused by it. Another is that it tends to encourage practitioners to break tasks down to things that can be completed in about 25 minutes, which is something that is usually manageable from the perspective of time available. It is much easier to squeeze in three 25-minute sessions of work time during the day than it is to set aside a 75- minute block of time.

Eat the Frog

Of our three quick strategies, *eat the frog* probably has the strangest name and may not sound the most inviting. The name comes from a famous quote, attributed to Mark Twain: “Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day.” *Eat the Frog* is also the title of a best-selling book by Brian Tracy that deals with time management and avoiding procrastination.

How this applies to time and task management is based on the concept that if a person takes care of the biggest or most unpleasant task first, everything else will be easier after that.

Although stated in a humorous way, there is a good deal of truth in this. First, we greatly underestimate how much worry can impact our performance. If you are continually distracted by anxiety over a task you are dreading, it can affect the task you are working on at the time. Second, not only will you have a sense of accomplishment and relief when the task you are concerned with is finished and out of the way, but other tasks will seem lighter and not as difficult.



Figure 4.13 Timer

A key aspect of overcoming procrastination is developing strategies to get started. Often, committing to complete one small task can be enough to begin moving ahead. For example, just taking out your laptop, creating a document, and typing the title can create some forward momentum.

A well-known technique for managing time that can help with procrastination is called the *Pomodoro Technique*. This technique is a method of managing procrastination by breaking down your work periods into small, manageable units. Here's how it works:

1. Choose the task you want to accomplish.
2. Set a timer for 25 minutes- no interruptions are allowed!
3. Work until the timer rings.
4. Take a short break.
5. Do up to 4 Pomodoros and then take a longer break.

Why the Method Works

The Pomodoro technique can help you push past procrastination and create forward momentum because it requires you to commit to only a small, manageable period of work. In addition, it can help you discipline yourself to work without interruptions, and can create awareness of how much time individual tasks take. Lastly, this method allows you to reward yourself with frequent breaks, which maintains motivation.

Activity 3.2 Defeat procrastination

Take some concrete steps this week to defeat procrastination.

1. Of the reasons listed above, why do you tend to procrastinate? What is one step you will take this week to defeat procrastination?
2. Try the *Pomodoro technique* once this week. Do you find that it helps you get started and stay focused?

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4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It



Figure 4.14: Numbered lists are useful and easy tools to create.

Questions to consider:

- Why is prioritization important?
- What are the steps involved in prioritization?
- How do I deal with situation where others' priorities are not the same as my own?
- What do I do when priorities conflict?
- What are the best ways to make sure I complete tasks?

Prioritization: Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It

Another key component in time management is that of prioritization. Prioritization can be thought of as ordering tasks and allotting time for them based on their identified needs or value.

This next section provides some insight into not only helping prioritize tasks and actions based on need and value, but also how to better understand the factors that contribute to prioritization.

How to Prioritize

The enemy of good prioritization is panic, or at least making decisions based on strictly emotional reactions. It can be all too easy to immediately respond to a problem as soon as it pops up without thinking of the consequences of your reaction and how it might impact other priorities. It is very natural for us to want to remove a stressful situation as soon as we can. We want the adverse emotions out of the way as quickly as possible. But when it comes to juggling multiple problems or tasks to complete, prioritizing them first may mean the difference between completing everything satisfactorily and completing nothing at all.

Make Certain You Understand the Requirements of Each Task

One of the best ways to make good decisions about the prioritization of tasks is to understand the requirements of each. If you have multiple assignments to complete and you assume one of those assignments will only take an hour, you may decide to put it off until the others are finished. Your assumption could be disastrous if you find, once you begin the assignment, that there are several extra components that you did not account for and the time to complete will be four times as long as you estimated. Or, one of the assignments may be dependent on the results of another—like participating in a study and then writing a report on the results. If you are not aware that one assignment depends upon the completion of the other before you begin, you could inadvertently do the assignments out of order and have to start over. Because of situations like this, it is critically important to understand exactly what needs to be done to complete a task before you determine its priority.

Make Decisions on Importance, Impact on Other Priorities, and Urgency

After you are aware of the requirements for each task, you can then decide your priorities based on the importance of the task and what things need to be finished in which order.

To summarize: *the key components to prioritization are making certain you understand each task and making decisions based on importance, impact, and urgency.*

ACTIVITY

To better see how things may need to be prioritized, some people make a list of the tasks they need to complete and then arrange them in a quadrant map based on importance and urgency. Traditionally this is called the Eisenhower Decision Matrix. Before becoming the 34th president of the United States, Dwight Eisenhower served as the Allied forces supreme commander during World War II and said he used this technique to better prioritize the things he needed to get done.

In this activity you will begin by making a list of things you need or want to do today and then draw your own version of the grid below. Write each item in one of the four squares; choose the square that best describes it based on its urgency and its importance. When you have completed writing each the tasks in its appropriate square, you will see a prioritization order of your tasks. Obviously, those listed in the Important and Urgent square will be the things you need to finish first. After that will come things that are "important but not urgent," followed by "not important, but urgent," and finally "not urgent and not important."

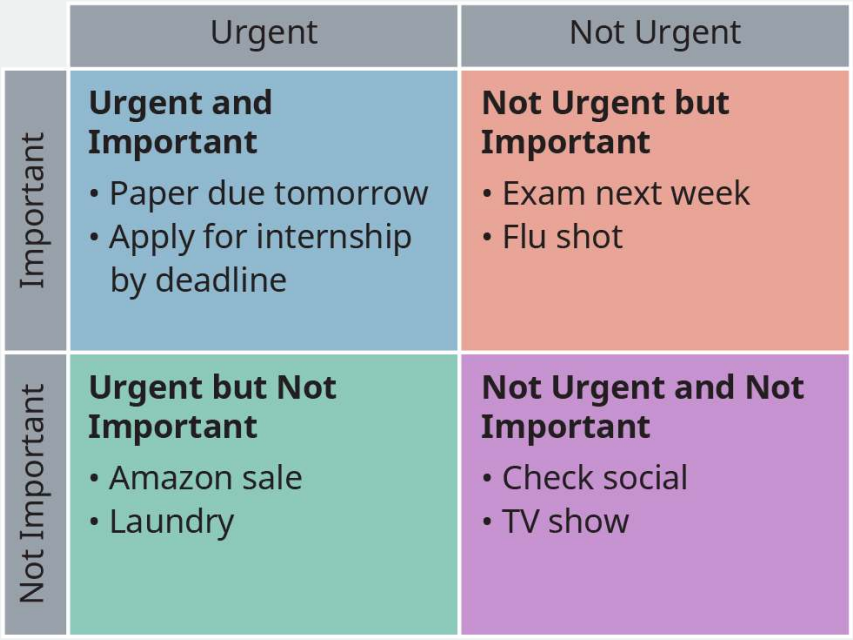


Figure 4.15: The Eisenhower Matrix can help organize priorities and ensure that you focus on the correct tasks.

Who Is Driving Your Tasks?

Another thing to keep in mind when approaching time management is that while you may have greater autonomy in managing your own time, many of your tasks are being driven by a number of different individuals. These individuals are not only unaware of the other things you need to do, but they often have goals that are in conflict with your other tasks. This means that different instructors, your manager at work, or even your friends may be trying to assert their needs into your priorities. An example of this might be a boss that would like for you to work a few hours of overtime, but you were planning on using that time to do research for a paper.

Just like assessing the requirements and needs for each priority, doing the same with how others may be influencing your available time can be an important part of time management. In some cases, keeping others informed about your priorities may help avert possible conflicts (e.g., letting your boss know you will need time on a certain evening to study, letting your friends know you plan to do a journal project on Saturday but can do something on Sunday, etc.).

It will be important to be aware of how others can drive your priorities and for you to listen to your own good judgment. In essence, time management in college is as much about managing all the elements of your life as it is about managing time for class and to complete assignments.

Making the Tough Decision When It Is Needed

Occasionally, regardless of how much you have planned or how well you have managed your time, events arise where it becomes almost impossible to accomplish everything you need to by the time required. While this is very unfortunate, it simply cannot be helped. As the saying goes, “things happen.”

Finding yourself in this kind of situation is when prioritization becomes most important. You may find yourself in the uncomfortable position of only being able to complete one task or another in the time given. When this occurs with college assignments, the dilemma can be extremely stressful, but it is important to not feel overwhelmed by the anxiety of the situation so that you can make a carefully calculated decision based on the value and impact of your choice.

> **“What do you do when faced with priority conflicts?”**

As an illustration, imagine a situation where you think you can only complete one of two assignments that are both important and urgent, and you must make a choice of which one you will finish and which one you will not. This is when it becomes critical to understand all the factors involved. While it may seem that whichever assignment is worth the most points to your grade is how you make the choice, there are actually a number of other attributes that can influence your decision in order to make the most of a bad situation. For example, one of the assignments may only be worth a minimal number of points toward your total grade, but it may be foundational to the rest of the course. Not finishing it, or finishing it late, may put other future assignments in jeopardy as well. Or the instructor for one of the courses might have a “late assignment” policy that is more forgiving—something that would allow you to turn in the work a little late without too much of a penalty.

If you find yourself in a similar predicament, the first step is to try to find a way to get everything finished, regardless of the challenges. If that simply cannot happen, the next immediate step would be to communicate with your instructors to let them know about the situation. They may be able to help you decide on a course of action, or they may have options you had not thought of. Only then can you make the choices about prioritizing in a tough situation.

The key here is to make certain you are aware of and understand all the ramifications to help make the best decision when the situation dictates you make a hard choice among priorities.

Completing the Tasks

Another important part of time management is to develop approaches that will help you complete tasks in a manner that is efficient and works for you. Most of this comes down to a little planning and being as informed about the specifics of each task as you can be.

Knowing What You Need to Do

As discussed in previous parts of this chapter, many learning activities have multiple components, and sometimes they must occur in a specific order. Additionally, some elements may not only be dependent on the order they are completed, but can also be dependent on how they are completed. To illustrate this we will analyze a task that is usually considered to be a simple one: *attending a class session.* In this analysis we will look at not only what must be accomplished to get the most out of the experience, but also at how each element is dependent upon others and must be done in a specific order. The graphic below shows the interrelationship between the different activities, many of which might not initially seem significant enough to warrant mention, but it becomes obvious that other elements depend upon them when they are listed out this way.

Element or Task Needed for Success	Task it Depends on
Pre-class Prep	
• Completing previous homework • Reading appropriate material for lecture • Taking notes on areas that need clarification	• Understanding homework assigned from previous class • Making certain appropriate reading material is identified • Reading appropriate material for lecture
↓ **During Class**	
• Understanding lecture • Taking notes on lecture • Asking questions for clarification • Taking part in class discussion • Receive assignments for next class	• Reading appropriate material • Understanding lecture • Reading appropriate material, Understanding lecture • Reading appropriate material, Understanding lecture
↓ **Post-Class**	
• Understanding homework assigned • Making certain appropriate reading material is identified • Ask questions for clarification • Reviewing and rewriting notes	• Receive assignments for next class • Receive assignments for next class • Receive assignments for next class

Figure 4.16: Many of your learning activities are dependent on others, and some are the gateways to other steps.

As you can see from the graphic above, even a task as simple as "going to class" can be broken down into a number of different elements that have a good deal of dependency on other tasks. One example of this is preparing for the class lecture by reading materials ahead of time in order to make the lecture and any complex concepts easier to follow. If you did it the other way around, you might miss opportunities to ask questions or receive clarification on the information presented during the lecture.

Understanding what you need to do and when you need to do it can be applied to any task, no matter how simple or how complex. Knowing what you need to do and planning for it can go a long way toward success and preventing unpleasant surprises.

Knowing How You Will Get It Done

After you have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to complete a task (or the component parts of a task), the next step is to create a plan for completing everything.

This may not be as easy or as simple as declaring that you will finish part one, then move on to part two, and so on. Each component may need different resources or skills to complete, and it is in your best interest to identify those ahead of time and include them as part of your plan.

A good analogy for this sort of planning is to think about it in much the same way you would preparing for a lengthy trip. With a long journey you probably would not walk out the front door and then decide how you were going to get where you were going. There are too many other decisions to be made and tasks to be completed around each choice. If you decided you were going by plane, you would need to purchase tickets, and you would have to schedule your trip around flight times. If you decided to go by car, you would need gas money and possibly a map or GPS device. What about clothes? The clothes you will need are dependent on how long will you be gone and what the climate will be like. If it far enough away that you will need to speak another language, you may need to either acquire that skill or at least come with something or someone to help you translate.

What follows is a planning list that can help you think about and prepare for the tasks you are about to begin.

What Resources Will You Need?

The first part of this list may appear to be so obvious that it should go without mention, but it is by far one of the most critical and one of the most overlooked. Have you ever planned a trip but forgotten your most comfortable pair of shoes or neglected to book a hotel room? If a missing resource is important, the entire project can come to a complete halt. Even if the missing resource is a minor component, it may still dramatically alter the end result.

Learning activities are much the same in this way, and it is also important to keep in mind that resources may not be limited to physical objects such as paper or ink. Information can be a critical resource as well. In fact, one of the most often overlooked aspects in planning by new college students is just how much research, reading, and information they will need to complete assignments.



Figure 4.17: Allowing time to think is an important part of learning. Credit: Juhan Sonin / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

For example, if you had an assignment in which you were supposed to compare and contrast a novel with a film adapted from that novel, it would be important to have access to both the movie and the book as resources. Your plans for completing the work could quickly fall apart if you learned that on the evening you planned to watch the film, it was no longer available.

What Skills Will You Need?

Poor planning or a bad assumption in this area can be disastrous, especially if some part of the task has a steep learning curve. No matter how well you planned the other parts of the project, if there is some skill needed that you do not have and you have no idea how long it will take to learn, it can be a bad situation.

Imagine a scenario where one of your class projects is to create a poster. It is your intent to use some kind of imaging software to produce professional-looking graphics and charts for the poster, but you have never used the software in that way before. It seems easy enough, but once you begin, you find the charts keep printing out in the wrong resolution. You search online for a solution, but the only thing you can find requires you to recreate them all over again in a different setting. Unfortunately, that part of the project will now take twice as long.

It can be extremely difficult to recover from a situation like that, and it could have been prevented by taking the time to learn how to do it correctly before you began or by at least including in your schedule some time to learn and practice.

Set Deadlines

Of course, the best way to approach time management is to set realistic deadlines that take into account which elements are dependent on which others and the order in which they should be completed. Giving yourself two days to write a 20- page work of fiction is not very realistic when even many professional authors average only 6 pages per day. Your intentions may be well founded, but your use of unrealistic deadlines will not be very successful.

Setting appropriate deadlines and sticking to them is very important—so much so that several sections in the rest of this chapter touch on effective deadline practices.

Be Flexible

It is ironic that the item on this list that comes just after a strong encouragement to make deadlines and stick to them is the suggestion to be flexible. The reason that *being flexible* has made this list is because even the best-laid plans and most accurate time management efforts can take an unexpected turn. The idea behind being flexible is to readjust your plans and deadlines when something does happen to throw things off. The worst thing you could do in such a situation is panic or just stop working because the next step in your careful planning has suddenly become a roadblock. The moment when you see that something in your plan may become an issue is when to begin readjusting your plan.

Adjusting a plan along the way is incredibly common. In fact, many professional project managers have learned that it seems something *always* happens or there is always some delay, and they have developed an approach to deal with the inevitable need for some flexibility. In essence, you could say that they are even planning for problems, mistakes, or delays from the very beginning, and they will often add a little extra time for each task to help ensure an issue does not derail the entire project or that the completion of the project does not miss the final due date.

> **"As you work through tasks, make certain you are always monitoring and adapting to ensure you complete them."**

STUDENT PROFILE

"While in college, I recall an instance where I was awake for two nights in a row trying to cram for upcoming midterms. I quickly learned that trying to navigate through college while working full time posed a significant challenge. Because of inability to manage my responsibilities, my first year of college was quite miserable. I went through a lot of trial and error to find out that *time management* was the key. From my experiences, I have extrapolated three important components to this skill. First, knowing your *values* is imperative. Values will serve as a guide, which will help you to determine which actions bring you closer to your goals and those that don't. Second, know your *constraints*. Constraints (in form of time or other responsibilities) can help you set the parameter within which you can function efficiently. The last component is *action*. This component was the hardest for me to master, but it was the most fruitful. Because knowing values and limitations without engaging in appropriate actions does not serve any meaningful purpose. I strongly believe that learning time management can contribute greatly towards positive university experience."

—Firdavs Khaydarov, Psychology Major, Minnesota State University, Mankato

The Importance of Where You Do Your Work



Figure 4.18: Where you do work can be as important as when. (Credit: Mads Bodker / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

A large part of ensuring that you can complete tasks on time comes to setting up conditions that will allow you to do the work well. Much of this has to do with the environment where you will do your work. This not only includes physical space such as a work area, but other conditions like being free from distractions and your physical well-being and mental attitude.

The Right Space

Simple things, like where you are set up to do your work, can not only aid in your efficiency but also affect how well you can work or even if you can get the work completed at all. One example of this might be typing on a laptop. While it might seem more comfortable to lie back on a couch and type a long paper, sitting up at a desk or table actually increases your typing speed and reduces the number of mistakes. Even the kind of mouse you use can impact how you work, and using one you are comfortable with can make a big difference.

There are a host of other factors that can come into play as well. Do you have enough space? Is the space cluttered, or do you have the room to keep reference materials and other things you might need within arm's reach? Are there other ways you could work that might be even more efficient? For example, buying an inexpensive second monitor—even secondhand—might be the key to decreasing the amount of time you spend when you can have more than one document displayed at a time.

The key is to find what works for you and to treat your work space as another important resource needed to get the task finished.

Distraction Free

Few things are more frustrating than trying to do work while distractions are going on around you. If other people are continually interrupting you or there are things that keep pulling your attention from the task at hand, everything takes longer and you are more prone to mistakes.[4]

Many people say they work better with distractions—they prefer to leave the television or the radio on—but the truth is that an environment with too many interruptions is rarely helpful when focus is required. Before deciding that the television or talkative roommates do not bother you when you work, take an honest accounting of the work you produce with interruptions compared to work you do without.

If you find that your work is better without distractions, it is a good idea to create an environment that reduces interruptions. This may mean you have to go to a private room, use headphones, or go somewhere like a library to work. Regardless, the importance of a distraction-free environment cannot be emphasized enough.

Working at the Right Time

Most people are subject to their own rhythms, cycles, and preferences throughout their day. Some are alert and energetic in the mornings, while others are considered “night owls” and prefer to work after everyone else has gone to sleep. It can be important to be aware of your own cycles and to use them to your advantage. Rarely does anyone do their best work when they are exhausted, either physically or mentally. Just as it can be difficult to work when you are physically ill, it can also be a hindrance to try to learn or do mental work when you are tired or emotionally upset.

Your working environment definitely includes your own state of mind and physical well-being. Both have a significant influence on your learning and production ability. Because of this, it is not only important to be aware of your own condition and work preferences, but to actually try to create conditions that help you in these areas. One approach is to set aside a specific time to do certain kinds of work. You might find that you concentrate better after you have eaten a meal. If that is the case, make it a habit of doing homework every night after dinner. Or you might enjoy reading more after you are ready for bed, so you do your reading assignments just before you go to sleep at night. Some people find that they are more creative during a certain time of the day or that they are more comfortable writing with subtle lighting. It is worth taking the time to find the conditions that work best for you so that you can take advantage of them.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Student Survey on Work Environment

Analysis: Take the time to think about where you will do your work and when. What can you do to help ensure your working environment will be helpful rather than harmful? What do you know doesn’t work for you? What will you do to prevent those adverse conditions from creeping into your work environment?

Below is a quick survey to help you determine your own preferences in regard to your work space, the time you work, and distractions. Rank each option: 1–4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.”

- I like my workspace to be organized and clean.
- There are certain places where I am more comfortable when I work.
- I prefer to be alone when I work on certain things.
- I find it difficult to read with other sounds or voices around me.
- There are certain times of the day when I can be more focused.
- My moods or emotions can interfere with my ability to concentrate

Footnotes

- 4 Journal of Media Education [en.calameo.com]

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4.7: Goal Setting and Motivation

Questions to consider:

- How do I set motivational goals?
- What are SMART goals?
- What's the importance of an action plan?
- How do I keep to my plan?
- What beliefs help shape your decision-making and goals?
- How do you set manageable goals that will help you stay on track?

Motivation often means the difference between success and failure. That applies to school, to specific tasks, and to life in general. One of the most effective ways to keep motivated is to set goals.

Goals can be big or small. A goal can range from *I am going to write one extra page tonight*, to *I am going to work to get an A in this course*, all the way to *I am going to graduate in the top of my class so I can start my career with a really good position*. The great thing about goals is that they can include and influence a number of other things that all work toward a much bigger picture. For example, if your goal is to get an A in a certain course, all the reading, studying, and every assignment you do for that course contributes to the larger goal. You have motivation to do each of those things and to do them well.

If obtaining a BSN degree is your primary goal, treat each year and semester as a milestone toward attaining the degree. Break that down further into the classes you need to take each semester. Each course has objectives that must be met to receive credit for the class. Assignments address the objectives, therefore, assignments are sub-goals of objectives. Each assignment also has requirements you must meet, so, even your assignments have sub-goals. Ultimately, as you address each sub-goal, you edge closer to your dream of graduating with a Nursing degree.

Setting goals is something that is frequently talked about, but it is often treated as something abstract. Like time management, goal setting is best done with careful thought and planning. This next section will explain how you can apply tested techniques to goal setting and what the benefits of each can be.

Values

Values are the basic beliefs that guide our thinking and actions. Whether we are consciously aware of them or not, values influence both our attitudes and our actions. They help us determine what is important and what makes us happy. It is important to think about and reflect on your values, especially as you make decisions.

Another way to recognize the important influence of values is to consider if you have ever made a decision that you later regretted. Did you reflect on your values prior to making that choice? Sometimes others ask us to do things that are inconsistent with our values. Knowing what you value and making plans accordingly is an important effort to help you stay on track toward your goals.

Set Goals That Motivate You

The first thing to know about goal setting is that a goal is a specific end result you desire. If the goal is not something you are really interested in, there is little motivational drive to achieve it. Think back to when you were much younger and some well-meaning adult set a goal for you—something that didn't really appeal to you at all. How motivated were you to achieve the goal? More than likely, if you were successful at all in meeting the goal, it was because you were motivated by earning the approval of someone or receiving a possible reward, or you were concerned with avoiding something adverse that might happen if you did not do what you were told. From an honest perspective in that situation, your real goal was based on something else, not the meeting of the goal set for you. To get the most from the goals you set, make sure they are things that you are interested in achieving.

That is not to say you shouldn't set goals that are supported by other motivations (e.g., If I finish studying by Friday, I can go out on Saturday), but the idea is to be intellectually honest with your goals.

Set SMART Goals

Goals should also be SMART. In this case, the word *smart* is not only a clever description of the type of goal, but it is also an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound. The reason these are all desirable traits for your goals is because they not only help you plan how to meet the goal, but they can also contribute to your decision-making processes during the planning stage.

What does it mean to create SMART goals?

- Specific—For a goal to be specific, it must be defined enough to actually determine the goal. A goal of *get a good job when I graduate* is too general. It doesn't define what a good job is. In fact, it doesn't even necessarily include a job in your chosen profession. A more specific goal would be something like *be hired as a nurse in a place of employment where it is enjoyable to work and that has room for promotion.*
- Measurable—The concept of *measurable* is one that is often overlooked when setting goals. What this means is that the goal should have clearly defined outcomes that are detailed enough to measure and can be used for planning of how you will achieve the goal. For example, setting a goal of *doing well in school* is a bit undefined, but making a goal of *graduating with a GPA above 3.0* is measurable and something you can work with. If your goal is measurable, you can know ahead of time how many points you will have to earn on a specific assignment to stay in that range or how many points you will need to make up in the next assignment if you do not do as well as you planned.
- Attainable—*Attainable* or *achievable* goals means they are reasonable and within your ability to accomplish. While a goal of *make an extra one million dollars by the end of the week* is something that would be nice to achieve, the odds that you could make that happen in a single week are not very realistic.
- Relevant—For goal setting, *relevant* means it applies to the situation. In relation to college, a goal of *getting a horse to ride* is not very relevant, but *getting dependable transportation* is something that would contribute to your success in school.
- Time-bound—Time-bound means you set a specific time frame to achieve the goal. *I will get my paper written by Wednesday* is time-bound. You know when you have to meet the goal. *I will get my paper written sometime soon* does not help you plan how and when you will accomplish the goal.

In the following table you can see some examples of goals that do and do not follow the SMART system. As you read each one, think about what elements make them SMART or how you might change those that are not.

Table 4.4

Goal	Is it SMART?	
I am going to be rich someday.	No	There is nothing really specific, measurable, or time-bound in this goal.
I will graduate with my degree, on time.	Yes	The statement calls out specific, measureable, and time-bound details. The other attributes of attainable and relevant are implied.
I am going to save enough money to buy a newer car by June.	Yes	All SMART attributes are covered in this goal.
I would like to do well in all my courses next semester.	No	While this is clearly time-bound and meets most of the SMART goal attributes, it is not specific or measurable without defining what "do well" means.
I am going to start being a nicer person.	No	While most of the SMART attributes are implied, there is nothing really measurable in this goal.
I will earn at least a 3.0 GPA in all my courses next semester.	Yes	All of the SMART attributes are present in this goal.
I am going to start being more organized.	No	While most of the SMART attributes are implied, there is nothing really measurable in this goal.

APPLICATION

Try writing two SMART goals—something with a one-week time frame and something that you will accomplish over the next year. Make certain that you include all the appropriate elements—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Make an Action Plan

Like anything else, making a step-by-step action plan of how you will attain your goals is the best way to make certain you achieve them. It doesn't matter if it is a smaller goal with immediate results (e.g., finish all your homework due by Friday) or something bigger that takes several years to accomplish (graduate with my degree in the proper amount of time).

The planning techniques you use for time management and achieving goals can be similar. In fact, accurate goal setting is very much a part of time management if you treat the completion of each task as a goal.

What follows is an example of a simple action plan that lists the steps for writing a short paper. You can use something like this or modify it in a way that would better suit your own preferences.

Table 4.5

Action Plan		
Task	**Objective**	**When**
Choose topic.	Select something interesting.	Needs to be done by Monday!
Write outline, look for references.	Create structure of paper and outline each part.	Monday, 6:00 p.m.
Research references to support outline, look for good quotes.	Strengthen paper and resources.	Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.
Write paper introduction and first page draft.	Get main ideas and thesis statement down.	Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.
Write second page and closing draft.	Finish main content and tie it all together.	Thursday, 6:00 p.m.
Rewrite and polish final draft.	Clean up for grammar, writing style, and effective communication.	Friday, 5:00 p.m.

Another useful approach to goal setting is to create SMART goals and then write them down. For most people there is a higher level of commitment when we write something down. If you have your goals written out, you can refer to each component of the SMART acronym and make certain you are on track to achieve it.

Problem Solving: When Setbacks Happen

Even when you have clear goals and are motivated and focused to achieve them, problems sometimes happen. Accept that they *will* happen, since inevitably they do for everyone. The difference between those who succeed by solving the problem and moving on and those who get frustrated and give up is partly attitude and partly experience—and knowing how to cope when a problem occurs.

Lots of different kinds of setbacks may happen while you're in college—just as to everyone in life. Here are a few examples:

- A financial crisis
- An illness or injury
- A crisis involving family members or loved ones
- Stress related to frequently feeling you don't have enough time
- Stress related to relationship problems

Some things happen that we cannot prevent—such as some kinds of illness, losing one's job because of a business slowdown, or crises involving family members. But many other kinds of problems can be prevented or made less likely to occur. You can take steps to stay healthy. You can take control of your finances and avoid most financial problems common among college students. You can learn how to build successful social relationships and get along better with your instructors, with other students, and in

personal relationships. You can learn time management techniques to ensure you use your time effectively for studying. Most of the chapters in this book also provide study tips and guidelines to help you do well in your classes with effective reading, note-taking, test-taking, and writing skills for classes. *Preventing* the problems that typically keep college students from succeeding is much of what this book is all about.

Not all problems can be avoided. Illness or a financial problem can significantly set one back—especially when you're on a tight schedule and budget. Other problems, such as a social or relationship issue or an academic problem in a certain class, may be more complex and not easily prevented. What then?

First, work to resolve the immediate problem:

1. Stay motivated and focused. Don't let frustration, anxiety, or other negative emotions make the problem worse than it already is.
2. Analyze the problem to consider all possible solutions. An unexpected financial setback doesn't automatically mean you have to drop out of school—not when alternatives such as student loans, less expensive living arrangements, or other possible solutions may be available. Failing a midterm exam doesn't automatically mean you're going to fail the course—not when you make the effort to determine what went wrong, work with your instructor and others on an improved study plan, and use better strategies to prepare for the next test.
3. Seek help when you need to. None of us gets through life alone, and it's not a sign of weakness to see your academic advisor or a college counselor if you have a problem.
4. When you've developed a plan for resolving the problem, work to follow through. If it will take a while before the problem is completely solved, track your progress in smaller steps so that you can see you really are succeeding. Every day will move you one step closer to putting it behind you.

After you've solved a problem, be sure to avoid it again in the future:

1. Be honest with yourself: how did you contribute to the problem? Sometimes it's obvious: a student who drank heavily at a party the night before a big test failed the exam because he was so hung over he couldn't think straight. Sometimes the source of the problem is not as obvious but may become clearer the more you think about it. Another student did a lot of partying during the term but studied all day before the big test and was well rested and clearheaded at test time but still did poorly; he may not yet have learned good study skills. Another student has frequent colds and other mild illnesses that keep him from doing his best: how much better would he feel if he ate well, got plenty of exercise, and slept enough every night? If you don't honestly explore the factors that led to the problem, it's more likely to happen again.
2. Take responsibility for your life and your role in what happens to you. Earlier we talked about people with negative attitudes, who are always blaming others, fate, or "the system" for their problems. It's no coincidence that they keep on having problems. Unless you *want* to keep having problems, don't keep blaming others.
3. Taking responsibility doesn't mean being down on yourself. Failing at something doesn't mean *you* are a failure. We all fail at something, sometime. Adjust your attitude so you're ready to get back on track and feel happy that you'll never make that mistake again!
4. Make a plan. You might still have a problem on that next big test if you don't make an effective study plan and stick to it. You may need to change your behavior in some way, such as learning time management strategies. (Read on!)

Key Takeaways

- Goals should be realistic, specific, and time oriented, and you must be committed to them.
- Setting priorities helps keep you focused on your goals but doesn't determine how you use your time at all times.
- Attitude is often the major reason students succeed or fail in college. Everyone can work on developing a more positive, motivating attitude.
- Planning, the essence of time management, is necessary to stay focused and continue moving toward your goals.
- Networking with other students helps you stay motivated as well as making studying more effective.
- Since problems and setbacks are inevitable, knowing how to solve problems is important for reaching goals. With a good attitude, most common student problems can be prevented.

Stick with It!

As with anything else, the key to reaching goals is to keep at it, keep yourself motivated, and overcome any obstacles along the way. In the following graphic you will find seven methods that highly successful people use to accomplish this.



Figure 4.19: These seven ways to stay motivated are good suggestions from highly successful people. What other strategies would you suggest?

Activity 4.7: Goal setting

Goal Setting Exercise

Write a personal goal and an academic goal using the S.M.A.R.T. formula discussed in "Be S.M.A.R.T. about Your Goals" above.

Think about these questions:

- Is there a level of education you'd like to complete?
- Is there a particular role you'd like? Or an organization for whom you would like to work?

Now, list the objectives you need to meet to reach each goal.

- Specific courses you need to take?
- Networking and/or internship opportunities?

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4.8: Summary

This chapter began by pointing out the dangers of poor time management, both in cost and even the potential risk to graduation. After presenting why time management is important, sections of the text covered how time management for college can be different from what students may have experienced before. Following this, the chapter contained several sections on how to effectively manage time (including predicting time on task), how to use technology to your advantage, and how to prioritize tasks. Other topics included goal setting and motivation, some specific strategies for time and task management, and avoiding procrastination.

Career Connection

Rick says: I've wanted to work in radio since I was in high school and had great opportunities in college to learn at the campus station. I interned for a semester at a local Top 40 station and, after graduation, was offered a position as the producer of the station's morning show.

The only problem: I had to be at the radio station by 4:45 a.m. I couldn't do it. I tried everything—alarms on my phone, clock radio alarms, friends calling me. This is not a job you can be late for—dead air is a radio DJ's greatest nightmare. But no matter what I tried, I could not wake up on time. The third time I arrived late, the radio station let me go.

Reflection question: How might you have handled the situation differently? How might this aspiring radio DJ have managed his time differently to ensure he was not late for work?

For discussion: Is the Internet responsible for most of our wasted work time? Read through this article. What do you think?

Who Wastes Time(opens in new window) [openstax.org]

Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter, and consider one option you learned in this chapter that might change your answer to one of them.

1. I regularly procrastinate completing tasks that don't interest me or seem challenging.
2. I use specific time management strategies to complete tasks.
3. I find it difficult to prioritize tasks because I am not sure what is really important.
4. I am pleased with my ability to manage my time.

Where do you go from here?

Refining your time management skills based on an honest assessment is something that should never stop. The benefits of good time management skills are something that will apply to the rest of your life. What would you like to learn more about? Choose a topic from the list below, and create an annotated bibliography that would direct further research.

- Psychological reasons for procrastinating
- Technology and social media as distractions
- Additional time management strategies
- Time management strategies that successful people use

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Planning Your Academic Pathways

5.1: Prelude to Planning Your Academic Pathways
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
5.3: Getting the Right Stuff
5.4: Making a Plan
5.5: Managing Change and the Unexpected
5.6: Exploration of the Field
5.7: Skill Development
5.8: Job Seeking
5.9: The Power of Networking
5.10: Summary

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5.1: Prelude to Planning Your Academic Pathways

Learning Objectives

1. Evaluate academic and career goals to create a personalized degree path that aligns with professional aspirations in health careers or nursing.
2. Develop a comprehensive academic plan by selecting courses and opportunities that enhance skill development and career readiness.
3. Analyze strategies for managing change and unexpected challenges in academic and career planning, including adapting to new opportunities.
4. Apply networking skills to explore career opportunities, build professional relationships, and gain insights into the healthcare field.
5. Synthesize job-seeking strategies that include resume building, interview preparation, and leveraging career resources.



Figure 5.1: Credit: University of the Fraser Valley / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0)

Student Survey

How do you feel about your readiness to create an academic and life plan? These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As you are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed. Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning "least like me" and 4 meaning "most like me."

1. I have reflected on and can identify my personal values.
2. I have set both short- and long-term academic goals.
3. I am familiar with the requirements I must complete and options I must select to obtain a college degree.
4. I am familiar with the resources, tools, and individuals who can assist me in developing an effective plan for success.

You can also take the Chapter 5 survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

"I came into my university with little to no knowledge about how to decide a college major. I can now say with confidence that I have found the major for me! This was not an easy process though. It takes a lot of reflection to decide where you will focus your time and energy for your college career. The most important thing I had to consider was what major would provide me with learning outcomes that matter the most to me? I switched my major three or four times and each time I weighed the pros and cons of the major I was exiting and the one I was transitioning into. I decided to major in sociology and it has been the best decision of my academic career! I value social awareness and deep understandings of social phenomenon and sociology provided the course material necessary to place me on a path to begin learning about those topics. As a first-generation and

> low-income student navigating college pathways can be difficult. That is why it is so important to be open to change and set on learning what you want to learn how to get yourself to the next step!"
>
> **—Drew Carter**, Rice University

About This Chapter

Among the most celebrated differences between high school and college is the freedom that students look forward to when they complete their mandatory high school education and take up the voluntary pursuit of a college degree. Though not every college freshman comes fresh from high school, those who do might be looking forward to the freedom of moving away from home onto a campus or into an apartment. Others might be excited about the potential to sleep in on a Monday morning and take their classes in the afternoon. For others, balancing a class schedule with an already-busy life filled with work and other responsibilities may make college seem less like freedom and more like obligation. In either case, and however they might imagine their next experience to be, students can anticipate increased freedom of choice in college and the ability to begin to piece together how their values, interests, and developing knowledge and skills will unfold into a career that meets their goals and dreams.

In Chapter 4, Managing Your Time and Priorities with Goal Setting, we cover how goal setting and prioritizing help you plan and manage your time effectively. This chapter extends that discussion by recognizing that it can be challenging to stay on task and motivated if you don't see how those tasks fit into a larger plan. Even the freedom to choose can become overwhelming without a plan to guide those choices. The goal of this chapter is to help you develop the personal skills and identify the resources, tools, and support people to help you make sense of your choices and formulate a personal academic and career plan. We will also consider how to take those first steps toward making your plan a reality and what to do if or when you realize you're off track from where you had hoped to be.

By the time you complete this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Use your personal values to guide your decision-making, set short-term goals that build toward a long-term goal, and plan how you will track progress toward your goals.
- List the types of college certificates, degrees, special programs, and majors you can pursue, as well as general details about their related opportunities and requirements.
- Take advantage of resources to draft and track an academic plan.
- Recognize decision-making and planning as continuous processes, especially in response to unexpected change.

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5.2: Planning Your Degree Path

Questions to consider:

- What types of college degrees or certifications can I pursue?
- What is the difference between majors and minors?
- How do preprofessional programs differ from other majors?
- Do some majors have special requirements beyond regular coursework?

To set goals for your academic and career path, you must first have an understanding of the options available for you to pursue and the requirements you will need to meet. The next section provides an overview of academic programs and college degrees that are common among many colleges and universities in the United States. Please note that each institution will have its own specific options and requirements, so the intention of this section is both to help you understand your opportunities and to familiarize you with language that colleges typically use to describe these opportunities. After reviewing this section, you should be better able to formulate specific questions to ask at your school or be better prepared to navigate and search your own college's website.

Types of Degrees

Whereas in most states high school attendance through the 12th grade is mandatory, or *compulsory*, a college degree may be pursued voluntarily. There are fields that do not require a degree. Bookkeeping, computer repair, massage therapy, and childcare are all fields where certification programs—tracks to study a specific subject or career without need of a complete degree—may be enough.

However, many individuals will find that an associate's or bachelor's degree is a requirement to enter their desired career field. According to United States Census data published in 2017, more than one-third of the adult population in the country has completed at least a bachelor's degree, so this may be the degree that is most familiar to you.

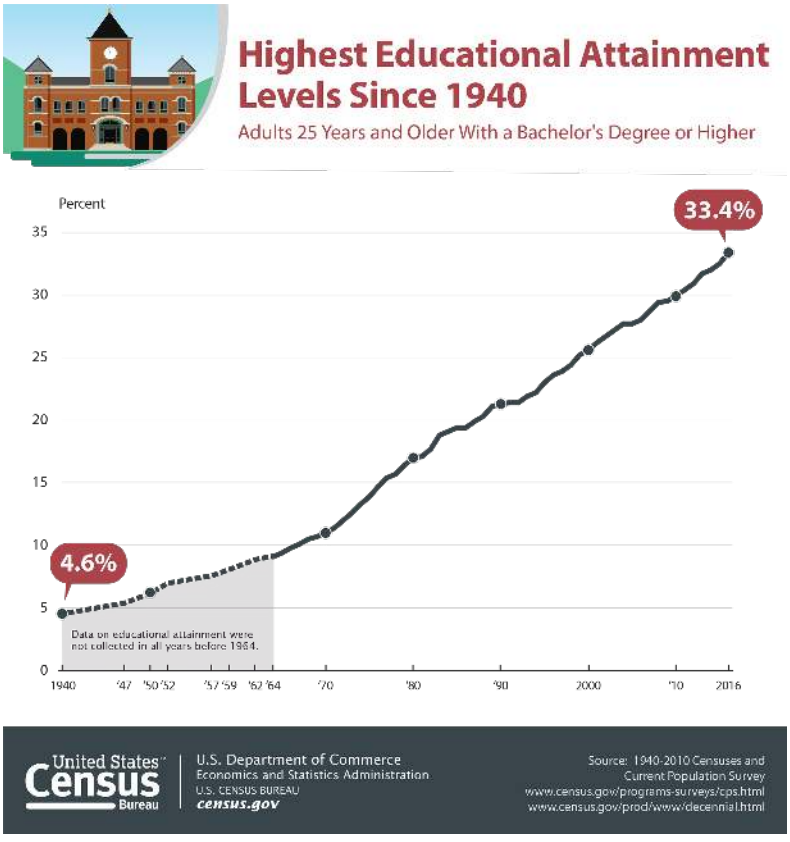


Figure 5.1: The number of American's receiving Bachelor's degrees has increased significantly. While not every job requires one, the level of overall education required for most careers continues to go up. (Credit: US Department of Commerce / Public Domain)

Not every job requires a bachelor's degree, and some require even higher degrees or additional specialized certifications. As you develop your academic plan, it is important to research your field of interest to see what requirements might be necessary or most

desirable.

Table 5.1 Example Jobs by Minimum Degree Qualification

Require Associate's Degrees	Require Bachelor's Degrees	Require Additional Certifications	Require Graduate Degrees
Radiology Technician	Nurse Manager	Public School Teacher	Lawyer
Dental Hygienist	Computer/Information Systems Manager	Accountant	College or University Professor
Nurse	Airline Pilot	Financial Advisor	Pharmacist
Graphic Designer	Electrical Engineer		Marriage and Family Therapist
Automotive Technician	Construction Manager		Occupational Therapist

To distinguish between the types of degrees, it is useful to understand that courses are often assigned a number of credits, sometimes called *semester hours* as well. Credits relate to the calculated hours during a course that a student spends interacting with the instructor and/or the course material through class time, laboratory time, online discussions, homework, etc. Courses at all degree levels are typically assigned a value of one to six credits, although students often need to complete a developmental education course or two, often in English or math. These requirements, which cost as much as typical college courses but do not grant college credit, are meant to provide some basic information students may have missed in high school but that will be necessary to keep up in college-level coursework.

The minimum or maximum number of credits required to graduate with different degrees varies by state or institution, but approximate minimum numbers of credits are explained below. Keep in mind that although a minimum number of credits must be completed to get a certain degree, total credits completed is not the only consideration for graduation—you must take your credits or courses in particular subjects indicated by your college.

To determine your best degree option, it might make sense to do some research to determine what kind of career you're most interested in pursuing. Visit your campus career center to meet with a counselor to guide you through this process. These services are free to students—similar services can be pricey once you've graduated, so take advantage. There are other tools online you can investigate.

GET CONNECTED

These free, online self-assessments help you narrow down your choices.

- MyPlan(opens in new window) identifies your motivations by having you rank different aspects of work, then creating a ranked list of different possible jobs.
- MAPP Test(opens in new window) helps you determine what you love to do and what you don't love to do and then creates a list of jobs that might be a good fit for you.
- The Career Cluster Interest Survey(opens in new window) is a quick tool to let you create career clusters based on personal qualities and school subjects and activities you especially enjoy.

Associate's Degrees

To enter an associate's degree program, students must have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Associate's degree programs may be intended to help students enter a technical career field, such as automotive technology, graphic design, or entry-level nursing in some states. Such technical programs may be considered an Associate of Applied Arts (AAA) or Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees, though there are other titles as well.

Other associate's degree programs are intended to prepare a student with the necessary coursework to transfer into a bachelor's degree program upon graduation. These transfer-focused programs usually require similar general education and foundational courses that a student would need in the first half of a bachelor's degree program. Transfer-focused associate's degrees may be called Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS), or other titles, depending on the focus of study.



Figure 5.2: Air traffic controllers are extremely important and well-paid jobs that typically require an associates degree. (Credit: Expert Infantry / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

An associate's degree is typically awarded when a student has completed a minimum of 60 credits, approximately 20 courses, meeting the requirements of a specific degree. Some technical associate's degrees, such as nursing, may require additional credits in order to meet requirements for special certifications. You may find that your college or university does not offer associate's degrees. Most associate's degrees are offered by community or junior colleges, or by career and technical colleges.

ACTIVITY

What to Ask

If you're planning your associate's degree, here are some specific questions you may want to research.

If you intend to enter a technical career that requires special certification:

- Does your college prepare you to take a certification exam, or will you be meeting those requirements through your courses?
- Does your college have any special internship or employment placement arrangements with employers to help you gain experience or get started in the field?

If you intend to transfer upon graduation:

- Is your college regionally accredited?
- Does your college have any special transfer agreements for guaranteed transfer of credits or perhaps for discounted tuition?
- Does your state have special transfer agreements or requirements that make it easier to transfer to colleges or universities within the same state?

Bachelor's Degrees

When someone generally mentions "a college degree," they are often referring to the bachelor's degree, or baccalaureate degree. Because it takes four years of full-time attendance to complete a bachelor's degree, this degree is also referred to as a "four-year degree." Similar to an associate's degree, to enter a bachelor's degree program a student must have completed a high school diploma or its equivalent. Both associate's degrees and bachelor's degrees are considered *undergraduate degrees*, thus students working toward these degrees are often called *undergraduates*. A student with an associate's degree may transfer that degree to meet some (usually half) of the requirements of a bachelor's degree; however, completion of an associate's degree is not necessary for entry into a bachelor's degree program.

A bachelor's degree is usually completed with a minimum of 120 credits, or approximately 40 courses. Some specialized degree programs may require more credits. (If an associate's degree has been transferred, the number of credits from that degree usually counts toward the 120 credits. For example, if an associate's degree was 60 credits, then a student must take 60 additional credits to achieve their bachelor's degree.)

Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BS), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), and Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) are the most popular degree titles at this level and differ primarily in their focus on exploring a broader range of subject areas, as with a

BA, versus focusing in more depth on a particular subject, as with a BS, BSN, or BFA. Regardless of whether a student is pursuing a BA, BS, BSN, or BFA, each of these programs requires a balance of credits or courses in different subject areas. In the United States, a bachelor's degree comprises courses from three categories: *general education* courses, *major* courses, and *electives*. A fourth category of courses would be those required for a minor, which we will discuss in more detail in the section on majors and minors.

General Education

General education, also called *core curriculum*, is a group of courses that are often set as requirements by your state or by your individual college. These courses provide you with a foundation of knowledge across a breadth of fields and are also intended to help you further develop college-level critical-thinking and problem-solving abilities. You may be able to select courses from a general education menu of courses available at your institution. More than half of your bachelor's degree program is likely made up of general education courses.

Table 5.2 General Education Categories. While your college may use different labels, general education courses often include a selection of courses from these categories.

English composition
Humanities courses that study our beliefs and the expression of our beliefs such as literature, philosophy, politics, art, or religious studies
Social science courses that study our behavior such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, or economics
Laboratory science courses such as biology, chemistry, physics, and environmental science
Mathematics
Technology or computer skills
Foreign language, diversity, or global studies courses that provide introduction to different cultures or global social issues and promote cultural awareness
College success or first-year experience courses that provide introduction to your specific institution, discuss college-level expectations and skills, and/or provide assistance with academic and career planning

Major Courses

Major courses are courses in your field of interest and provide you with the foundational knowledge required for further study in that field or with the skills necessary to enter your career. Some schools may refer to these as *career studies* courses. Major courses often have a series of *prerequisites*, or courses that must be taken in sequence prior to other courses, starting with an introductory course and progressing into more depth. Major courses usually make up about a fourth or more of a bachelor's degree (30 credits, or approximately 10 courses). A BS or BFA degree may require more major courses than a BA degree. Colleges and universities usually require students to select a major by the time they've completed 30 total credits.

Electives

Electives are free-choice courses. Though you may have a choice to select from a menu of options to meet general education and major requirements, electives are even less restricted. Some students may be able to take more electives than others due to their choice of major or if they are able to take courses that meet more than one requirement (for example, a sociology course may be both a major requirement and a general education social science course). Some colleges intentionally allow room for electives in a program to ensure that students, particularly those students who are undecided about their major, are able to explore different programs without exceeding the total number of credits required to graduate with a bachelor's degree. In other cases, students may have taken all of their major courses and fulfilled their general education requirements but still need additional credits to fulfill the minimum to graduate. The additional courses taken to meet the total credit requirement (if necessary) are considered electives.

Did you know?

Exploring the right nursing career path, whether through an RN with an associate degree or a BSN degree, involves assessing your long-term aspirations, financial considerations, and time constraints. When deliberating between these options, it's essential to evaluate how each choice aligns with your career goals and the opportunities you aim to pursue. Starting with an associate degree to become an RN can provide a quicker entry into the workforce and a stepping stone to begin your nursing career. It allows you to

gain valuable experience and potentially earn a decent income initially. However, if your ambitions include advanced nursing roles, specializations, or leadership positions, obtaining a BSN is often the preferred path due to the broader skill set and career advancement opportunities it offers. If immediate factors such as finances or time constraints are influencing your decision, beginning as an RN through an associate degree and later pursuing a BSN while working can be a practical approach. This strategy enables you to start your nursing career sooner while leaving the option open to further your education in the future. Considering your long-term career aspirations, such as becoming a nurse practitioner, nurse educator, or exploring various nursing specialties, a BSN would be advantageous. Furthermore, a BSN can enhance your competitiveness in the job market, opening doors to diverse nursing opportunities and increasing your earning potential over time. Ultimately, the decision between an RN with an associate degree and a BSN depends on your career goals, financial situation, and willingness to invest in your education. Evaluating these factors will help you determine the most suitable path to achieve your nursing career objectives. The licensure exam for a candidate who earned an associates degree in nursing is the same exam as a candidate with a Bachelors degree in Nursing. The primary difference is the long-term career goals after licensure.

Graduate Degrees

According to United States Census data published in 2018, 13.1 percent of the U.S. adult population have completed advanced degrees.[3] Whereas associate's and bachelor's degrees are considered undergraduate degrees and require high school graduation for entry, advanced degrees called graduate degrees require prior completion of a bachelor's degree. Some professions require graduate degrees as a minimum job qualification, such as pharmacists, lawyers, physical therapists, psychologists, and college professors. In other cases, students may be motivated to pursue a graduate degree to obtain a higher-level job or higher salary, or to be more competitive in their field. Some students are also interested in learning about some subject in greater depth than they did at the undergraduate level. Because graduate degrees do not include general education or free elective courses, they are very focused on career-specific knowledge and skills. Graduate degrees include master's, doctoral, and professional degrees. *Master's degrees* often require 30–60 credits and take one to two years of full-time attendance to complete. Some master's degrees, like those for counselors, require supervised job experience as a component of the degree and therefore require more credits.

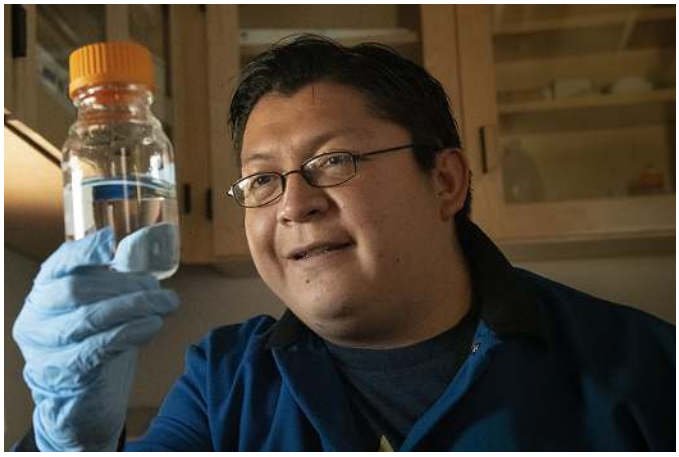


Figure 5.3: Pharmacists and related scientific or medical careers require master's degrees. (Credit: US Department of Agriculture / Flickr / Public Domain)

Doctorate and professional degrees are the highest level of advanced degrees. Approximately 3.5% of the U.S. adult population has completed a doctorate or professional degree. Very few careers require this level of education for entry, so fewer individuals pursue these degrees. Doctorates are offered in many subjects and primarily prepare students to become researchers in their field of study. This in-depth level of education often requires an additional 90–120 credits beyond the bachelor's degree, and may or may not require a master's degree prior to entry. (A master's degree as an entry requirement may reduce the number of credits required to complete the doctoral degree.)

Professional degrees are a specific type of doctorate-level degree that focus on skills to be applied in a *practical*, or hands-on, career rather than as a researcher. The most common professional degrees are Doctor of Medicine (MD) for aspiring medical doctors, Juris Doctor (JD) for aspiring lawyers, Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) for aspiring pharmacists, and Doctor of Education (EdD) for aspiring school and college or university administrators. If the career you are pursuing requires a graduate degree, you should keep this end goal in mind as you plan for the timeline and finances required to meet your goals. You may also want to inquire about special agreements that your college or university may have to expedite admission into or completion of graduate

degrees. For example, some universities offer *4+1 master's programs*, wherein students take both bachelor's and master's level courses during their last year as an undergraduate to accelerate the completion of both degrees.

Other Post-Baccalaureate Credentials

Post-baccalaureate refers to structured learning experiences pursued after a bachelor's degree is achieved. While some such activities are structured into graduate degrees as described in the sections above, other fields value continuing education credits, competency badges, and additional certifications. These post-baccalaureate credentials may need to be completed prior to entering a career field, may be obtained as an option to gain competitive advantage for hiring, or may be achieved during the course of an individual's career to stay current, maintain qualification, or be promoted. To determine if your field requires post-baccalaureate credentials, you may want to speak with an established professional in that career, review the qualifications section of related job descriptions, or visit with a career counselor on your campus. In a world that changes as rapidly as ours, engaging in lifelong learning is advisable regardless of the specific requirements of any particular career choice.



Figure 5.4: Some computing, networking, and database careers require post-baccalaureate certificates. (Credit: WOCinTechChat / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

ACTIVITY

Draft an Education Timeline

Use the Bureau of Labor Statistics online Occupational Outlook Handbook(opens in new window) to search for occupations that interest you, and note the level of education that these jobs require. Refer to your college's academic catalog (frequently located on the college's website) or curriculum maps to see the suggested sequence of courses for majors that relate to your career or careers of interest.

Select three interesting jobs and sketch a timeline for each, starting with your first semester of undergraduate study (whether you're getting an associate's or a bachelor's) and ending with the point when you will meet the minimum requirements to be qualified for that job. Keep in mind that the timeline of students attending full-time may differ from those who are attending part-time.

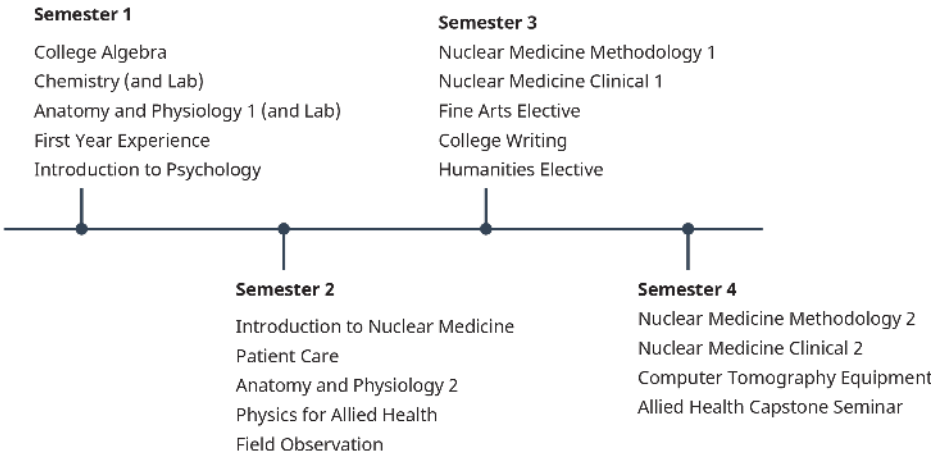


Figure 5.5: This example timeline for a nuclear medicine technician spaces different types of courses across four semesters. Note that some courses may be prerequisites for other courses and experiences. For example, Introduction to Nuclear Medicine, Patient Care, and a Field Observation may be required before students engage in the formal Clinical in Semester 3. When planning, look at each course description in the college catalog to understand its prerequisites.

Majors and Minors

One of the most common questions an undergraduate college student will be asked is "What's your major?" As we already noted, your major is only one part of your undergraduate (associate's or bachelor's) degree, but it is the part that most demonstrates your interests and possible future goals. At some point during your studies you will be asked to decide on, or *declare*, a major. You may also be able to select a *minor* or additional concentration. Whereas a major comprises approximately 10–12 courses of a bachelor's degree program and is required, a minor is usually 5–8 courses, is often optional, and may count toward or contribute to exceeding the total number of credits required for graduation. Rather than take elective courses, some students will select courses that meet the requirements for a minor. When selecting a major and possibly a minor, you'll want to consider how the knowledge and skills you gain through those fields of study prepare you for a particular career. Majors and minors can be complementary. For example, a major in business might be well-matched with a minor in a foreign language, thus allowing the student to pursue a career in business with a company that hires bilingual employees. It is important to research careers of interest to you when selecting your major and/or minor to determine what will best help you to meet your goals.



Figure 5.6: Many majors, such nursing, allied health, and emergency medical technician, may include simulations and other activities to expose students to the real-world activities of their field. (Credit: COD Newsroom / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Preprofessional Programs

Some undergraduate degrees are specifically designed to prepare students to later pursue professional degrees (such as the MD or PharmD) at the graduate level. Such programs are called *preprofessional programs*, *preprofessional majors*, or *preprofessional tracks*. The most common preprofessional programs are premed, prelaw, and prepharmacy, but you may see other offerings.

Although some preprofessional programs are structured as majors that you can declare, many preprofessional programs are a sequence of recommended courses and activities that a student can follow alongside a related major. While following a preprofessional program may not guarantee your admittance to a professional program, it does increase the likelihood of acceptance to and preparation for a graduate professional program.

Consider Loretta's story as an example of how a student might be on a preprofessional track. Loretta has decided that she would like to become a medical doctor. She has declared biology as her major and is taking the courses required to graduate with a bachelor of science degree in biology. Her university does not have a premed major, but it does have a premed track. She informs her academic advisor of her career goals, and her advisor provides her information about the premed track. The premed track includes a list of courses that students should take to prepare for the medical school entrance exams, called MCATs. Some of these courses are biology courses that overlap with Loretta's biology major, while others are higher-level chemistry courses that are not required for her major. She can take these chemistry courses, and any other premed-track courses, as her elective courses. The premed track at Loretta's university includes opportunities to attend MCAT study workshops and premed student club meetings. It also provides recommendations for summer volunteering and internships that will strengthen Loretta's resume and application to medical school following the completion of her bachelor's degree.

Special Requirements of Majors

While preprofessional programs prepare students for entrance into graduate professional degree programs, some undergraduate majors involve special requirements beyond the usual courses and classroom experience to prepare students for entrance to their career. Such requirements provide students practical experience or prerequisites for licensure necessary for a particular job. When requirements are major-specific, it is often because the requirement is state-mandated for that job. Majors that often include state-mandated special requirements are education, social work, and nursing. Some colleges and universities may require all students to participate in additional experiences beyond their regular coursework. You will want to ask your college about details specific to your major or institution. In this section we will generally discuss four such special requirements and experiences: fieldwork and internships, clinicals, student teaching, and service learning.

Fieldwork and Internships

Fieldwork and internships may also be referred to as *practicums* and field experience. These requirements provide hands-on work experience in a career, or *field*. When fieldwork or internships are required for your major, such as with a social work major, it is often listed as a course requirement among your major requirements. In other words, you usually receive credits for your fieldwork as you would for a lab or lecture course. Your fieldwork instructor will likely ask you to reflect on and report on your experiences. They will likely confer with a supervisor at your *fieldwork site*, the place where you are working, to help assess your hands-on learning. Fieldwork and internships provide students with opportunities to practice the skills they've learned in the classroom while also introducing them to the values and culture of the organizations and communities in which they hope to be employed. It is important to note that fieldwork and internship experiences are often available to students even if they are not required for their major. You may want to inquire with your academic advisors, faculty, or career services office to determine what opportunities might be available for you to gain this type of experience in your field of interest.

Clinicals

Clinicals are a type of fieldwork specifically required of nursing students. Clinicals may take place in hospitals, nursing homes, or mental health facilities. They provide nursing students who are nearing the end of their degree programs with the opportunity to practice nursing skills that cannot be learned in a regular classroom. During clinicals, students will interact with real patients to conduct physical examinations, draw blood, administer medicine, and provide other care as necessary. Because of the risk to patients, students participating in clinicals are more closely supervised by experienced professionals than those in other types of fieldwork experiences. Thus, clinicals function very much like a real-world classroom and progress to more independent work through the semester. Before undertaking clinicals, nursing students will need to complete certain coursework and pass a physical examination and background check. Because clinicals are often much longer than a class meeting, students will need to work with staff from the program to plan their schedule. It may not be feasible to work at another job while completing clinicals, so if you must work while you're in college, it's important to discuss this with nursing staff or academic advisors and to plan ahead.

Student Teaching

Student teaching is a specific type of fieldwork undertaken by students who plan to teach at the preschool, elementary, or middle and high school levels. Education students are often required to complete a student teaching experience in order to obtain a

teaching license in their state. Students must often complete core education coursework prior to student teaching and must complete a background check prior to placement in a school setting. During their student teaching experience, students are usually paired one-on-one with an experienced teacher and have the opportunity to observe that teacher, get to know the students, understand the classroom culture, and participate in lessons as a teaching assistant as needed or appropriate. Much like nursing clinicals, this highly supervised fieldwork experience usually progresses to more independent work when the student teacher is asked to deliver and reflect on a lesson plan of their own design. Keep in mind as you plan for student teaching that unlike other fieldwork experiences, student teaching is limited to fall or spring semesters and cannot be completed in the summer because most schools are closed during the summer terms. Also, it may not be feasible to work at another job while completing your student teaching experience, so if you must work while you're in college, it's important to discuss this with your program staff or academic advisors and to plan ahead.



Figure 5.6: Student teaching is an extremely important aspect of becoming a K-12 educator. The experience helps future teachers practice their skills and understand the complexity of working in the classroom. (Credit: seansinnit / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Service Learning

While service learning may not be required of a specific major, you may see this special requirement for a course or as a general graduation requirement for your college or university. It's also an excellent opportunity to try out something that interests you, something that could lead to or be part of your eventual career.

Service learning is very much like volunteering or community service. The purpose of service learning is to interact with and meet the needs of your local community. Service learning does differ from volunteering in that it is more structured to meet specific learning goals. For example, if you were engaging in service learning for an environmental science course, your activities would likely be focused on local environmental issues. Or, if you were engaging in service learning for a sociology course, you would likely be working with local community groups or organizations not only to assist these organizations, but also to observe how groups interact. Like fieldwork, service learning provides you an opportunity to observe and apply concepts learned in the classroom in a real-world setting. Students are often asked to reflect on their service learning activities in the context of what they've been learning in class, so if you're engaged in service learning, be thinking about how the activities you do relate to what you've learned and know.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. Does your major have any special requirements that must be completed outside of the classroom?
    a. Fieldwork, internships, and/or student teaching
    b. Clinicals
    c. Other (write in)
    d. None
2. While in college, which of the following do you think you are most likely to do?
    a. Internship
    b. Part-time job
    c. Full-time job

d. Study Abroad

3. What has influenced your academic and career plan the most? (rank order)
    a. The advice of friends and/or family
    b. The practical, hands-on experiences I've had outside of the classroom
    c. The knowledge and skills I've learned in class
    d. The advice I've gotten from mentors, advisors, or college faculty

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say(opens in new window) surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

Does your major have any special requirements that must be completed outside of the classroom?

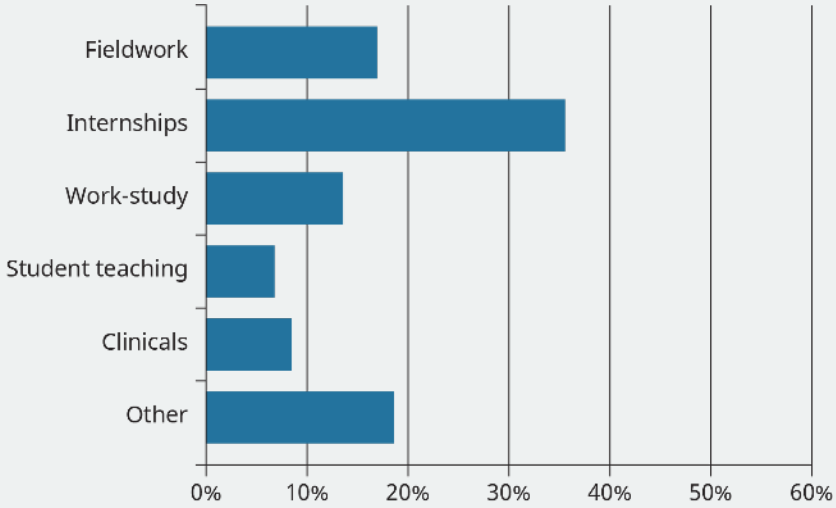


Figure 5.7

While in college, which of the following do you think you are most likely to do?

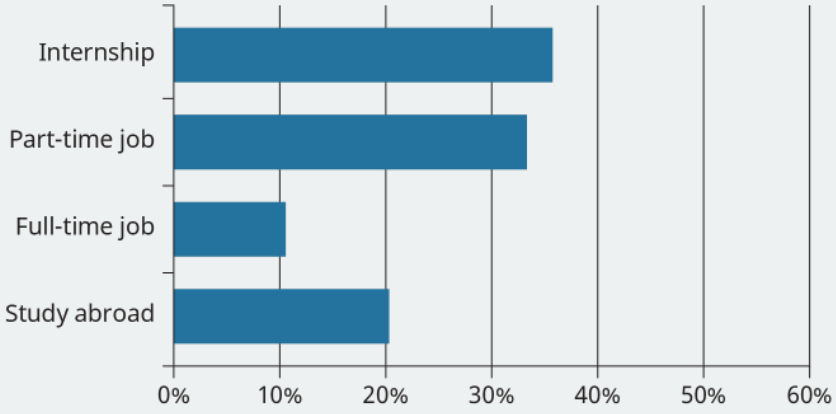


Figure 5.8

What has influenced your academic and career plan the most?

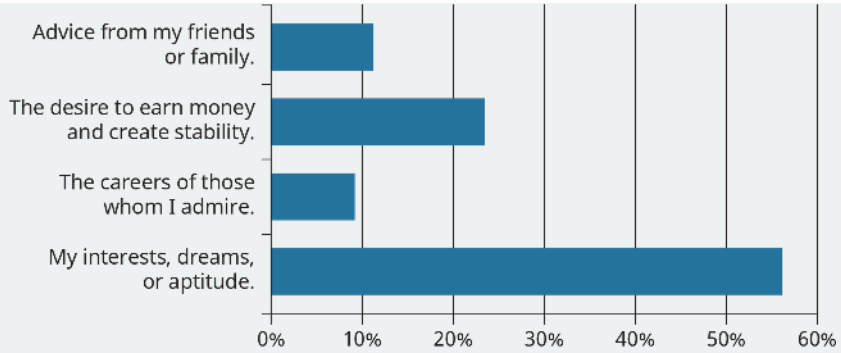


Figure 5.9

Footnotes

- 2 Minimum degree qualifications may vary by state.
- 3 United States Census Bureau. (2019, February 21). Number of People with Master's and Doctoral Degrees Doubles Since 2000. Retrieved from: Census.gov [www.census.gov]

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5.3: Getting the Right Stuff

What do you need to launch a good career? Employers will look at your education, skills, and experience. Making sure you have the "right stuff" in these three areas is what you should focus on in your college experience.

The Transfer Ticket

Are you in a two-year program or community college? Perhaps you decided to attend your college to save some money or to be able to explore a career before committing to a four-year program. Now you may find that a bachelor's degree is worth pursuing because it appears to be a requirement for the kind of career you want or because you will be able to boost your income opportunities. If you are thinking about transferring to a four-year program, be sure to follow these steps:

1. Find out about the transfer program at your college. Most two-year colleges have a program designed to make sure you have the right kind of general education courses, electives, and courses related to your major so that you can transfer seamlessly into a junior year at a four-year institution.
2. Make sure your credits are transferable. Each four-year college or university has its own policies about what kind of credits it accepts. If you are considering one or two particular four-year colleges, find out about their transfer policies as you lay out your plan of studies. These policies are typically described in the college catalogs. Read them carefully to ensure you can transfer most if not all of your credits.
3. Talk to your advisor. Now. If you haven't met with your advisor to discuss your ideas about transferring, do so soon. Your advisor will be a great help in formulating a plan of studies that meets your requirements for your associate's degree and maximizes your transferable credits.
4. Does your college have articulation agreements? These agreements between your college and four-year institutions define specific requirements for transferring and make it easier for you to transfer from your college to the bachelor's program in a four-year school.

If you are in a four-year college already but think your career objectives might be better filled in a program at another college, you should also go through steps two and three as soon as possible. It can save you a great deal of time, money, and heartbreak.

Skilled Labor

The second requirement for employment is skills. Many of the skills you will need are career specific: we call those work-based skills. These include knowing how to use equipment that is specific to your career and mastering processes that are used in your field. While some of these skills are learned and perfected on the job, you may be in a vocational track program (such as for homeland security officers, nurses aides, or paralegals) where you are learning your work-based skills.

These are not the only skills you will need to be successful. The second set of skills you must have are called transferable skills because they can be used in almost all occupations. These include thinking skills, communication skills, listening skills—in fact, most of the skills for college success we have been stressing throughout this book are transferable skills because they are also key to success in life. This skill set is very broad, and your extent of mastery will vary from skill to skill; therefore, you should identify those skills that are most important to your career objective and develop and master them. Review your occupation profile on O*Net (ONet Online(opens in new window) [online.onetcenter.org]) to determine which skills you need to prove to potential employers you have mastered.

Exercise 3: Transferable Skills Inventory

In the list of forty transferable skills that follows, *underline* five skills you believe you have mastered and then describe specific ways in which you have used each skill successfully. Then *circle* five skills you think are important to your career that you have not mastered yet. Describe specific steps you plan to take to master those skills.

Transferable Skills Inventory

Active listening	Decision making	Negotiating	Researching
Active learning	Editing	Observing	Selling
Analyzing	Evaluating	Organizing	Speaking a second language
Budgeting	Forecasting	Perceiving Feelings	Supervising

Active listening	Decision making	Negotiating	Researching
Coaching	Goal setting	Persuading	Teaching
Communicating	Handling a crisis	Planning	Teamwork
Consulting	Handling details	Problem solving	Time management
Creative thinking	Manipulating numbers	Public speaking	Training
Critical thinking	Mentoring	Reading	Visualizing
Customer service	Motivating	Reporting	Writing

Skills

Skills I have mastered	Examples of how I used them

Skills Mastery

Skills I still need to master	How I will master them

Going over the list in Exercise 3, you will find that you have at least some experience in many of them, but you probably haven't thought that much about them because you use them in so many ways that you take them for granted. It is important to think about all your activities and consider the skills you have applied successfully; your transferable skills inventory is larger than you may think. For example, if you volunteer as a big brother or big sister, you have skills in active listening, mentoring, time management, and probably coaching. If you have written a college paper, you have skills in visualizing, researching, communicating, and writing.

Be aware of the ways you develop and master transferable skills. Keep a list of them, and update it every month or two. That will be a valuable tool for you as you work with your career development and ultimately with job applications.

Are You Ready for a Test Drive?

Are you frustrated by the fact that even entry-level jobs require some experience? Experience is the third set of qualifications employers look for, and it's the one that often stumps students. Relevant experience is not only important as a job qualification; it can also provide you with a means to explore or test out occupational options and build a contact list that will be valuable when networking for your career.

But how can you gain relevant experience without experience to begin with? You should consider three options: volunteering, internships, and part-time employment.

Volunteering is especially good for students looking to work in social and artistic occupations, but students looking for work in other occupation types should not shy away from this option. You can master many transferable skills through volunteering! Certainly it is easy to understand that if you want to be in an artistic field, volunteering at a museum or performance center can provide you with relevant experience. But what if you want to work in an engineering field? Volunteering for an organization promoting green energy would be helpful. Looking for a career in homeland security? Do volunteer work with the Red Cross or the Coast Guard Auxiliary. With a little brainstorming and an understanding of your career field, you should be able to come up with relevant volunteer experiences for just about any career.

Internships focus on gaining practical experience related to a course or program of study. Interns work for an organization or company for a reduced wage or stipend or volunteer in exchange for practical experience. A successful internship program should create a win-win situation: the intern should add value to the company's efforts, and the company should provide a structured program in which the student can learn or practice work-related skills. Internships are typically held during summers or school vacation periods, though on occasion they can be scheduled for a set block of time each week during the course of a regular school term.

Once you secure an internship (usually through a normal job application process aided by a faculty member or the career guidance or placement office), it is important to have a written agreement with the employer in which the following is stated:

1. The learning objective for the internship
2. The time commitment you will invest (including work hours)
3. The work the company expects you to do
4. The work your supervisor will do for the college and for the student (internship progress reports, evaluations, etc.)

This written agreement may seem like overkill, but it is critical to ensure that the internship experience doesn't degrade into unsatisfying tasks such as photocopying and filing.

Remember that a key objective of your internship is to develop relationships you can use for mentoring and networking during your career. Befriend people, ask questions, go the extra mile in terms of what is expected of you, and generally participate in the enterprise. The extra effort will pay dividends in the future.

Part-time employment may be an option if your study schedule provides enough free time. If so, be sure to investigate opportunities in your field of study. Ask your instructors and the career guidance or placement office to help you generate job leads, even if they are not specifically in the area you want to be working in. It is valuable and relevant to hold a job designing Web sites for an advertising agency, for example, if your specific job objective is to produce event marketing. The understanding of how an advertising agency works and the contacts you make will make the experience worthwhile.

If you are lucky enough to have a job in your field of study already and are using your college experience to enhance your career opportunities, be sure to link what you are learning to what you do on the job—and what you do on the job to what you are learning. Ask your supervisor and employer about ideas you have picked up in class, and ask your instructors about the practices you apply at work. This cross-linking will make you a much stronger candidate for future opportunities and a much better student in the short term.

Key Takeaways

- Employers look at candidates who have the right education, the right skills, and the right experience.
- Progress in many career opportunities is enhanced by more advanced education; you should work, however, to make sure the education you are already getting counts.
- Be sure you can identify and show mastery in transferable skills as well as work-related skills.
- Experience through volunteering, internships, and part-time jobs will illustrate to potential employers that you can work in your chosen field, but it is also instrumental to help create a network of colleagues to enhance your career development.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Read the famous "fence whitewashing" story in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Tom Sawyer Fence(opens in new window) [www.inspirational-short-stories.com]). What transferable skills does Tom demonstrate? What work-related skills does he demonstrate?

   _____

   _____

_____

2. Why is having a written internship agreement important?

_____

_____

_____

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5.4: Making a Plan

Questions to consider:

- What resources are available to help me understand my degree program requirements?
- Who can assist me in making a plan?
- What tools are available to help me develop and track the progress of my plan?
- Is there anything else I can do now to plan for after I graduate?

As previously noted, most associate's degrees require a minimum of 60 credit hours for completion, and bachelor's degrees minimally require a total of 120 credits. Some individuals refer to these degrees as "two-year" and "four-year" degrees, respectively. To complete a 60-credit associate's degree in two years, you would need to take 15 credits (about five classes) in the fall and spring semesters during both years of your attendance. To complete a 120-credit bachelor's degree in four years, you would need to take 15 credits in the fall and spring semesters each of your four years. It is therefore entirely possible to complete these degrees in two and four years, particularly if you use the three primary resources that colleges provide to help you with your planning: curriculum maps, academic advisors, and interactive planning technology.

Curriculum Maps

Many colleges and universities will provide *curriculum maps*, or course checklists to illustrate the sequence of courses necessary to follow this timeline. These timelines often assume that you are ready to take college-level math and English courses and that you will be attending college as a full-time student. If placement tests demonstrate a need for prerequisite math and English coursework to get you up to speed, your timeline will likely be longer.

Many students attend college part-time, often because of family or work responsibilities. This will obviously have an impact on your completion timeline as well. Programs that have special requirements may also require that you plan for additional time. For example, it may be the case that you cannot take other courses while completing clinicals or student teaching, so you will need to plan accordingly. Alternatively, you may be able to speed up, or *accelerate*, your timeline to degree by taking courses during summer or winter terms. Or if you take fewer than 15 credits per semester, you can take courses during the summer terms to "make up" those credits and stay on track toward those two- or four-year graduation goals.[4]

Academic Advisors

All colleges and universities provide resources such as a curriculum map to assist you with your academic planning. Academic advisors may also be called success coaches, mentors, preceptors, or counselors. They may be staff members, or faculty may provide advisement as an additional role to their teaching responsibilities. Regardless of what your college calls this role, academic advisors are individuals who are able to assist you in navigating the puzzle of your academic plan and piecing your courses and requirements together with your other life obligations to help you meet your goals.

An advisor is an expert on college and major requirements and policies, while you are the expert on your life circumstances and your ability to manage your study time and workload. It is also an advisor's responsibility to understand the details of your degree requirements. This person can teach you how to best utilize college resources to make decisions about your academic and career path. An advisor can help you connect with other college staff and faculty who might be integral to supporting your success. Together with your advisor, you can create a semester-by-semester plan for the courses you will take and the special requirements you will meet. Refer to the end of this section for a detailed planning template that you could use in this process. Even if your college does not require advising, it is wise to meet with your advisor every semester to both check your progress and learn about new opportunities that might lend you competitive advantage in entering your career.

Common Functions of Academic Advisors

Academic advisors can help you:

- Set educational and career goals
- Select a major and/or minor
- Understand the requirements of your degree
- Navigate the online tools that track the progress of your degree
- Calculate your GPA and understand how certain choices may impact your GPA
- Discuss your academic progress from semester to semester

- Assist with time management strategies
- Connect with other support and resources at the college such as counseling, tutoring, and career services
- Navigate institutional policies such as grade appeals, admission to special programs, and other concerns
- Strategize how to make important contacts with faculty or other college administrators and staff as necessary (such as discussing how to construct professional emails)
- Discuss transfer options, if applicable
- Prepare for graduate school applications

Interactive Planning Technology

In addition to a curriculum map and an advisor, colleges and universities usually have technological tools that can assist you in your academic planning. Degree audit reporting systems, for example, are programmed to align with degree requirements and can track individual student progress toward completion. They function like an interactive checklist of courses and special requirements. Student planning systems often allow students to plan multiple semesters online, to register for planned courses, and to track the progress of their plan. Though friends and family are well-intentioned in providing students with planning advice and can provide important points for students to consider, sometimes new students make the mistake of following advice without consulting their college's planning resources. It's important to bring all of these resources together as you craft your individual plan.

Despite all of the resources and planning assistance that is available to you, creating an individual plan can still be a daunting task. Making decisions about which major to pursue, when to take certain courses, and whether to work while attending school may all have an impact on your success, and it is tough to anticipate what to expect when you're new to college. Taking the time to create a plan and to revise it when necessary is essential to making well-informed, mindful decisions. Spur-of-the-moment decisions that are not well-informed can have lasting consequences to your progress.

The key to making a mindful decision is to first be as informed as possible about your options. Make certain that you have read the relevant resources and discussed the possibilities with experts at your college. Then you'll want to weigh your options against your values and goals. You might ask: Which option best fits my values and priorities? What path will help me meet my goals in the timeframe I desire? What will be the impact of my decision on myself or on others? Being well-informed, having a clear sense of purpose, and taking the necessary time to make a thoughtful decision will help to remove the anxiety associated with making the "right" decision, and help you make the best decision for you.

APPLICATION

Academic Planning Readiness Checklist: Review the checklist below and mark each item if you agree. For those you cannot yet answer, consult your instructor, academic advisor, or college website to locate these important details.

1. I know the total number of credits required to graduate from my program.
2. I know the difference between general education, major, and elective classes.
3. I know whether I am required to take preparatory or developmental courses in math and English, and whether these courses will count among my total credits toward my degree.
4. I am aware of the special requirements of my major (if any) and the prerequisites I must complete.
5. I am aware of the minimum entry requirements for my desired career field and know whether I should be preparing to plan for a graduate degree as well.

ACTIVITY

Draft an Academic Plan

With the assistance of your instructor or academic advisor, find the curriculum map for your major or for an example major that you might be considering if you're still exploring. Use the information in the curriculum map to draft an academic plan for your undergraduate degree. This plan should include both a semester-by-semester sequence of courses and a list of related activities to help you progress toward your career or graduate school goals. Keep in mind any personal circumstances that may impact your plan (such as whether you'll need to attend part-time or full-time). You may use the grid provided or utilize your college's student planning software if available. For your reference, you will find the start of an example grid from a dedicated environmental science student below.

Note: If your college offers courses using the quarter system rather than semesters, you may need to draft your own grid. You can find example planning grids for quarter systems online. This Draft an Academic Plan activity provides you an opportunity to consider and plan experiences alongside your coursework that could help you better prepare to meet your career goals.

Example Semester # 1 : Fall 20 __ __	**Example Semester # 2 :** Spring 20 __ __
List your planned courses here: English Composition 1 (3 credits) General Biology 1 + lab (4 credits) Environmental Science (4 credits) History of Western Civilization (3 credits) First Year Success Seminar (2 credits) Total semester credits – 16	***List your planned courses here:*** English Composition 2 (3 credits) General Biology 2 + lab (4 credits) Principles of Sustainability (3 credits) Pre-Calculus Mathematics (4 credits) Total semester credits – 14 Total first year credits planned – 30
List your planned activities here: • Meet with my advisor to review my plan. • Attend an environmental science student club meeting.	***List your planned activities here:*** • Visit with Career Services Office early to ask about summer volunteering related to my major
Example Summer Plans: ***List your planned courses here:*** None this summer ***List your planned activities here:*** Volunteer for local road or park clean-up days or start one if none exist in my area, follow and read that blog I found about becoming an environmental policy advocate, and research possible internships for my 2nd or 3rd year.	

Figure 5.10: This sample of an academic plan was completed with the help of a college advisor. Below you'll find a blank template that you can use (or adapt) for your own plan.

Example Semester # 1 :	Example Semester # 2 :
List your planned courses here: *List your planned activities here:*	*List your planned courses here:* *List your planned activities here:*
Example Summer Plans: *List your planned courses here:* *List your planned activities here:*	
Example Semester # 1 :	**Example Semester # 2 :**
List your planned courses here: *List your planned activities here:*	*List your planned courses here:* *List your planned activities here:*
Example Summer Plans: *List your planned courses here:* *List your planned activities here:*	

Figure 5.11: This two-year version of the planning document may need to be adopted for colleges operating on a quarter, trimester, or other schedule. (Downloadable versions are available at OpenStax.org.)

Planning for After Graduation

Students usually pursue a college degree with some additional end goal in mind, whether that goal is further study as a graduate student or entry into a desired career. As you develop a plan for your undergraduate studies, you can also plan pursuits outside of the classroom to prepare for these future goals. To begin planning for life after graduation, consider the experiences that would best complement your coursework. If you are not required to participate in fieldwork or internships, perhaps you could plan a summer internship to help you gain workplace experience and learn more about what you do and do not want to do. It is also valuable to gain leadership experience through participation in student clubs and organizations. Plan to find a club that matches your interests. Set a goal to attend regularly your first year and then run for a club leadership role in your second or third year.



Figure 5.12: Graduation is a significant milestone, both for students and often for their families, friends, and support networks. A good academic plan will help you reach this important step, and then go far beyond it. (Credit: COD Newsroom / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Even before you begin an internship or career search in earnest, sites like Internships.com can be helpful simply to explore the possibilities and get ideas. Often, a dedicated career-oriented website will provide more filtered and specific information than a general search engine.

Consult with services or offices at your college that can assist with you with making your future plans and incorporating experiences into your academic plan that will prepare you to enter your career. These services are often accessible both to current students as well as to graduates, providing assistance with résumé writing and job searches. Chapter 12: Planning for Your Future provides further insight into career planning and college career services.

Alumni associations help graduates connect with other former students of all ages so that they can begin to build and strengthen their professional networks, leading to further job opportunities. And don't discount the role of your professors in helping you build your network as well! In addition to providing valuable letters of recommendation for both graduate school and job applications, professors often have well-established professional networks and may be willing to help connect dedicated students with additional opportunities. You can plan these experiences to be distributed across your academic semesters and during the summer.

Table 5.3 Prepare for Your Career While in College

Exploring Options
• Locate and visit your career services office on campus to discover what services are available. • Take a career assessment that matches your values, interests, and skills to career options. • Join a student organization. • Seek volunteer opportunities to gain additional skills. • Research trends and salary expectations for careers of interest.
Gain Experience
• Develop relationships with faculty by visiting during office hours and speaking to them after class. • Network with employers by attending career fairs. • Pursue an internship or part-time employment that is relevant to your field of interest. • Take a leadership role on campus or in a student organization. • Practice for interviews with friends or career counselors.
Document Experiences
• Begin your resume and continuously update it to include new experiences. • Create a LinkedIn profile. • Review and monitor your social media accounts through the lens of a potential employer. • Solidify relationships with faculty and ask about letters of recommendation. • Draft additional job application materials, such as cover letters. • Seek assistance from career counselors on campus in reviewing your resumes/cover letters/portfolios.

Footnotes

- 4 Brookdale Community College Office of Career and Leadership Development. (2016). *Your Career Checklist*. Retrieved from: Brookdale Community College [www.brookdalecc.edu]

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5.5: Managing Change and the Unexpected

Questions to consider:

- What happens if things don't go according to plan?
- How can I make adjustments to my plan if things change?
- Is it OK to ask for planning help, and from whom?

Though we've discussed planning in a great degree of detail, the good news is that you don't have to have it all figured out in order to be successful. Recall the upside-down puzzle analogy from earlier in this chapter. You can still put a puzzle together picture-side down by fitting together the pieces with trial and error. Similarly, you can absolutely be successful in your academic and career life even if you don't have it all figured out. It will be especially important to keep this in mind as circumstances change or things don't go according to your original plan.

Consider Elena's and Ray's stories as examples.

Elena had always intended to go to college. It was her goal to become a nurse like her grandmother. She decided that the best path would be to complete her BSN degree at a state university nearby. She researched the program, planned her bachelor's degree semester by semester, and was very excited to work with real patients while completing her clinicals! During her second year, Elena's grandmother fell ill and needed more regular care. Elena made the difficult decision to stop-out of her program to help care for her grandmother. She spoke with her academic advisor, who told her about the policies for readmission. Because the nursing program was limited to a certain number of students, it would be challenging to reenter her program whenever she was ready to return.

At first Elena felt discouraged, but then her advisor assisted her in mapping a plan to take some prerequisite courses part-time at a community college near her home while she cared for her grandmother. She could then transfer those credits back to the university so they would count toward her degree there, or she could finish an associate's degree and then return to a bachelor's degree program whenever she was able. Although things weren't following her original plans, she would be able to continue working toward her goals while also tending to one of her greatest values—her family. Elena's plans changed, but her values and long-term goals didn't have to change.

Ray's parents wanted him to go to college to increase his chances of getting a good job. He wasn't really sure what he wanted to study, so his dad suggested he choose business. During Ray's first semester he took an introduction to business course that was required of all business majors in their first semester. He did well in the course, but it wasn't his favorite topic. Conversely, he loved the history course on early Western civilization that he was taking to meet a general education requirement. He wasn't necessarily ready to change his major from business to history, so he met with an academic advisor to see if there were any classes he could take during his second semester that would count toward either major. Ray was still exploring and had yet to set specific goals. But Ray did know that he wanted to finish college within a reasonable amount of time, so he made flexible plans that would allow him to change his mind and change his major if necessary.

Expecting Change

After you've devoted time to planning, it can be frustrating when circumstances unexpectedly change. Change can be the result of internal or external factors. Internal factors are those that you have control over. They may include indecision, or changing your mind about a situation after receiving new information or recognizing that something is not a good fit for your values and goals. Though change resulting from internal factors can be stressful, it is often easier to accept and to navigate because you know why the change must occur. You can plan for a change and make even better decisions for your path when the reason for change is, simply put—you! Ray's story demonstrates how internal factors contribute to his need or desire to change plans.

External factors that necessitate change are often harder to plan for and accept. Some external factors are very personal. These may include financial concerns, your health or the health of a loved one, or other family circumstances, such as in Elena's example. Other external factors may be more related to the requirements of a major or college. For example, perhaps you are not accepted into the college or degree program that you had always hoped to attend or study. Or you may not perform well enough in a class to continue your studies without repeating that course during a semester when you had originally planned to move on to other courses. Change caused by external factors can be frustrating. Because external factors are often unexpected, when you encounter them you'll often have to spend more time changing your plans or even revising your goals before you'll feel as though you're back on track.

Managing Change

It is important to recognize that change, whether internal or external, is inevitable. You can probably think of an example of a time when you had to change your plans due to unforeseen circumstances. Perhaps it's a situation as simple as canceling a date with friends because of an obligation to babysit a sibling. Even though this simple example would not have had long-term consequences, you can probably recall a feeling of disappointment. It's okay to feel disappointed; however, you'll also want to recognize that you can manage your response to changing circumstances. You can ask yourself the following questions:

- What can I control in this situation?
- Do I need to reconsider my values?
- Do I need to reconsider my goals?
- Do I need to change my plans as a result of this new information or these new circumstances?
- What resources, tools, or people are available to assist me in revising my plans?

When encountering change, it helps to remember that decision-making and planning are continuous processes. In other words, active individuals are always engaged in decision-making, setting new plans, and revising old plans. This continuous process is not always the result of major life-changing circumstances either. Oftentimes, we need to make changes simply because we've learned some new information that causes a shift in our plans. Planning, like learning, is an ongoing lifetime process.

Asking for Help

> **"Be strong enough to stand alone, be yourself enough to stand apart, but be wise enough to stand together when the time comes."**
>
> *— Mark Amend, American Author*



Figure 5.13: Your instructors are an important not only in your courses, but as potential advisors and mentors. (Credit: Rural Institute / Flickr / Public Domain)

Throughout this chapter we have made mention of individuals who can help you plan your path, but noted that your path is ultimately your own. Some students make the mistake of taking too much advice when planning and making decisions. They may forgo their values and goals for others' values and goals for them. Or they may mistakenly trust advice that comes from well-meaning but ill-informed sources.

In other cases, students grapple with unfamiliar college paperwork and technology with little assistance as they proudly tackle perhaps newfound roles as adult decision makers. It's important to know that seeking help is a strength, not a weakness, particularly when that help comes from well-informed individuals who have your best interests in mind. When you share your goals and include others in your planning, you develop both a support network and a system of personal accountability. Being held *accountable* for your goals means that others are also tracking your progress and are interested in seeing you succeed. When you are working toward a goal and sticking to a plan, it's important to have unconditional cheerleaders in your life as well as folks who keep pushing you to stay on track, especially if they see you stray. It's important to know who in your life can play these roles.

Asking for Help: Anton's Story

Anton is in his first semester at State University. His high school guidance counselor, who he was required to meet with in his junior and senior years, was very helpful in preparing his college applications and in discussing what he could expect through the admissions process. When he was accepted to State University, she celebrated with him as well! Now that he's arrived at college, though, he's found it to be different from his high school. There are so many more options available to him and more freedom to plan his own time. About halfway through the semester, Anton falls behind in his information technology course, the introductory class for his major. He had been so excited to study more about computers and systems networking, but he's finding it harder and harder to understand the content and he feels discouraged.

After learning that he's headed for a D grade in the course, Anton is not certain what to do both about the class and about his major. In high school he would have spoken with his guidance counselor, who he knew by name and ran into in the hallway frequently. But he's not yet well-connected to resources at his college. When his mom texts him from back home to share a story about his younger sister, he considers confiding in her about the course but doesn't want her to worry about his focus or dedication. Anton is the first person from his family to attend college, so he feels a particular pressure to succeed and isn't even certain if his mom would know how to help. He ends the text thread with a generic thumbs-up emoji and heads to the college fitness center to let off some steam.

At the fitness center he sees another student from his class, Noura, who mentions that she just came from meeting with an academic advisor. After talking a bit more about Noura's interaction with her advisor, Anton learns that advising is both free and available on a walk-in basis. In fact, he finds out that at State University he even has an advisor who is assigned to him, similar to his high school counselor. Anton heads over to the advising center after class the next morning. He's a bit hesitant to share about his concerns about his grade, but he feels more confident after speaking with Noura about her experiences. When he meets his advisor, Anton also finds out that the information he shares is confidential to his personal academic records. After introductions and sharing this privacy information, Anton's advisor starts by asking him how everything is going this term. The casual conversation develops from there into a detailed plan for how Anton can seek some additional help in his course, including language he can use in an email to his instructor, the hours and location of the computer science tutoring lab, and "intel" on where the computer science students hang out so he can drop by to discuss their experiences in classes further along in the major. When Anton leaves his advisor's office, he's still considering a change to his major but decides to focus on improving his grade first and then making more decisions from there. Anton makes arrangements to meet with his advisor again before registering for the next semester and plans to follow up with him about his course via email after he speaks with his instructor. The whole experience was more casual and friendly than he could have imagined. He looks forward to running into Noura again to thank her (after he texts his mom back, of course!).

Mentors

When making academic decisions and career plans, it is also useful to have a mentor who has had similar goals. A *mentor* is an experienced individual who helps to guide a *mentee*, the less experienced person seeking advice. A good mentor for a student who is engaged in academic and career planning is someone who is knowledgeable about the student's desired career field and is perhaps more advanced in their career than an entry-level position. This is a person who can model the type of values and behaviors that are essential to a successful career. Your college or university may be able to connect you with a mentor through an organized mentorship program or through the alumni association. If your college does not have an organized mentor program, you may be able to find your own by reaching out to family friends who work in your field of interest, searching online for a local professional association or organization related to your field (as some associations have mentorship programs as well), or speaking to the professors who teach the courses in your major.

ACTIVITY

Your Support Call List

When you start a new job, go to a new school, or even fill out paperwork at a new doctor's office, you're often asked to provide contact information for someone who can assist in making decisions and look out for your best interests in the event of an emergency. Academic decision-making and planning doesn't involve the same level of urgency, but it's useful to have in mind the people in your life or the offices and individuals available to you at your college who motivate and support your plans, or can assist you in setting them. Prepare your support call (or text, email, or DM) list now so that all you have to do is pick up your phone to get the support you need. Keep in mind that one person can fulfill more than one role.

Table 5.4

Who knows your interests? Knows what you love or what you hate to do sometimes even before you do? Who can list your strengths and weaknesses without bias? This is the person who can support you when you are deciding on a degree program or major:	Name of individual(s) or office:
Who knows the college or university degree and program details, policies, procedures, and technological systems? This is the person who can support you when you are drafting your plan:	Name of individual(s) or office:
Who knows the career and graduate school opportunities available to someone in your major or program? This is the person who can support you in planning for activities beyond your courses:	Name of individual(s) or office:
Who is your biggest cheerleader who you can contact when you're feeling discouraged or unmotivated? This is the person who can support you when plans need to change:	Name of individual(s) or office:
Who has successfully navigated all of this college planning in the past and is now working in a career that interests you as well? This is the person who can become your mentor:	Name of individual or office:

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Consider, are you someone who panics if there is a change in plans, or are you relatively flexible? What techniques will you employ to help you manage change if you encounter it?

This chapter focuses on the importance of decision-making and planning, stressors that can sometimes feel overwhelming. If you are feeling less excited about the possibilities of planning and more overwhelmed, it's important that you take a break from this process. If you talk to others who are already working in their career fields, even those who work at your college, you'll probably find many individuals who were undecided in their path. Take some comfort in their stories and in knowing that you can absolutely find success even if you don't yet have a plan. Take a break and engage in those self-care activities that bring you some peace of mind. If you are ever feeling anxious, stressed, depressed, or overwhelmed, please find the resources available at your college to assist you.

STUDENT PROFILE

"I graduated with my bachelor's degree in elementary education about 10 years ago and was lucky to get a job at the same school where I completed my student teaching requirement. I absolutely love my students and am very happy as a teacher. Recently, though, I've had the opportunity to mentor some new teachers at my school. After I got over the shock of not being the new teacher myself anymore (am I that old?!), I realized how much I enjoyed helping new teachers get established in their classroom as well. I've been thinking about maybe going to back school to get a master's degree in education so that I can someday become an administrator or maybe a principal at a school. I guess I should start researching programs that will help me meet my goal, because I know I won't get started until I have a plan in place. I'll need a program that can allow me to continue working full-time while going back to school. It's totally exciting, but I'm also overwhelmed."

—**Amara**, Brookdale Community College

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Some jobs require a graduate degree as a minimum entry requirement, but in other career fields, a graduate degree can help an individual advance to a management position or to a higher-level job with a higher salary. If you were in Amara's position,

> what would you factor into your consideration when deciding whether to go back to college for a master's degree? If you were Amara's friend or advisor, what questions would you ask her to help her find a fitting program and create an academic plan?

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5.6: Exploration of the Field

Laura Haygood and RaeAnna Jeffers

"It is not what happens to you that determines how far you go in life; it is what you do with what happens to you."

-Zig Ziglar

Planning for one's career is a task often overlooked by college students in the early years of their education. However, making a plan and preparing for your job search now will save you time and money later.

Career Planning for a Degree in Healthcare

Career planning for a degree in healthcare involves a strategic approach to understanding the diverse opportunities within the field and aligning them with personal interests and skills. Initially, individuals should research various healthcare roles, such as medical technologists, healthcare administrators, or physical therapists, to identify a suitable career path. Networking with professionals, attending career fairs, and participating in internships or volunteer experiences can provide valuable insights and practical exposure. It's also essential to stay informed about the evolving healthcare landscape, including advancements in technology and changes in healthcare policies, to remain adaptable and competitive. By setting clear career goals, seeking mentorship, and continuously developing relevant skills and knowledge, individuals can navigate the dynamic healthcare environment and achieve long-term success.

Degree Planning for a Degree in Nursing

Degree planning for a career in nursing requires a focused and structured approach to meet the rigorous educational and licensing requirements of the profession. Prospective nursing students should start by selecting an accredited nursing program, whether it's an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) or a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), based on their long-term career goals. It's important to complete prerequisite courses in subjects like biology, chemistry, and anatomy to build a strong foundation. Additionally, students should take advantage of clinical placements and simulation labs to gain hands-on experience and develop critical nursing skills. Engaging in study groups, utilizing academic resources, and seeking guidance from instructors can enhance learning and performance. As nursing education progresses, students should prepare for the NCLEX-RN exam, which is essential for obtaining licensure. By carefully planning their academic journey and actively seeking opportunities for professional growth, nursing students can successfully transition into the workforce and contribute effectively to patient care.

THE FIVE-STEP PROCESS FOR CHOOSING YOUR CAREER

As your thoughts about your career expand, keep in mind that over the course of your life, you will probably spend a lot of time at work—thousands of hours, in fact. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average workday is about 8.7 hours long, and this means that if you work 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year, for 35 years, you will spend a total of 76,125 hours of your life at work. These numbers should convince you that it's pretty important to enjoy your career.

If you do pursue a career, you'll find yourself making many decisions about it. Is this the right career for me? Am I feeling fulfilled and challenged? Does this career enable me to have the lifestyle I desire? It's important to consider these questions now, whether you're just graduating from high school or college, or you're returning to school after working for a while.

Choosing a career—any career—is a unique process for everyone, and for many people the task is daunting. There are so many different occupations to choose from. How do you navigate this complex world of work?

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office has identified a five-step decision process that will make your career path a little easier to find. Below are the steps:

1. Get to know yourself.
2. Get to know your field.
3. Prioritize your "deal makers" and rule out your "deal breakers".
4. Make a preliminary career decision and create a plan of action.
5. Go out and achieve your career goal.

Step 1: Get to Know Yourself

Get to know yourself and the things you're truly passionate about.

- Gather information about your career-related interests and values.
- Think about what skills and abilities come naturally to you and which ones you want to develop.
- Consider your personality type and how you want it to reflect in your work.

Step 2: Get to Know Your Field

Get to know your field. You'll want to investigate the career paths available to you. You may also want to see what your college Career Center offers or conduct informational interviews to find out more about your field. One of the handiest starting points and "filters" is to decide the level of education you want to attain before starting your first or your next job. Students should consider determining both how much education they are willing to acquire, and how much education a particular career will require. Do you want to earn an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, or a doctorate or professional degree? Meeting with a college counselor or career counselor can help a student clarify this information.

Step 3: Prioritize Your Deal Makers

Prioritize your deal makers and rule out your deal-breakers. Educational requirements aren't the only criteria that you will want to consider. Do you want to work outside or in an office? In the country or a city? In a big or small organization? For a public organization or a private company? What type of industry is interesting to you? What role do you see yourself playing in the organization? Do you want to be your own boss?

Step 4: Make a Preliminary Career Decision

Make a preliminary (or first) career decision and create a plan of action. It is not set in stone and you may have multiple careers in your lifetime, but everything starts with that preliminary career decision and plan of action. As a student matures and gains experience, more career opportunities will present themselves.

Now that you have an idea of who you are and where you might find a satisfying career, how do you start taking action to get there? Some people talk to family, friends, or instructors in their chosen disciplines. Others have mentors in their lives with whom to discuss this decision. Your college has career counselors and academic advisers who can help you with both career decision-making and the educational planning process. Nevertheless, be advised: You'll get the most from sessions with your counselor if you have done some work on your own.

Step 5: Go out and Achieve Your Career Goal

Go out and achieve your (initial) career goal! Now it's time to take concrete steps toward achieving your educational and career goals. This may be as simple as creating a preliminary educational plan for next semester or a comprehensive educational plan that maps out the degree you are currently working toward. You may also want to look for internships, part-time work, or volunteer opportunities that help you test and confirm your preliminary career choice. Your college counselor can help you with this step, as well.

Your work experiences and life circumstances will undoubtedly change throughout the course of your professional life, so you may need to go back and reassess where you are on this path in the future. However, no matter if you feel like you were born knowing what you want to do professionally, or you feel totally unsure about what the future holds for you, remember that with careful consideration, resolve, and strategic thought, you can find a career that feels rewarding.

Specialized fields

Nursing Specialties

While you may have already chosen nursing as a field, it is important to consider the various roles nurses may fill. The following three resources provide information about the various specialties nurses can pursue, as well as information about the average salary and the education level needed:

- Johnson & Johnson's Nursing Specialties
- Occupational Outlook Handbook (scroll down to "Similar Occupations")
- Imprint Career Planning Guides

Publications

The following publications are helpful resources to explore more aspects of nursing practice (UTA Students, follow the hyperlinked title for access):

- Professional Nursing by Beth Black
  ISBN: 9780323431125
  Publication Date: 2016-06-23
- Becoming a Nurse by Derek Sellman (Editor); Paul Snelling (Editor)
  ISBN: 0273786210
  Publication Date: 2016-10-12
- 301 Careers in Nursing by Joyce Fitzpatrick
  ISBN: 0826133088
  Publication Date: 2017
- Nursing Practice by Ian Peate (Editor); Karen Wild (Editor)
  ISBN: 1119237483
  Publication Date: 2017-11-20
- Coping with Caring by Meredith Mealer
  ISBN: 0429448775
  Publication Date: 2019-07-08
- Imprint: Career Planning Guides by National Student Nurses' Association
  Publication Date: 2020
- Advancing Your Career by Rose Kearney Nunnery
  ISBN: 0803690142
  Publication Date: 2019-10-01

Guiding Questions To Think About

You should consider the following questions when deciding if you want to specialize in a particular field of nursing. Regardless of your answers, there is likely a field of nursing that will suit both you and the profession:

Are you an introvert or an extrovert?

How you answer this question requires deep insight on your part. Consider the various environments you might work and thrive in based on your natural tendencies. This question does not imply that either is better or worse than the other.

Some specialties for introverts include (not limited to):

- Forensic Nursing
- Nursing Education
- Legal Nursing
- Nursing Informatics
- Private Duty Nursing
- Nurse Researcher
- Surgical Nurse
- Case Management
- Infection Control and Prevention
- Mental Health Nursing

Some specialties for extroverts include (not limited to):

- Emergency Nursing
- Critical Care/Intensive Care Nursing
- Medical-Surgical Nursing
- Labor & Delivery Nursing

Are you willing to go for additional training beyond this degree?

This is a valid question in that nursing is a challenging degree to obtain. Your individual circumstances after graduation may play into whether or not you pursue additional degrees and/or certifications. Many specialties require more credentials, so look through all of the requirements of the specialty you choose. Think about your support system and other logistics involved in obtaining the required training, too.

Which population are you most interested in caring for?

For some, this is an easy question to answer. For others, it will take more self-evaluation to determine. If you find that no specific population rises to the top of your list, do not worry! There is still a place for you.

There are many areas that work with a variety of patients, such as (not limited to):

- Primary Care Nursing
- Public Health Nursing
- Family Nurse Practitioner
- Rehabilitation Nursing
- Mental Health Nursing
- Pain Management Nursing
- Specific Disease Care (diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, etc.)

Do you have a personal experience that connects you to a field of study?

Many nurses were called to the profession by a personal experience that stirred something within them to serve. If you have those experiences, examine what sparked the interest. That could provide you with the link between your professional nursing service and your true passion.

Are you afraid of blood and bodily fluids? What things gross you out most?

Consider what each specialty will expose you to. Be aware these can become desensitized over time with experience. However, if there are phobias and/or strong aversions that may interfere with your ability to care for your patient(s), those areas of practice should be avoided if possible.

Do you prefer providing team-based care or individualized 1:1 care?

Recognize that nurses work in a myriad of environments. Some are conducive to individualized 1:1 or 1:2 care, while others lean on care teams to coordinate. If you like to spend a lot of time with your patients, you might choose a specialty that lends itself to that level of care. Conversely, if you prefer lots of interactions with colleagues, choose those that encompass your preference for collaboration.

What pace of work do you perform best in?

The pace of a nurse's work varies greatly depending on the specialty, facility, location, time of day, patient load, etc. Knowing your preferences in this area will help you identify the kind of environment you need to work in to be optimal.

Fast-paced nursing specialties (not limited to):

- Emergency Care Nursing
- Post-Anesthesia Care Unit Nursing
- Cardiovascular Care Nursing
- Progressive Care/Step-down Care Unit

Slower-paced nursing specialties (not limited to):

- Clinic Nurse
- Nurse Educator
- Nurse Researcher
- Public Health Nurse
- Occupational Health Nurse
- Informatics Nursing
- Home Health Nursing

How do you respond to stress/crisis?

The way you react to stress in your body impacts your ability to provide care amid crisis. Think about your natural physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual response to different levels of experienced stress. Picture yourself in the environment you selected. Imagine all of the sensory inputs you encounter there. Process how this makes you feel inside your body. Use this to guide you toward a specialty that resonates with your natural level of stress tolerance.

What is the need in your area of residence?

Need drives jobs! Get to know the local market in your specialty. Be prepared to relocate or create a secondary plan if the available openings are competitive (2019 Texas Professional Nursing Trends: Statewide)

Activity: Nursing specialty exploration

Nursing Specialty Quiz

Take the Johnson and Johnson's Nursing Specialty Quiz and reflect on the questions you read about above. Did you discover any additional specialties you haven't thought of before? What have you learned about yourself in the process?

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5.7: Skill Development

Laura Haygood and RaeAnna Jeffers

Hard and soft skills

If you lived and worked in colonial times in the United States, what skills would you need to be gainfully employed? What kind of person would your employer want you to be? And how different would your skills and aptitudes be then, compared to today?

Many industries that developed during the 1600s–1700s, such as health care, publishing, manufacturing, construction, finance, and farming, are still with us today. And the professional abilities, aptitudes, and values required in those industries are many of the same ones employers seek today.

For example, in the health care field then, just like today, employers looked for professionals with scientific acumen, active listening skills, a service orientation, oral comprehension abilities, and teamwork skills. And in the financial field then, just like today, employers looked for economics and accounting skills, mathematical reasoning skills, clerical and administrative skills, and deductive reasoning.

Why is it that with the passage of time and all the changes in the work world, some skills remain unchanged (or little changed)?

The answer might lie in the fact that there are two main types of skills that employers look for: hard skills and soft skills.

- **Hard skills** are concrete or objective abilities that you learn and perhaps have mastered. They are skills you can easily quantify, like using a computer, speaking a foreign language, or operating a machine. You might earn a certificate, a college degree, or other credentials that attest to your hard-skill competencies. Obviously, because of changes in technology, the hard skills required by industries today are vastly different from those required centuries ago.
- S**oft skills,** on the other hand, are subjective skills that have changed very little over time. Such skills might pertain to the way you relate to people, or the way you think, or the ways in which you behave—for example, listening attentively, working well in groups, and speaking clearly. Soft skills are sometimes also called “transferable skills” because you can easily transfer them from job to job or profession to profession without much training. Indeed, if you had a time machine, you could probably transfer your soft skills from one time period to another!

What Employers Want in an Employee

Employers want individuals who have the necessary hard and soft skills to do the job well and adapt to changes in the workplace. Soft skills may be especially in demand today because employers are generally equipped to train new employees in a hard skill—by training them to use new computer software, for instance—but it’s much more difficult to teach an employee a soft skill such as developing rapport with patients and coworkers or knowing how to manage conflict. An employer might rather hire an inexperienced worker who can pay close attention to details than an experienced worker who might cause problems on a work team.

Transferable Skills for Any Career Path

Transferable (soft) skills may be used in multiple professions. They include, but are by no means limited to, skills listed below:

- Dependable and punctual (showing up on time, ready to work, not being a liability)
- Self-motivated
- Enthusiastic
- Committed
- Willing to learn (lifelong learner)
- Able to accept constructive criticism
- A good problem solver
- Strong in customer service skills
- Adaptable (willing to change and take on new challenges)
- A team player
- Positive attitude
- Strong communication skills
- Good in essential work skills (following instructions, possessing critical thinking skills, knowing limits)
- Ethical

- Safety-conscious
- Honest
- Strong in time management

These skills are transferable because they are positive attributes that are invaluable in practically any kind of work. They also do not require much training from an employer—you have them already and take them with you wherever you go. Soft skills are a big part of your "total me" package. Work on communicating your skills when speaking with employers, giving examples of how you have used soft skills in the past.

So, identify the soft skills that show you off the best, and identify the ones that prospective employers are looking for. By comparing both sets, you can more directly gear your job search to your strongest professional qualities.

Networking

In the context of career development, networking is the process by which people build relationships with one another for the purpose of helping one another achieve professional goals.

When you "network," you exchange information.

- You may share business cards, résumés, cover letters, job-seeking strategies, leads about open jobs, information about companies and organizations, and information about a specific field.
- You might also share information about meet-up groups, conferences, special events, technology tools, and social media.
- You might also solicit job "headhunters," career counselors, career centers, career coaches, an alumni association, family members, friends, acquaintances, and vendors.

Networking can occur anywhere and at any time. In fact, your network expands with each new relationship you establish. And the networking strategies you can employ are nearly limitless. With imagination and ingenuity, your networking can be highly successful.



Figure 5.14 Networking Diagram

Strategies for Networking

We live in a social world. Almost everywhere you go and anything you do professionally involves connecting with people. It stands to reason that finding a new job and advancing your career entails building relationships with these people. Truly, the most effective way to find a new job is to network, network, and network some more.

Once you acknowledge the value of networking, the challenge is figuring out how to do it. What is your first step? Whom do you contact? What do you say? How long will it take? Where do you concentrate your efforts? How do you know if your investments will pay off?

For every question you may ask, a range of strategies can be used. Begin exploring your possibilities by viewing the following energizing video, *Networking Tips for College Students and Young People*, by Hank Blank. He recommends the following modern and no-nonsense strategies:

1. Hope is not a plan. You need a plan of action to achieve your networking goals.
2. Keenly focus your activities on getting a job. Use all tools available to you.
3. You need business cards. No ifs, ands, or buts.

4. Attend networking events. Most of them offer student rates.
5. Master Linkedin because that is what human resource departments use. Post updates.
6. Think of your parents' friends as databases. Leverage their knowledge and their willingness to help you.
7. Create the world you want to live in in the future by creating it today through your networking activity. These are the times to live in a world of "this is how I can help."

Strategies at College

NOTES FOR NURSING SUCCESS! Each of these areas includes tips specific for nursing students… just for you!

- **Get to know your professors**: Communicating with instructors is a valuable way to learn about a career and also get letters of reference if and when needed for a job. Professors can also give you leads on job openings, internships, and research possibilities. Most instructors will readily share information and insights with you. Get to know your instructors. They are a valuable part of your network.
  - **Nursing students:** This is especially important for nursing students. Instructors are keen observers of their students. They are looking for those who exhibit a passion for the profession and are actively engaged in their learning. Establishing a good working relationship with your instructors is key. You are more likely to get help from those with whom you have built connections than those you have not. Treat every day in college like an ongoing job interview. It is good practice!
- **Check with your college's alumni office**: You may find that some alumni are affiliated with your field of interest and can give you the "inside scoop."
- **Check with classmates**: Classmates may or may not share your major, but many of them may have leads that could help you. You could be just one conversation away from a good lead.
  - **Nursing students:** Many of your classmates already work in the health care industry in a variety of roles and settings. These classmates can alert you to job openings even before they are posted publicly. Be a good colleague. Do not pester your classmates for this information. Rather, be helpful to them and build working relationships through collaborations, teamwork, communication, empathy, etc. Show them your value. Your attitude and approach will influence your classmates to either help you or avoid you. Ask yourself, "Would I want to work with me?" followed by, "How may I serve?".

Strategies at Work

- **Join professional organizations**: You can meet many influential people at local and national meetings and events of professional and volunteer organizations. Learn about these organizations. See if they have membership discounts for students or student chapters. Once you are a member, you may have access to membership lists, which can give you prospective access to many new people to network with.
  - **Nursing students:** There are numerous organizations that can help you connect with people and various useful resources.
    - Sigma Theta Tau (Delta Theta Chapter)
    - Arlington Student Nurses Association
    - National Student Nurses Association
    - Texas Nurses Association
    - American Nurses Association

    For more nursing organizations and links to the journal publications for each are located in the Appendix.
- **Volunteer**: Volunteering is an excellent way to meet new people who can help you develop your career, even if the organization you are volunteering with is not in your field. Just by working alongside others and working toward common goals, you build relationships that may later serve you in unforeseen and helpful ways. Research to find a placement that interests you. Understand your responsibilities and be aware of the time commitment you agree to.
  - If you are seeking a local position, The Leadership Center at the University of Texas at Arlington maintains a database of ongoing and short-term volunteer opportunities for students. A cross-section of organizations — including schools, ministries, nonprofit organizations, and nursing facilities — are represented. VolunteerMatch.org lets you search for opportunities by location and area of interest, such as Health & Medicine,

Seniors, or Crisis Support. Databases like GoAbroad.com and WorkingAbroad.com let you search for international opportunities.

- **Nursing students:** Potential options include the American Red Cross, local hospitals, long-term care facilities, hospice/palliative care (Check out The National Hospice Foundation's search tool to find a hospice near you).

- **Get an internship**: Many organizations offer internship positions to college students. Some of these positions are paid, but often they are not. Paid or not, you gain experience relevant to your career, and you potentially make many new contacts. Check CollegeRecruiter.com and internships.com for key resources.
  - **Nursing students:** Many hospitals are now offering residency programs to new graduate nurses. Research these early in your college career so that you may prepare to meet the criteria outlined in the posting or announcement. These can be highly competitive depending on the location of the facility and the number of applicants per rotation. These can last from 3 months to 1 year. Benefits include exposure to multiple areas of practice, comprehensive training, and mentorship throughout the program. When the residency is completed, nurses will then be provided with options for placements. This process has proven to increase confidence in the new nurse graduates and reduce the experience of burnout.
- **Get a part-time job**: Working full-time may be your ultimate goal, but you may want to fill in some cracks or crevices by working in a part-time job. Invariably you will meet people who can feasibly help with your networking goals. And you can gain good experience along the way, which can also be noted on your résumé. Check your college career center website. Many have online job boards for full and part-time employment.
- **Join a job club**: Your career interests may be shared by many others who have organized a club, which can be online or in person. If you don't find an existing club, consider starting one.
- **Attend networking events**: There are innumerable professional networking events taking place around the world and also online. Find them listed in magazines, community calendars, newspapers, journals, and at the websites of companies, organizations, and associations.
  - **Nursing students:** The
  -
  - has centralized many of the relevant nursing organizations for your convenience.
- **Conduct informational interviews**: You may initiate contact with people in your chosen field who can tell you about their experiences of entering the field and thriving in it. Many websites have guidance on how to plan and conduct these interviews.

Strategies at Home and Beyond

- **Participate in online social media**: An explosion of career opportunities awaits you with social media, including LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and many more. You will find an extensive list of suggested sites at CareerOneStop. Keep your communication ultra-professional at these sites. Peruse magazine articles, and if you find one that's relevant to your field and it contains names of professionals, you can reach out to them to learn more and get job leads. Realize that social media is public and posting pictures of yourself at parties or commenting in an unbecoming way could cost you an opportunity.
- **Ask family members and friends, coworkers, and acquaintances for referrals**: Do they know others who might help you? You can start with the question "Who else should I be talking to?"

activity 7.3: networking

Networking

Identify 1-3 professional organizations in your career field that you want to join.

- Do the organizations publish any professional journals?
- What journals do they publish?

Identify 1-3 people in your network that may be able to help you connect with a job opportunity.

- Craft a professional email to solicit their support.

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5.8: Job Seeking

Laura Haygood and RaeAnna Jeffers

RÉsumÉs

A résumé is a "selfie" for business purposes. It is a written picture of who you are—it's a marketing tool, a selling tool, and a promotion of you as an ideal candidate for any job you may be interested in.

The word *résumé* comes from the French word *résumé*, which means "a summary." Leonardo da Vinci is credited with writing one of the first known résumés, although it was more of a letter that outlined his credentials for a potential employer, Ludovico Sforza. The résumé got da Vinci the job, though, and Sforza became a longtime patron of da Vinci and later commissioned him to paint *The Last Supper*.

Résumés and cover letters work together to represent you in the most positive light to prospective employers. With a well-composed résumé and cover letter, you stand out—which may get you an interview and then a good shot at landing a job.

In this section, we discuss résumés and cover letters as key components of your career development tool kit. We explore some of the many ways you can design and develop them for the greatest impact in your job search.

Your Résumé: Purpose and Contents

Your résumé is an inventory of your education, work experience, job-related skills, accomplishments, volunteer history, internships, residencies, and/or more. It's a professional autobiography in outline form to give the person who reads it a quick, general idea of who you are, and what skills, abilities, and experiences you have to offer. With a better idea of who you are, prospective employers can see how well you might contribute to their workplace.

As a college student or recent graduate, though, you may be unsure about what to put in your résumé, especially if you don't have much employment history. Still, employers don't expect recent grads to have significant work experience. And even with little work experience, you may still have a host of worthy accomplishments to include. It's all in how you present yourself.

Elements of Your Successful R**ésumé**

Perhaps the hardest part of writing a résumé is figuring out what format to use to organize and present your information in the most effective way. There is no correct format, per se, but most résumés follow one of the four formats below. Which format do you think will best represent your qualifications?

1. **Reverse chronological résumé**: A reverse chronological résumé (sometimes also simply called a chronological résumé) lists your job experiences in reverse chronological order—that is, starting with the most recent job and working backward toward your first job. It includes starting and ending dates. Also included is a brief description of the work duties you performed for each job, and highlights of your formal education. The reverse chronological résumé may be the most common and perhaps the most conservative résumé format. It is most suitable for demonstrating a solid work history, and growth and development in your skills. It may not suit you if you are light on skills in the area you are applying to, or if you've changed employers frequently, or if you are looking for your first job. Reverse Chronological Résumé Examples
2. **Functional résumé**: A functional résumé is organized around your talents, skills, and abilities (more so than work duties and job titles, as with the reverse chronological résumé). It emphasizes specific professional capabilities, like what you have done or what you can do. Specific dates may be included but are not as important. So if you are a new graduate entering your field with little or no actual work experience, the functional résumé may be a good format for you. It can also be useful when you are seeking work in a field that differs from what you have done in the past. It's also well suited for people in unconventional careers. Functional Résumé Examples
3. **Hybrid résumé**: The hybrid résumé is a format reflecting both the functional and chronological approaches. It's also called a combination résumé. It highlights relevant skills, but it still provides information about your work experience. With a hybrid résumé, you may list your job skills as most prominent and then follow with a chronological (or reverse chronological) list of employers. This résumé format is most effective when your specific skills and job experience need to be emphasized. Hybrid Résumé Examples
4. **Video, infographic, and website résumé**: Other formats you may wish to consider are the video résumé, the infographic résumé, or even a website résumé. These formats may be most suitable for people in multimedia and creative careers. Certainly, with the expansive use of technology today, a job seeker might at least try to create a media-enhanced résumé. But the paper-

based, traditional résumé is by far the most commonly used—in fact, some human resource departments may not permit the submission of any format other than paper-based. Video Resume Examples; Infographic Résumé Examples; Website Résumé Examples

An important note about formatting is that, initially, employers may spend only a few seconds reviewing each résumé—especially if there is a big stack of them or they seem tedious to read. That's why it's important to choose your format carefully so it will stand out and make the first cut.

Résumé Contents and Structure

For many people, the process of writing a résumé is daunting. After all, you are taking a lot of information and condensing it into a very concise form that needs to be both eye-catching and easy to read. Don't be scared off, though! Developing a good résumé can be fun, rewarding, and easier than you think if you follow a few basic guidelines.

Contents and Components To Include

1. **Your contact information**: name, address (note that some recommend not sharing for security purposes, others recommend sharing to be complete), phone number, professional email address
2. **A summary of your skills**: 5–10 skills you have gained in your field
3. **Work experience**: depending on the résumé format you choose, you may list your most recent job first; include the title of the position, employer's name, location, employment dates (beginning, ending); Working for a family business is valid work experience and should definitely be on a resume.
4. **Volunteer experience:** can be listed in terms of hours completed or months/years involved. Use the same format as that used to list work experience.
5. **Education and training**: formal and informal experiences matter; include academic degrees, professional development, certificates, internships, etc.
6. **Other sections**: may include a job objective, a brief profile, a branding statement, a summary statement, additional accomplishments, and any other related experiences

Caution

Résumés resemble snowflakes in as much as no two are alike. Although you can benefit from giving yours a stamp of individuality, you will do well to steer clear of personal details that might elicit a negative response. It is advisable to omit any confidential information or details that could make you vulnerable to discrimination, for instance. Your résumé will likely be viewed by a number of employees in an organization, including human resource personnel, managers, administrative staff, etc. By aiming to please all reviewers, you gain maximum advantage.

- Do not mention your age, gender, height or weight.
- Do not include your social security number.
- Do not mention religious beliefs or political affiliations, unless they are relevant to the position.
- Do not include a photograph of yourself or a physical description.
- Do not mention health issues.
- Do not use first-person references (I, me).
- Do not include wage/salary expectations.
- Do not use abbreviations.
- Proofread carefully—absolutely no spelling mistakes are acceptable.

Top Ten Tips for a Successful Résumé

1. Aim to make a résumé that's 1–2 pages long on letter-size paper.
2. Make it visually appealing.
3. Use action verbs and phrases.
4. Proofread carefully to eliminate any spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typographical errors.
5. Include highlights of your qualifications or skills to attract an employer's attention.
6. Craft your letter as a pitch to people in the profession you plan to work in.
7. Stand out as different, courageous.
8. Be positive and reflect only the truth.
9. Be excited and optimistic about your job prospects!

10. Keep refining and reworking your résumé; it's an ongoing project.

Remember that your résumé is your professional profile. It will hold you in the most professional and positive light, and it's designed to be a quick and easy way for a prospective employer to evaluate what you might bring to a job. When written and formatted attractively, creatively, and legibly, your résumé is what will get your foot in the door. You can be proud of your accomplishments, even if they don't seem numerous. Let your résumé reflect your personal pride and professionalism. A resume is also a "living document" and will change as your experiences and skills change.

Cover Letters

A cover letter is a letter of introduction, usually 3–4 paragraphs in length, that you attach to your résumé. It's a way of introducing yourself to a potential employer and explaining why you are suited for a position. Employers may look for individualized and thoughtfully written cover letters as an initial method of screening out applicants who may lack necessary basic skills, or who may not be sufficiently interested in the position.

Cover Letter Examples

Often an employer will request or require that a cover letter be included in the materials an applicant submits. There are also occasions when you might submit a cover letter uninvited (also called a letter of interest). For example, if you are initiating an inquiry about possible work or asking someone to send you information or provide other assistance.

With each résumé, you send out, always include a cover letter specifically addressing your purposes.

Characteristics of an Effective Cover Letter

Cover letters should accomplish the following:

- Get the attention of the prospective employer
- Set you apart from any possible competition
- Identify the position you are interested in
- Specify how you learned about the position or company
- Present highlights of your skills and accomplishments
- Reflect your genuine interest
- Please the eye and ear

Social Media and the Job Market

Social media has significantly impacted the job market, shaping the dynamics for both employers and future employees in distinct ways. From an employer's perspective, social media serves as a valuable tool for recruitment, talent acquisition, and employer branding. Companies utilize platforms like LinkedIn to showcase their culture, job openings, and engage with potential candidates. Social media advertising allows employers to target specific demographics, expanding their reach and attracting diverse talent pools.

On the flip side, for future employees, social media plays a crucial role in personal branding, networking, and job search strategies. Candidates leverage platforms like LinkedIn to build professional profiles, connect with industry peers, and stay updated on job opportunities. Social media offers a platform for individuals to showcase their expertise, accomplishments, and interests to potential employers.

However, along with its benefits, social media also poses risks for both employers and future employees. For job seekers, inappropriate or unprofessional content posted on social media profiles can negatively impact their job prospects. Employers often screen candidates' social media accounts to assess their professionalism and suitability for the role, making it essential for individuals to curate their online presence thoughtfully.

From the employer's standpoint, navigating social media comes with risks related to employer branding, privacy concerns, and potential bias in hiring processes. Companies must be mindful of their online reputation, engage transparently with candidates, and ensure fair and unbiased recruitment practices when using social media in hiring decisions.

While social media offers a multitude of benefits for the job market, such as enhanced recruitment strategies and expanded networking opportunities, it also presents challenges and risks related to personal branding, privacy, and bias. Both employers and future employees must exercise discretion and awareness of the implications of their online presence when leveraging social media in the job market.

Interviewing

If your résumé and cover letter have served their purposes well, you will be invited to participate in an interview with the company or organization you're interested in. Congratulations! It's an exciting time, and your prospects for employment are very strong if you put in the time to be well prepared.

In this section, we look at how to get ready for an interview, what types of interviews you might need to engage in, and what kinds of questions you might be asked.

Preparing Effectively for a Job Interview

Review the Job Description

When you prepare for an interview, your first step will be to carefully read and reread the job posting or job description. This will help you develop a clearer idea of how you meet the skills and attributes the company seeks.

Research the Company or Organization

Researching the company will give you a wider view of what the company is looking for and how well you might fit in. Your prospective employer may ask you what you know about the company. Being prepared to answer this question shows that you took time and effort to prepare for the interview and that you have a genuine interest in the organization. It shows good care and good planning—soft skills you will surely need on the job.

Practice Answering Common Questions

Most interviewees find that practicing for the interview in advance with a family member, a friend, or a colleague eases possible nerves during the actual interview. It also creates greater confidence when you walk through the interview door. In many interviews, you will be asked behavioral questions. Employers ask these questions to learn how you handled situations in the past. If you practice answering common behavioral interview questions in advance, then you will have examples fresh in your mind to share with the interviewer.

Plan to Dress Appropriately

Interviewees are generally most properly dressed for an interview in business attire, with the goal of looking highly professional in the eyes of the interviewer.

Come Prepared

Plan to bring your résumé, cover letter, and a list of references to the interview. You may also want to bring a portfolio of representative work. Leave behind coffee, chewing gum, and any other items that could be distractions.

Be Confident

Above all, interviewees should be confident and "courageous." By doing so you make a strong first impression. As the saying goes, "There is never a second chance to make a first impression."

Job Interview Types and Techniques

Every interview you participate in will be unique: The people you meet with, the interview setting, and the questions you'll be asked will all be different from interview to interview.

The various factors that characterize any given interview can contribute to the sense of adventure and excitement you feel. But it's also normal to feel a little nervous about what lies ahead. With so many unknowns, how can you plan to "nail the interview" no matter what comes up?

A good strategy for planning is to anticipate the type of interview you may find yourself in. There are common formats for job interviews, described in detail, below. By knowing a bit more about each type and being aware of techniques that work for each, you can plan to be on your game no matter what form your interview takes.

Screening Interviews

Screening interviews might best be characterized as "weeding-out" interviews. They ordinarily take place over the phone or in another low-stakes environment in which the interviewer has maximum control over the amount of time the interview takes. Screening interviews are generally short because they glean only basic information about you. If you are scheduled to participate in

a screening interview, you might safely assume that you have some competition for the job and that the company is using this strategy to whittle down the applicant pool. With this kind of interview, your goal is to win a face-to-face interview. For this first shot, though, prepare well and challenge yourself to shine. This type of interview should be treated like a real interview. This may mean dressing for the interview and having a resume in front of you so that it can be referred to. Another suggestion is to use a landline phone if possible and/or make sure a cell phone is fully charged and that the screening interview takes place in a location that is free of distractions. Try to stand out from the competition and be sure to follow up with a thank-you note.

Phone or Web Conference Interviews

If you are geographically separated from your prospective employer, you may be invited to participate in a phone interview or online interview, instead of meeting face-to-face. Technology, of course, is a good way to bridge distances. The fact that you're not there in person doesn't make it any less important to be fully prepared, though. In fact, you may wish to be all the more "on your toes" to compensate for the distance barrier. Make sure your equipment (phone, computer, Internet connection, etc.) is fully charged and works. If you're at home for the interview, make sure the environment is quiet and distraction-free. If the meeting is online, make sure your video background is pleasing and neutral, like a wall hanging or even a white wall.

One-on-One Interviews

The majority of job interviews are conducted in this format—just you and a single interviewer—likely with the manager you would report to and work with. The one-on-one format gives you both a chance to see how well you connect and how well your talents, skills, and personalities mesh. You can expect to be asked questions like "Why would you be good for this job?" and "Tell me about yourself." Many interviewees prefer the one-on-one format because it allows them to spend in-depth time with the interviewer. Rapport can be built. As always, be very courteous and professional. Have handy a portfolio of your best work.

Panel Interviews

An efficient format for meeting a candidate is a panel interview, in which perhaps four to five coworkers meet at the same time with a single interviewee. The coworkers comprise the "search committee" or "search panel," which may consist of different company representatives such as human resources, management, and staff. One advantage of this format for the committee is that meeting together gives them a common experience to reflect on afterward. In a panel interview, listen carefully to questions from each panelist, and try to connect fully with each questioner. Be sure to write down names and titles, so you can send individual thank-you notes after the interview.

Serial Interviews

Serial interviews are a combination of one-on-one meetings with a group of interviewers, typically conducted as a series of meetings staggered throughout the day. Ordinarily, this type of interview is for higher-level jobs, when it's important to meet at length with major stakeholders. If your interview process is designed this way, you will need to be ultra prepared, as you will be answering many in-depth questions. Be prepared.

Lunch Interviews

In some higher-level positions, candidates are taken to lunch or dinner, especially if this is a second interview (a "call back" interview). If this is you, count yourself lucky and be on your best behavior, because even if the lunch meeting is unstructured and informal, it's still an official interview. Do not order an alcoholic beverage, and use your best table manners. You are not expected to pay or even to offer to pay. But, as always, you must send a thank-you note.

Group Interviews

Group interviews are comprised of several interviewees and perhaps only one or two interviewers who may make a presentation to the assembled group. This format allows an organization to quickly prescreen candidates. It also gives candidates a chance to quickly learn about the company. As with all interview formats, you are being observed. How do you behave with your group? Do you assume a leadership role? Are you quiet but attentive? What kind of personality is the company looking for? A group interview may reveal this.

ACTIVITY: Behavioral Interview Questions Exercise

Behavioral Interview Questions Exercise

Write out your response to the following questions, reflecting on how your previous experiences apply to the question. Use the STAR technique to craft your response, describing the **S**ituation, the **T**ask you were assigned, the **A**ction you took, and the **R**esult.

- Tell me about a goal you achieved.
- Tell me about a major mistake you made, and what you did to correct it**.**
- Tell me about a time when you used your problem-solving skills to find a solution to a problem.

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5.9: The Power of Networking

There is some wisdom in the saying that it's who you know that brings success in getting a job. Consider the following:

- It is estimated that only 20 percent of new jobs and vacancies are advertised or posted.
- A Web posting for a job typically yields over 150 applicants for a position.
- Sixty to eighty percent of jobs are found through personal contact and networking.

What exactly is networking? In its simplest terms, it is the process of engaging others in helping you reach an objective. Three words in this definition deserve a closer look:

1. **Process.** Networking is something that doesn't happen casually but requires thought, planning, and deliberate activity.
2. **Engaging.** You are looking to have others do something for you—give you information, guidance, other contacts, or perhaps a recommendation.
3. **Objective.** You need to be clear about your purpose for networking—it is not merely to collect people's contact information but to further your career development.

The process of networking involves three basic phases: prospect identification and management, making contact, and follow-up.

Student FAQs

- **I won't graduate and be in the job market for a couple years. Do I need to work on résumés and networking now?** Yes, absolutely! Even though you aren't yet graduating from college, there are many benefits to starting now. As a student, you are likely to be applying for part-time jobs, internships, and even volunteer positions. Networking is a process of building relationships, and the strongest relationships are built over time. Having a good network will help identify interesting and relevant opportunities. Having a résumé that summarizes your strengths and skills will give you an advantage over other candidates who apply without a résumé, because job application forms rarely give the opportunity to highlight your strengths. Furthermore, a résumé is an updated record of your skills and experience; it makes sense to capture your accomplishments as they happen and will save you a lot of time in the future.
- **I don't have any work experience. How can I write a résumé?** You may not have any work experience, but you do have experience and skills. Focus on your transferable skills, and list examples of how you have used them. Think of organizations you have been involved in and volunteer work you have done. It is OK to include high school accomplishments; you can replace them with college accomplishments as you gain them. It is also OK to include your GPA, particularly if it is over 3.0, because that helps show you are disciplined and organized.

All Contacts Are Equal, but Some Are More So Than Others

The first phase involves identifying whom you should be speaking to and pinpointing the people who can introduce you to them. This is like the game Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon applied to your own life. Whom do you need to speak to? That really depends on your objectives. If you are trying to learn about an occupation, it can be just about anyone involved with that field. If you are in the process of trying to land an internship or a job, you want to reach the person who will make the hiring decision.

Your objective also defines how you get started with your networking. In the first case, you might want to start with people you met at an industry conference; in the job-specific case, you'll want to think about whom you know in that company or who might know someone in that company. If you don't have any contacts who fit that description, whom do you know who lives in the town in which the company is based or in a nearby town?

Your success in this phase of networking will be driven by the quality of the candidates (those who can directly influence your ability to reach your objectives) as well as the quantity (those who will lead you to the most contacts). This is why there is no such thing as a bad contact.

As important as having contacts is your ability to access those contacts when you need to. That is where contact management comes into play. Don't be caught wishing you could call someone you met three weeks ago…if you could only remember what you did with their business card! There are countless ways to keep track of contacts, from writing names in an address book, to keeping a Rolodex, to using a computer-based contact management system. Choose a system you feel comfortable with—comfortable enough to use regularly. A sophisticated system that has all the bells and whistles is no good to you if you can't use it.

Let technology help you in this endeavor. Your computer, PDA, or smartphone probably has features for capturing contact information and retrieving it based on keywords, and most will even connect with your calendar for scheduling and reminders.

Consider Web-based applications such as those offered by SuccessHawk (www.successhawk.com) and networking sites focused on professional networking, such as LinkedIn. Whatever your choices, invest the time to learn to use them well; you'll be very glad you did.

Building a network requires consistent work, and a strong network will take time to achieve. That is why we recommend you start building your professional network now—even early in your college career. Your network should include anyone who might have a connection that will help: family, friends, neighbors, past and present coworkers, bosses, people you met through associations and clubs (especially business associations), alumni from your college, and acquaintances you have met via online networking.

When you capture your contact data, use relevant keywords to help you search your database and shape your contact activity. One of the most overlooked pieces of information that you should be sure to capture is the source of the contact. That's what turns a "cold call" into a "warm call"—and it helps engage the prospect. If a friend introduced you, be sure to note that friend's name; if you met at a party, note the name of the host and the occasion; if you met at a conference, note the conference and date. You should also use other keywords so that you can quickly find the contacts that will be most effective for each of your objectives; keywords might describe the area of specialization, organization membership, or type of contact (family, friend, colleague, etc.).

Personal Contact

Being in the right place at the right time has much less to do with luck than with the art of personal contact. Contacts are everywhere, and you don't know when you might turn one to your advantage. You may feel a little awkward following these tips at first, but with practice you will become quite adept at meeting new people and adding them to your network.

- Be prepared. If you are going to a conference, a party, or even a class, know ahead of time which people or kinds of people you want to meet. Be prepared with topics you can steer your contact toward so you don't spend two minutes awkwardly talking about the weather and then slink away.
- Be confident. Prepare and learn a short introduction for yourself. Be factual, don't brag, and give enough information about yourself to prompt your contact to ask questions.
- Be curious. The best way to get contacts to want to know you is to show you want to know them. Observe them before you step up to them. Is there something unique about them, the way they are dressed, or perhaps what you may have overheard that you can ask about? "I couldn't help but notice that lovely necklace; is that from a local designer?" or "You have such an interesting accent; do you mind if I ask where you're from?" After you ask the question, listen actively to keep the conversation going.
- Be prepared (part 2). Have a good supply of personal cards to give out to contacts; that will prompt them to give you their contact information, too. You don't have to be in business to have "business cards."
- Be courteous. If someone you know comes up to you while you are speaking with a contact, introduce them; if you see that the contact is getting antsy, tell them you enjoyed meeting them and then move on. Don't trap them!
- Be prepared (part 3). Set yourself up for networking success by discreetly writing a word or two on the back of their card to jog your memory in the future. "World-class rodeo clown" will certainly help you remember who Jack Smith at Triangle Financial was.

Make the Call

What you say in your networking calls or e-mails will depend largely on the objective of your networking effort. (Is it to learn about an occupation or industry? Seek a job-shadowing opportunity? Ask for a job?) But some networking basics and elements of etiquette apply to all contacts:

- **Be mindful of your contact's time.** Keep your calls and e-mails courteous but brief. If you are calling, ask if it is a good time to talk.
- **If this is a first contact, tell the contact where you got his or her name.** "I was referred to you by our friend Janet Smith" or "My colleague Richard Stewart suggested I call you" or "I heard you speak at the International Genius Conference" (remember the contact source information in your contact database?). This turns an interrupting cold call into a warm call with an interested individual.
- **Be specific about how the contact can help you.** Know what you are asking for and do so directly. Don't be shy.
- **Use your network for more than just asking for jobs.** It is a great vehicle for learning about new trends in the industry, for launching "trial balloons" for ideas or concepts you are developing, and for seeking advice on practical aspects of your occupation.

- **Help others in your network.** Networking is not a one-way endeavor. Be willing to offer your assistance whenever you can; the fact that you are still in college doesn't mean you can't be of value. You may be able to get an introduction to an instructor for a person in the industry or help that person's daughter learn about your college.

Care and Feeding of Your Network

Much of the success of your networking efforts depends on what you do after you've hung up after a call or received an e-mail reply. The first step is to **thank your contact** for his or her help. Do this right away; any thank-you after twenty-four hours of your contact can be considered late. Find a reason (not just an excuse) to **keep in touch** with people in your network. If you read an article people in your network would be interested in, send them the link. If you run across a problem one of your contacts might help you with, don't be shy—give him or her a call to **ask for help**. If you meet someone you think a contact would like, make introductions. **Send a follow-up note of thanks** to a person who gave you a particularly productive lead. Let him or her know what you were able to accomplish. People like to know they are on a successful team. Finally, if a person in your network asks you for help, **do what you say you will do**.

Key Takeaways

- Networking is an ongoing process that involves identifying and managing prospects, making contact, and following up.
- All contacts are good contacts.
- Common courtesy and follow-through are the catalysts of good networking.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Give yourself twenty minutes to list one hundred people you know. (You may want to think of groups first and then see how quickly you can draw up the list.) Now give yourself another twenty minutes to write one or two words next to each name to describe how he or she could help you network.
2. List three things you should do whenever you contact someone for the first time.

   _____

   _____

   _____
3. Describe two things you can do to overcome shyness and network effectively in a person-to-person setting.

   _____

   _____

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5.10: Summary

This chapter began by describing the personal guideposts for our planning: our values and our goals. After a discussion of the relationship between short- and long-term goals and the importance of tracking the progress of our goals, the chapter dove into the specifics of academic plans. Sections on degree types and the special considerations and requirements of certain programs should help you understand the type of opportunities that may be available to you and the types of questions you should research and ask. The section on planning your semesters provides you with the types of resources, people, and tools that you should look for when developing your academic plan. It also provides you an example planning grid to begin to draft a plan for your undergraduate studies. Keep in mind that you may need to make changes to your plan as you follow it. You can refer back to the section on managing change to consider how you might respond. Finally, the chapter concludes with a section on asking for help. Recall that others can both help you plan and hold you accountable to your plan, but only you set your values, so stick to them!

Career Connection

The healthcare sector and its related professions are anticipated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics to contribute significantly to new job creation until 2032. It is estimated that approximately 1.8 million job opportunities will arise annually due to the increasing demand for healthcare services driven by an aging population, as well as the need to replace workers exiting the field. Many of these roles in the medical field require less than one year of education.

Seeking a career as a nurse offers a rewarding path in healthcare, providing opportunities to directly impact patients' lives while working in a dynamic and evolving field. Nursing is not just a job but a profession that requires dedication, compassion, and a commitment to lifelong learning. Aspiring nurses have various educational pathways to choose from, each offering distinct advantages and opportunities for specialization.

At the entry level, many students pursue an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN), typically a two-year program offered at community colleges or vocational schools. ADN programs provide foundational knowledge and skills necessary for entry-level nursing practice, preparing students to take the NCLEX-RN exam to become registered nurses (RNs). This route is popular for those seeking a quicker entry into the workforce or who plan to pursue further education while working.

For those looking to advance their career and potentially specialize in specific areas of nursing practice, a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) is often recommended. BSN programs, typically completed in four years at universities or colleges, offer a more comprehensive education in nursing theory, research, leadership, and community health. BSN graduates are increasingly preferred by healthcare employers for their broader understanding of nursing practice and their ability to provide evidence-based care.

Beyond the ADN and BSN, nurses can pursue graduate-level education such as a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) or a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP). An MSN allows nurses to specialize in advanced practice roles such as nurse practitioner, nurse anesthetist, nurse midwife, or clinical nurse specialist. These roles require additional education and clinical training, often leading to increased autonomy and responsibility in patient care.

A DNP, on the other hand, focuses on leadership, advanced clinical practice, and healthcare system management. It prepares nurses for roles in executive leadership, healthcare policy, or as advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) seeking the highest level of clinical expertise and leadership.

Choosing the right educational pathway in nursing depends on individual career goals, desired level of responsibility, and commitment to ongoing professional development. Regardless of the degree pursued, nursing offers a diverse and fulfilling career with opportunities for growth, specialization, and making a meaningful difference in patients' lives.

Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter. After reviewing this chapter, were you as ready to plan as you thought you were? Are you more prepared now? Rate your readiness again, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.”

1. I have reflected on and can identify my personal values.
2. I have set both short- and long-term academic goals.
3. I am familiar with the requirements I must complete and options I must select to obtain a college degree.
4. I am familiar with the resources, tools, and individuals who can assist me in developing an effective plan for success.

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Where do you go from here?

Planning and decision-making are continuous processes, but if you're reading this text you presumably have a specific educational end goal in mind—you want to graduate with a degree! After you've decided on a degree and major path, you're already well-prepared to begin your academic planning. Use the resources discussed in this chapter and available at your college or university to draft your plan, and then review it with others who can provide feedback. If you're undecided about your degree and major, you will still have some work ahead of you before you can craft a more detailed academic plan. Here are some steps you can take to help you find a major that's right for you:

- Consider your interests and skills. Your academic advisor and/or your college's career services office can connect you with an academic and career path through discussion about your interests and skills. These offices and individuals often provide interest and skills tests that offer a starting point for your discussion. There are also free assessments available on the internet, such as the this one(opens in new window), that can help identify your interests and skills and match them with careers and related majors. (Refer to the Get Connected section earlier in this chapter for additional online resources.)
- Consider the future. Imagine yourself in job. What types of tasks or work environments are attractive to you? Is there anything you would absolutely hate to do that you can already rule out? Also consider the future of work. The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook identifies some career fields as having a bright outlook with expected job growth in the future. Ideally, you'll want to study for a career that's growing, not declining.
- Consider your preferred lifestyle. Although we all like to have a balanced life, perhaps it's less important to you to follow your interests and more important to follow the bottom line. If your preferred lifestyle will require that you make a high salary, you'll want to research those jobs that are highest paying and take note of the degrees and majors that prepare you for those fields.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Reading and Notetaking

6.1: Prelude to Reading and Notetaking
6.2: The Nature and Types of Reading
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
6.4: Are You Ready for the Big Leagues?
6.5: How Do You Read to Learn?
6.6: Dealing with Special Texts
6.7: Building Your Vocabulary
6.8: Success Before Class - Pre-reading
6.9: Success During Class- Effective Note-Taking
6.10: Summary

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6.1: Prelude to Reading and Notetaking

Learning Objectives

1. Analyze the different types of reading materials in healthcare education and identify appropriate strategies for each.
2. Evaluate various effective reading strategies and apply them to complex healthcare texts and case studies.
3. Develop a personalized note-taking system that enhances learning and retention in nursing and healthcare-related courses.
4. Synthesize pre-reading and in-class note-taking methods to improve understanding and performance in healthcare-related exams.
5. Apply techniques for expanding healthcare-related vocabulary to enhance reading comprehension and professional communication skills.



Figure 6.1: Each of us reads and records information in our own way.

Student Survey

These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As we are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed.

On a scale of 1 (I need significant improvement) to 4 (I'm doing great), reflect on how you're doing right now on these statements:

1. I am reading on a college level.
2. I take good notes that help me study for exams.
3. I understand how to manage all the reading I need to do for college.
4. I recognize the need for different notetaking strategies for different college subjects.

You can also take the Chapter 6 survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

"Before I came to college, I always loathed reading from the textbook, taking notes during class, and even listening to lectures. I've since learned that in most cases I should do what my teacher suggests. I have a course that requires me to read two textbook chapters each week. Taking notes on the chapters is optional, making it easy to brush off these assignments. But there are reasons that professors tell students to read and do other classwork. They believe it is valuable information for a student to learn. Note taking in class may become tedious and, in some cases, feel redundant. But you can't recall a whole class from

> memory. There is not much time to learn the contents of a class in one semester, and it can feel overwhelming. It's important to take notes because writing them helps you remember."
>
> **—Christopher Naldini**, Westchester Community College

About this Chapter

In this chapter we will explore two skills you probably think you already understand—reading and notetaking. But the goal is to make sure you've honed these skills well enough to lead you to success in college. By the time you finish this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Discuss the way reading differs in college and how to successfully adapt to that change.
- Demonstrate the usefulness of strong notetaking for college students.

Reading and consuming information are increasingly important today because of the amount of information we encounter. Not only do we need to read critically and carefully, but we also need to read with an eye to distinguishing fact from opinion and identifying solid sources. Reading helps us make sense of the world—from simple reminders to pick up milk to complex treatises on global concerns, we read to comprehend, and in so doing, our brains expand. An interesting study from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, used MRI scans to track the brain conductivity while participants were reading. The researchers assert that a biological change to your brain actually happens when you read, and it lingers. If you want to read the study, published in the journal *Brain Connectivity*, you can find it online at Brain Connectivity(opens in new window) [openstax.org].

In academic settings, as we deliberately work to become stronger readers and better notetakers, we are both helping our current situation and enhancing our abilities to be successful in the future. Seems like a win-win. Take advantage of all the study aids you have at hand, including human, electronic, and physical resources, to increase your performance in these crucial skill sets.

Why? You need to read. It improves your thinking, your vocabulary, and your ability to make connections between disparate parts, which are all parts of critical thinking. Educational researchers Anne Cunningham and Keith Stanovich discovered after extensive study with college students that "reading volume [how much you read] made a significant contribution to multiple measures of vocabulary, general knowledge, spelling, and verbal fluency."

Research continues to assess and support the fact that one of the most significant learning skills necessary for success in any field is reading. You may have performed this skill for decades already, but learning to do it more effectively and practicing the skill consistently is critical to how well you do in all subjects. If reading *isn't your thing*, strive to make that your challenge. Your academic journey, your personal well-being, and your professional endeavors will all benefit from your reading. Put forth the effort and make it your thing. The long-term benefits will far outweigh the sacrifices you make now.

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6.2: The Nature and Types of Reading

Research supports the idea that reading is good for you. Students who read at or above reading level throughout elementary and secondary school have a higher chance of starting—and more importantly, finishing—college. Educational researchers convincingly claim that reading improves everything from grades to vocabulary (Cunningham 2).

If you don't particularly enjoy reading, don't despair. We read for a variety of reasons, and you may just have to step back and take a bigger picture of your reading habits to understand why you avoid engaging in this important skill. The myriad distractions we now face as well as the intense information overload we can suffer on a daily basis in all aspects of our lives can combine to make it difficult to slow down to read, an activity that demands at least a modicum of attention in a way that most television and music do not. You may need to adjust your schedule for more reading time, especially in college, because every class you take will expect you to read more pages than you probably have in the past.

Types of Reading

We may read small items purely for immediate information, such as notes, e-mails, or directions to an unfamiliar location. You can find all sorts of information online about how to fix a faucet or tie a secure knot. You won't have to spend too much time reading these sorts of texts because you have a specific goal in mind for them, and once you have accomplished that goal, you do not need to prolong the reading experience. These encounters with texts may not be memorable or stunning, but they don't need to be. When we consider why we read longer pieces—outside of reading for pleasure—we can usually categorize the reasons into about two categories: 1) reading to introduce ourselves to new content, and 2) reading to more fully comprehend familiar content.



Figure 6.2: A bookstore or library can be a great place to explore. Aside from books and resources you need, you may find something that interests you or helps with your course work.

Reading to Introduce New Content

Glenn felt uncomfortable talking with his new roommates because he realized very quickly that he didn't know anything about their major—architecture. Of course he knew that it had something to do with buildings and construction sites, but the field was so different from his discipline of biology that he decided he needed to find out more so he could at least engage in friendly conversation with his roommates. Since he would likely not go into their field, he didn't need to go into full research mode. When we read to introduce new content, we can start off small and increase to better and more sophisticated sources. Much of our further study and reading depends on the sources we originally read, our purpose for finding out about this new topic, and our interest level.

Chances are, you have done this sort of exploratory reading before. You may read reviews of a new restaurant or look at what people say about a movie you aren't sure you want to spend the money to see at the theater. This reading helps you decide. In academic settings, much of what you read in your courses may be relatively new content to you. You may have heard the word *volcano* and have a general notion of what it means, but until you study geology and other sciences in depth, you may not have a full understanding of the environmental origins, ecological impacts, and societal and historic responses to volcanoes. These perspectives will come from reading and digesting various material. When you are working with new content, you may need to schedule more time for reading and comprehending the information because you may need to look up unfamiliar terminology and

you may have to stop more frequently to make sure you are truly grasping what the material means. When you have few ways to connect new material to your own prior knowledge, you have to work more diligently to comprehend it.

Application

Try an experiment with a group of classmates. Without looking on the Internet, try to brainstorm a list of 10 topics about which all of you may be interested but for which you know very little or nothing at all. Try to make the topics somewhat obscure rather than ordinary—for example, the possibility of the non-planet Pluto being reclassified again as opposed to something like why we need to drink water.

After you have this random list, think of ways you could find information to read about these weird topics. Our short answer is always: Google. But think of other ways as well. How else could you read about these topics if you don't know anything about them? You may well be in a similar circumstance in some of your college classes, so you should listen carefully to your classmates on this one. Think beyond pat answers such as "I'd go to the library," and press for what that researcher would do once at the library. What types of articles or books would you try to find? One reason that you should not always ignore the idea of doing research at the physical library is because once you are there and looking for information, you have a vast number of other sources readily available to you in a highly organized location. You also can tap into the human resources represented by the research librarians who likely can redirect you if you cannot find appropriate sources.

Reading to Comprehend Familiar Content

Reading about unfamiliar content is one thing, but what if you do know something about a topic already? Do you really still need to keep reading about it? Probably. For example, what if during the brainstorming activity in the previous section, you secretly felt rather smug because you know about the demotion of the one-time planet Pluto and that there is currently quite the scientific debate going on about that whole de-planet-ation thing. Of course, you didn't say anything during the study session, mostly to spare your classmates any embarrassment, but you are pretty familiar with Pluto-gate. So now what? Can you learn anything new?

Again—probably. When did Pluto's qualifications to be considered a planet come into question? What are the qualifications for being considered a planet? Why? Who even gets to decide these things? Why was it called *Pluto* in the first place? On Amazon alone, you can find hundreds of books about the once-planet Pluto (not to be confused with the Disney dog also named Pluto). A Google search brings up over 34 million options for your reading pleasure. You'll have plenty to read, even if you do know something or quite a bit about a topic, but you'll approach reading about a familiar topic and an unfamiliar one differently.

With familiar content, you can do some initial skimming to determine what you already know in the book or article, and mark what may be new information or a different perspective. You may not have to give your full attention to the information you know, but you will spend more time on the new viewpoints so you can determine how this new data meshes with what you already know. Is this writer claiming a radical new definition for the topic or an entirely opposite way to consider the subject matter, connecting it to other topics or disciplines in ways you have never considered?

When college students encounter material in a discipline-specific context and have some familiarity with the topic, they sometimes can allow themselves to become a bit overconfident about their knowledge level. Just because a student may have read an article or two or may have seen a TV documentary on a subject such as the criminal mind, that does not make them an expert. What makes an expert is a person who thoroughly studies a subject, usually for years, and understands all the possible perspectives of a subject as well as the potential for misunderstanding due to personal biases and the availability of false information about the topic.

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6.3: Effective Reading Strategies

Allowing Adequate Time for Reading

You should determine the reading requirements and expectations for every class very early in the semester. You also need to understand why you are reading the particular text you are assigned. Do you need to read closely for minute details that determine cause and effect? Or is your instructor asking you to skim several sources so you become more familiar with the topic? Knowing this reasoning will help you decide your timing, what notes to take, and how best to undertake the reading assignment.

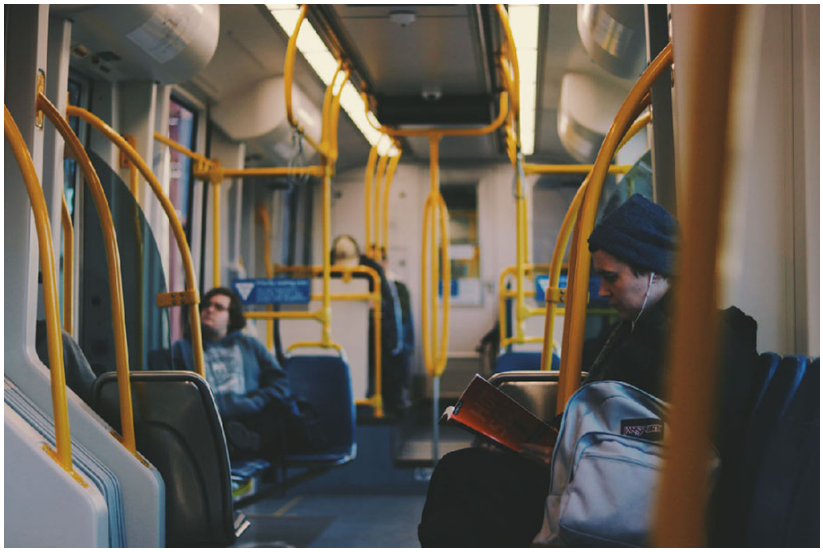


Figure 6.3: If you plan to make time for reading while you commute, remember that unexpected events like delays and cancellations could impact your concentration.

Depending on the makeup of your schedule, you may end up reading both primary sources—such as legal documents, historic letters, or diaries—as well as textbooks, articles, and secondary sources, such as summaries or argumentative essays that use primary sources to stake a claim. You may also need to read current journalistic texts to stay current in local or global affairs. A realistic approach to scheduling your time to allow you to read and review all the reading you have for the semester will help you accomplish what can sometimes seem like an overwhelming task.

When you allow adequate time in your hectic schedule for reading, you are investing in your own success. Reading isn't a magic pill, but it may seem like it when you consider all the benefits people reap from this ordinary practice. Famous successful people throughout history have been voracious readers. In fact, former U.S. president Harry Truman once said, "Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers." Writer of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, inventor, and also former U.S. president Thomas Jefferson claimed "I cannot live without books" at a time when keeping and reading books was an expensive pastime. Knowing what it meant to be kept from the joys of reading, 19th-century abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, "Once you learn to read, you will be forever free." And finally, George R. R. Martin, the prolific author of the wildly successful *Game of Thrones* empire, declared, "A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies . . . The man who never reads lives only one."

You can make time for reading in a number of ways that include determining your usual reading pace and speed, scheduling active reading sessions, and practicing recursive reading strategies.

Determining Reading Speed and Pacing

To determine your reading speed, select a section of text—passages in a textbook or pages in a novel. Time yourself reading that material for exactly 5 minutes, and note how much reading you accomplished in those 5 minutes. Multiply the amount of reading you accomplished in 5 minutes by 12 to determine your average reading pace (5 times 12 equals the 60 minutes of an hour). Of course, your reading pace will be different and take longer if you are taking notes while you read, but this calculation of reading pace gives you a good way to estimate your reading speed that you can adapt to other forms of reading.

Example Reading Times

Example Reading Times

Example Reading Times			
Reader	**Pages Read in 5 Minutes**	**Pages per Hour**	**Approximate Hours to Read 500 Pages**
Marta	4	48	10 hours, 30 minutes
Jordi	3	36	13 hours
Estevan	5	60	8 hours, 20 minutes

So, for instance, if Marta was able to read 4 pages of a dense novel for her English class in 5 minutes, she should be able to read about 48 pages in one hour. Knowing this, Marta can accurately determine how much time she needs to devote to finishing the novel within a set amount of time, instead of just guessing. If the novel Marta is reading is 497 pages, then Marta would take the total page count (497) and divide that by her hourly reading rate (48 pages/hour) to determine that she needs about 10 to 11 hours overall. To finish the novel spread out over two weeks, Marta needs to read a little under an hour a day to accomplish this goal.

Calculating your reading rate in this manner does not take into account days where you're too distracted and you have to reread passages or days when you just aren't in the mood to read. And your reading rate will likely vary depending on how dense the content you're reading is (e.g., a complex textbook vs. a comic book). Your pace may slow down somewhat if you are not very interested in what the text is about. What this method *will* help you do is be realistic about your reading time as opposed to waging a guess based on nothing and then becoming worried when you have far more reading to finish than the time available.

Scheduling Set Times for Active Reading

Active reading takes longer than reading through passages without stopping. You may not need to read your latest sci-fi series actively while you're lounging on the beach, but many other reading situations demand more attention from you. Active reading is particularly important for college courses. You are a scholar actively engaging with the text by posing questions, seeking answers, and clarifying any confusing elements. Plan to spend at least twice as long to read actively than to read passages without taking notes or otherwise marking select elements of the text.

To determine the time you need for active reading, use the same calculations you use to determine your traditional reading speed and double it. Remember that you need to determine your reading pace for all the classes you have in a particular semester and multiply your speed by the number of classes you have that require different types of reading.

Reading Times

Example Active Reading Times				
Reader	**Pages Read in 5 Minutes**	**Pages per Hour**	**Approximate Hours to Read 500 Pages**	**Approximate Hours to Actively Read 500 Pages**
Marta	4	48	10 hours, 30 minutes	21 hours
Jordi	3	36	13 hours	26 hours
Estevan	5	60	8 hours, 20 minutes	16 hours, 40 minutes

Practicing Recursive Reading Strategies

One fact about reading for college courses that may become frustrating is that, in a way, it never ends. For all the reading you do, you end up doing even more rereading. It may be the same content, but you may be reading the passage more than once to detect the emphasis the writer places on one aspect of the topic or how frequently the writer dismisses a significant counterargument. This rereading is called recursive reading.

For most of what you read at the college level, you are trying to make sense of the text for a specific purpose—not just because the topic interests or entertains you. You need your full attention to decipher everything that's going on in complex reading material—and you even need to be considering what the writer of the piece may *not* be including and why. This is why reading for comprehension is recursive.

Specifically, this boils down to seeing reading not as a formula but as a process that is far more circular than linear. You may read a selection from beginning to end, which is an excellent starting point, but for comprehension, you'll need to go back and reread passages to determine meaning and make connections between the reading and the bigger learning environment that led you to the selection—that may be a single course or a program in your college, or it may be the larger discipline, such as all biologists or the community of scholars studying beach erosion.

People often say writing is rewriting. For college courses, reading is rereading.

Strong readers engage in numerous steps, sometimes combining more than one step simultaneously, but knowing the steps nonetheless. They include, not always in this order:

- bringing any prior knowledge about the topic to the reading session,
- asking yourself pertinent questions, both orally and in writing, about the content you are reading,
- inferring and/or implying information from what you read,
- learning unfamiliar discipline-specific terms,
- evaluating what you are reading, and eventually,
- applying what you're reading to other learning and life situations you encounter.

Let's break these steps into manageable chunks, because you are actually doing quite a lot when you read.



Figure 6.4: The six elements of recursive reading should be considered as a circular, not linear, process.

Asking Questions

Humans are naturally curious beings. As you read actively, you should be asking questions about the topic you are reading. Don't just say the questions in your mind; write them down. You may ask: Why is this topic important? What is the relevance of this topic currently? Was this topic important a long time ago but irrelevant now? Why did my professor assign this reading?

You need a place where you can actually write down these questions; a separate page in your notes is a good place to begin. If you are taking notes on your computer, start a new document and write down the questions. Leave some room to answer the questions when you begin and again after you read.

Inferring and Implying

When you read, you can take the information on the page and *infer*, or conclude responses to related challenges from evidence or from your own reasoning. A student will likely be able to infer what material the professor will include on an exam by taking good

notes throughout the classes leading up to the test.

Writers may *imply* information without directly stating a fact for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a writer may not want to come out explicitly and state a bias, but may imply or hint at his or her preference for one political party or another. You have to read carefully to find implications because they are indirect, but watching for them will help you comprehend the whole meaning of a passage.

Learning Vocabulary

Vocabulary specific to certain disciplines helps practitioners in that field engage and communicate with each other. Few people beyond undertakers and archeologists likely use the term *sarcophagus* in everyday communications, but for those disciplines, it is a meaningful distinction. Looking at the example, you can use context clues to figure out the meaning of the term *sarcophagus* because it is something undertakers and/or archeologists would recognize. At the very least, you can guess that it has something to do with death. As a potential professional in the field you're studying, you need to know the lingo. You may already have a system in place to learn discipline-specific vocabulary, so use what you know works for you. Two strong strategies are to look up words in a dictionary (online or hard copy) to ensure you have the exact meaning for your discipline and to keep a dedicated list of words you see often in your reading. You can list the words with a short definition so you have a quick reference guide to help you learn the vocabulary.

Evaluating

Intelligent people always question and evaluate. This doesn't mean they don't trust others; they just need verification of facts to understand a topic well. It doesn't make sense to learn incomplete or incorrect information about a subject just because you didn't take the time to evaluate all the sources at your disposal. When early explorers were afraid to sail the world for fear of falling off the edge, they weren't stupid; they just didn't have all the necessary data to evaluate the situation.

When you evaluate a text, you are seeking to understand the presented topic. Depending on how long the text is, you will perform a number of steps and repeat many of these steps to evaluate all the elements the author presents. When you evaluate a text, you need to do the following:

- Scan the title and all headings.
- Read through the entire passage fully.
- Question what main point the author is making.
- Decide who the audience is.
- Identify what evidence/support the author uses.
- Consider if the author presents a balanced perspective on the main point.
- Recognize if the author introduced any biases in the text.

When you go through a text looking for each of these elements, you need to go beyond just answering the surface question; for instance, the audience may be a specific field of scientists, but could anyone else understand the text with some explanation? Why would that be important?

Analysis Question

Think of an article you need to read for a class. Take the steps above on how to evaluate a text, and apply the steps to the article. When you accomplish the task in each step, ask yourself and take notes to answer the question: Why is this important? For example, when you read the title, does that give you any additional information that will help you comprehend the text? If the text were written for a different audience, what might the author need to change to accommodate that group? How does an author's bias distort an argument? This deep evaluation allows you to fully understand the main ideas and place the text in context with other material on the same subject, with current events, and within the discipline.

Applying

When you learn something new, it always connects to other knowledge you already have. One challenge we have is applying new information. It may be interesting to know the distance to the moon, but how do we apply it to something we need to do? If your biology instructor asked you to list several challenges of colonizing Mars and you do not know much about that planet's exploration, you may be able to use your knowledge of how far Earth is from the moon to apply it to the new task. You may have to read several other texts in addition to reading graphs and charts to find this information.

That was the challenge the early space explorers faced along with myriad unknowns before space travel was a more regular occurrence. They had to take what they already knew and could study and read about and apply it to an unknown situation. These explorers wrote down their challenges, failures, and successes, and now scientists read those texts as a part of the ever-growing body of text about space travel. Application is a sophisticated level of thinking that helps turn theory into practice and challenges into successes.

Preparing to Read for Specific Disciplines in College

Different disciplines in college may have specific expectations, but you can depend on all subjects asking you to read to some degree. In this college reading requirement, you can succeed by learning to read actively, researching the topic and author, and recognizing how your own preconceived notions affect your reading. Reading for college isn't the same as reading for pleasure or even just reading to learn something on your own because you are casually interested.

In college courses, your instructor may ask you to read articles, chapters, books, or *primary sources* (those original documents about which we write and study, such as letters between historic figures or the Declaration of Independence). Your instructor may want you to have a general background on a topic before you dive into that subject in class, so that you know the history of a topic, can start thinking about it, and can engage in a class discussion with more than a passing knowledge of the issue.

If you are about to participate in an in-depth six-week consideration of the U.S. Constitution but have never read it or anything written about it, you will have a hard time looking at anything in detail or understanding how and why it is significant. As you can imagine, a great deal has been written about the Constitution by scholars and citizens since the late 1700s when it was first put to paper (that's how they did it then). While the actual document isn't that long (about 12–15 pages depending on how it is presented), learning the details on how it came about, who was involved, and why it was and still is a significant document would take a considerable amount of time to read and digest. So, how do you do it all? Especially when you may have an instructor who drops hints that you may also *love* to read a historic novel covering the same time period . . . in your *spare time*, not required, of course! It can be daunting, especially if you are taking more than one course that has time-consuming reading lists. With a few strategic techniques, you can manage it all, but know that you must have a plan and schedule your required reading so you *are* also able to pick up that recommended historic novel—it may give you an entirely new perspective on the issue.

Strategies for Reading in College Disciplines

No universal law exists for how much reading instructors and institutions expect college students to undertake for various disciplines. Suffice it to say, it's a LOT.

For most students, it is the volume of reading that catches them most off guard when they begin their college careers. A full course load might require 10–15 hours of reading per week, some of that covering content that will be more difficult than the reading for other courses.

You cannot possibly read word-for-word every single document you need to read for all your classes. That doesn't mean you give up or decide to only read for your favorite classes or concoct a scheme to read 17 percent for each class and see how that works for you. You need to learn to skim, annotate, and take notes. All of these techniques will help you comprehend more of what you read, which is why we read in the first place. We'll talk more later about annotating and notetaking, but for now consider what you know about skimming as opposed to active reading.

Skimming

Skimming is not just glancing over the words on a page (or screen) to see if any of it sticks. Effective skimming allows you to take in the major points of a passage without the need for a time-consuming reading session that involves your active use of notations and annotations. Often you will need to engage in that painstaking level of active reading, but skimming is the first step—not an alternative to deep reading. The fact remains that neither do you need to read everything nor could you possibly accomplish that given your limited time. So learn this valuable skill of skimming as an accompaniment to your overall study tool kit, and with practice and experience, you will fully understand how valuable it is.

When you skim, look for guides to your understanding: headings, definitions, pull quotes, tables, and context clues. Textbooks are often helpful for skimming—they may already have made some of these skimming guides in bold or a different color, and chapters often follow a predictable outline. Some even provide an overview and summary for sections or chapters. Use whatever you can get, but don't stop there. In textbooks that have some reading guides, or especially in text that does not, look for introductory words such as *First* or *The purpose of this article* . . . or summary words such as *In conclusion* . . . or *Finally*. These guides will help you read only those sentences or paragraphs that will give you the overall meaning or gist of a passage or book.

Now move to the meat of the passage. You want to take in the reading as a whole. For a book, look at the titles of each chapter if available. Read each chapter's introductory paragraph and determine why the writer chose this particular order. Depending on what you're reading, the chapters may be only informational, but often you're looking for a specific argument. What position is the writer claiming? What support, counterarguments, and conclusions is the writer presenting?

Don't think of skimming as a way to buzz through a boring reading assignment. It is a skill you should master so you can engage, at various levels, with all the reading you need to accomplish in college. End your skimming session with a few notes—terms to look up, questions you still have, and an overall summary. And recognize that you likely will return to that book or article for a more thorough reading if the material is useful.

Active Reading Strategies

Active reading differs significantly from skimming or reading for pleasure. You can think of active reading as a sort of conversation between you and the text (maybe between you and the author, but you don't want to get the author's personality too involved in this metaphor because that may skew your engagement with the text).

When you sit down to determine what your different classes expect you to read and you create a reading schedule to ensure you complete all the reading, think about when you should read the material strategically, not just how to *get it all done*. You should read textbook chapters and other reading assignments *before* you go into a lecture about that information. Don't wait to see how the lecture goes before you read the material, or you may not understand the information in the lecture. Reading before class helps you put ideas together between your reading and the information you hear and discuss in class.

Different disciplines naturally have different types of texts, and you need to take this into account when you schedule your time for reading class material. For example, you may look at a poem for your world literature class and assume that it will not take you long to read because it is relatively short compared to the dense textbook you have for your economics class. But reading and understanding a poem can take a considerable amount of time when you realize you may need to stop numerous times to review the separate word meanings and how the words form images and connections throughout the poem.

The SQ3R Reading Strategy

You may have heard of the **SQ3R** method for active reading in your early education. This valuable technique is perfect for college reading. The title stands for **S**urvey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite, **R**eview, and you can use the steps on virtually any assigned passage. Designed by Francis Pleasant Robinson in his 1961 book *Effective Study*, the active reading strategy gives readers a systematic way to work through any reading material.

Survey is similar to skimming. You look for clues to meaning by reading the titles, headings, introductions, summary, captions for graphics, and keywords. You can survey almost anything connected to the reading selection, including the copyright information, the date of the journal article, or the names and qualifications of the author(s). In this step, you decide what the general meaning is for the reading selection.

Question is your creation of questions to seek the main ideas, support, examples, and conclusions of the reading selection. Ask yourself these questions separately. Try to create valid questions about what you are about to read that have come into your mind as you engaged in the Survey step. Try turning the headings of the sections in the chapter into questions. Next, how does what you're reading relate to you, your school, your community, and the world?

Read is when you actually read the passage. Try to find the answers to questions you developed in the previous step. Decide how much you are reading in chunks, either by paragraph for more complex readings or by section or even by an entire chapter. When you finish reading the selection, stop to make notes. Answer the questions by writing a note in the margin or other white space of the text.

You may also carefully underline or highlight text in addition to your notes. Use caution here that you don't try to rush this step by haphazardly circling terms or the other extreme of underlining huge chunks of text. Don't over-mark. You aren't likely to remember what these cryptic marks mean later when you come back to use this active reading session to study. The text is the source of information—your marks and notes are just a way to organize and make sense of that information.

Recite means to speak out loud. By reciting, you are engaging other senses to remember the material—you read it (visual) and you said it (auditory). Stop reading momentarily in the step to answer your questions or clarify confusing sentences or paragraphs. You can recite a summary of what the text means to you. If you are not in a place where you can verbalize, such as a library or classroom, you can accomplish this step adequately by *saying* it in your head; however, to get the biggest bang for your buck, try to find a place where you can speak aloud. You may even want to try explaining the content to a friend.

Review is a recap. Go back over what you read and add more notes, ensuring you have captured the main points of the passage, identified the supporting evidence and examples, and understood the overall meaning. You may need to repeat some or all of the SQR3 steps during your review depending on the length and complexity of the material. Before you end your active reading session, write a short (no more than one page is optimal) summary of the text you read.

Reading Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary sources are original documents we study and from which we glean information; primary sources include letters, first editions of books, legal documents, and a variety of other texts. When scholars look at these documents to understand a period in history or a scientific challenge and then write about their findings, the scholar's article is considered a secondary source. Readers have to keep several factors in mind when reading both primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources may contain dated material we now know is inaccurate. It may contain personal beliefs and biases the original writer didn't intent to be openly published, and it may even present fanciful or creative ideas that do not support current knowledge. Readers can still gain great insight from primary sources, but readers need to understand the context from which the writer of the primary source wrote the text.

Likewise, secondary sources are inevitably another person's perspective on the primary source, so a reader of secondary sources must also be aware of potential biases or preferences the secondary source writer inserts in the writing that may persuade an incautious reader to interpret the primary source in a particular manner.

For example, if you were to read a secondary source that is examining the U.S. Declaration of Independence (the primary source), you would have a much clearer idea of how the secondary source scholar presented the information from the primary source if you also read the Declaration for yourself instead of trusting the other writer's interpretation. Most scholars are honest in writing secondary sources, but you as a reader of the source are trusting the writer to present a balanced perspective of the primary source. When possible, you should attempt to read a primary source in conjunction with the secondary source. The Internet helps immensely with this practice.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. What is the most influential factor in how thoroughly you read the material for a given course?
    a. How engaging the material is or how much I enjoy reading it.
    b. Whether or not the course is part of my major.
    c. Whether or not the instructor assesses knowledge from the reading (through quizzes, for example), or requires assignments based on the reading.
    d. Whether or not knowledge or information from the reading is required to participate in lecture.
2. What best describes your reading approach for required texts/materials for your classes?
    a. I read all of the assigned material.
    b. I read most of the assigned material.
    c. I skim the text and read the captions, examples, or summaries.
3. What best describes your notetaking style?
    a. I use a systematic method such as the Cornell method or something similar.
    b. I highlight or underline all the important information.
    c. I create outlines and/or note-cards.
    d. I use an app or program.
    e. I write notes in my text (print or digital).
    f. I don't have a style. I just write down what seems important.
    g. I don't take many notes.

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say(opens in new window) surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

What is the most influential factor in how thoroughly you read the material for a given course?

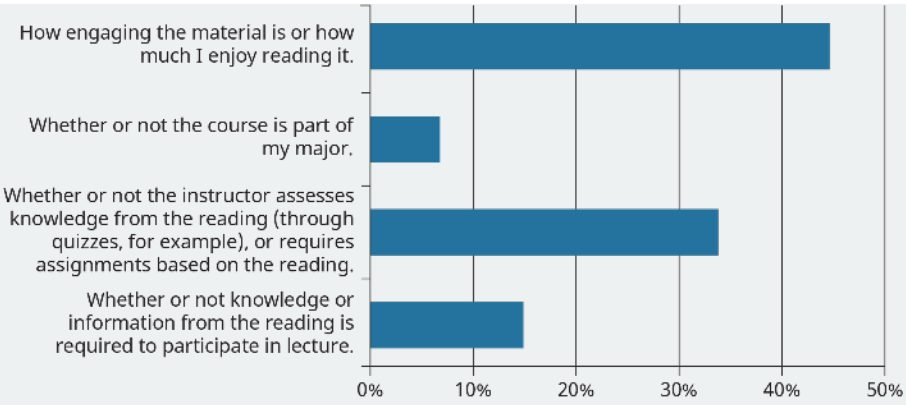


Figure 6.5

What best describes your reading approach for required texts/materials for your classes?

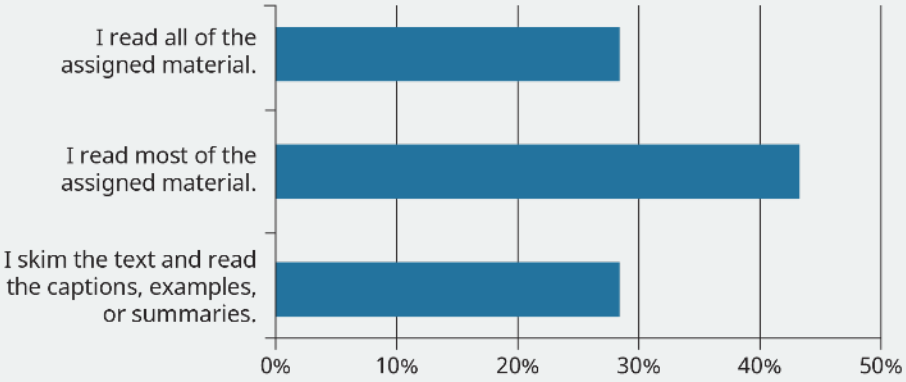


Figure 6.6

What best describes your notetaking style?

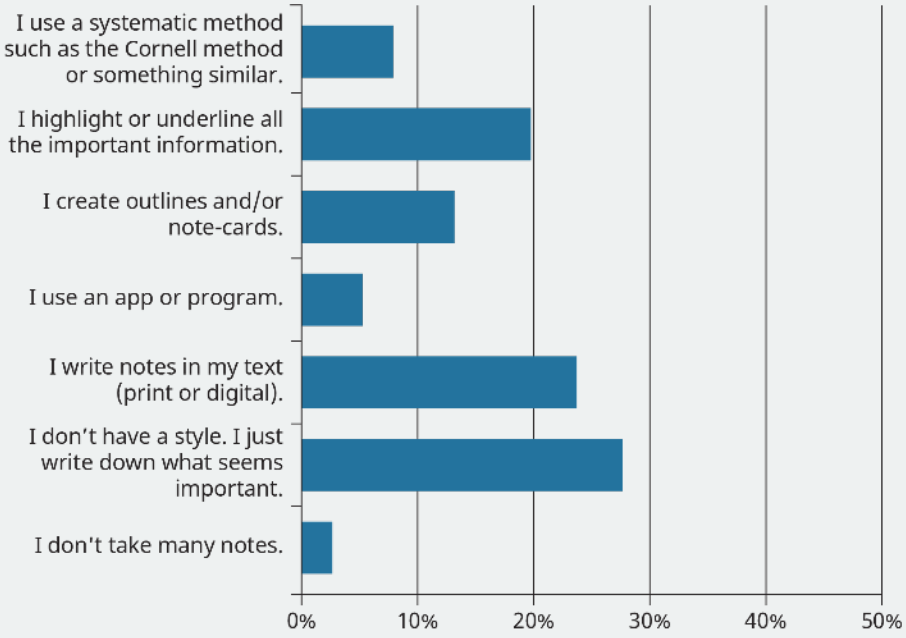


Figure 6.7

Researching Topic and Author

During your preview stage, sometimes called pre-reading, you can easily pick up on information from various sources that may help you understand the material you're reading more fully or place it in context with other important works in the discipline. If

your selection is a book, flip it over or turn to the back pages and look for an author's biography or note from the author. See if the book itself contains any other information about the author or the subject matter.

The main things you need to recall from your reading in college are the topics covered and how the information fits into the discipline. You can find these parts throughout the textbook chapter in the form of headings in larger and bold font, summary lists, and important quotations pulled out of the narrative. Use these features as you read to help you determine what the most important ideas are.

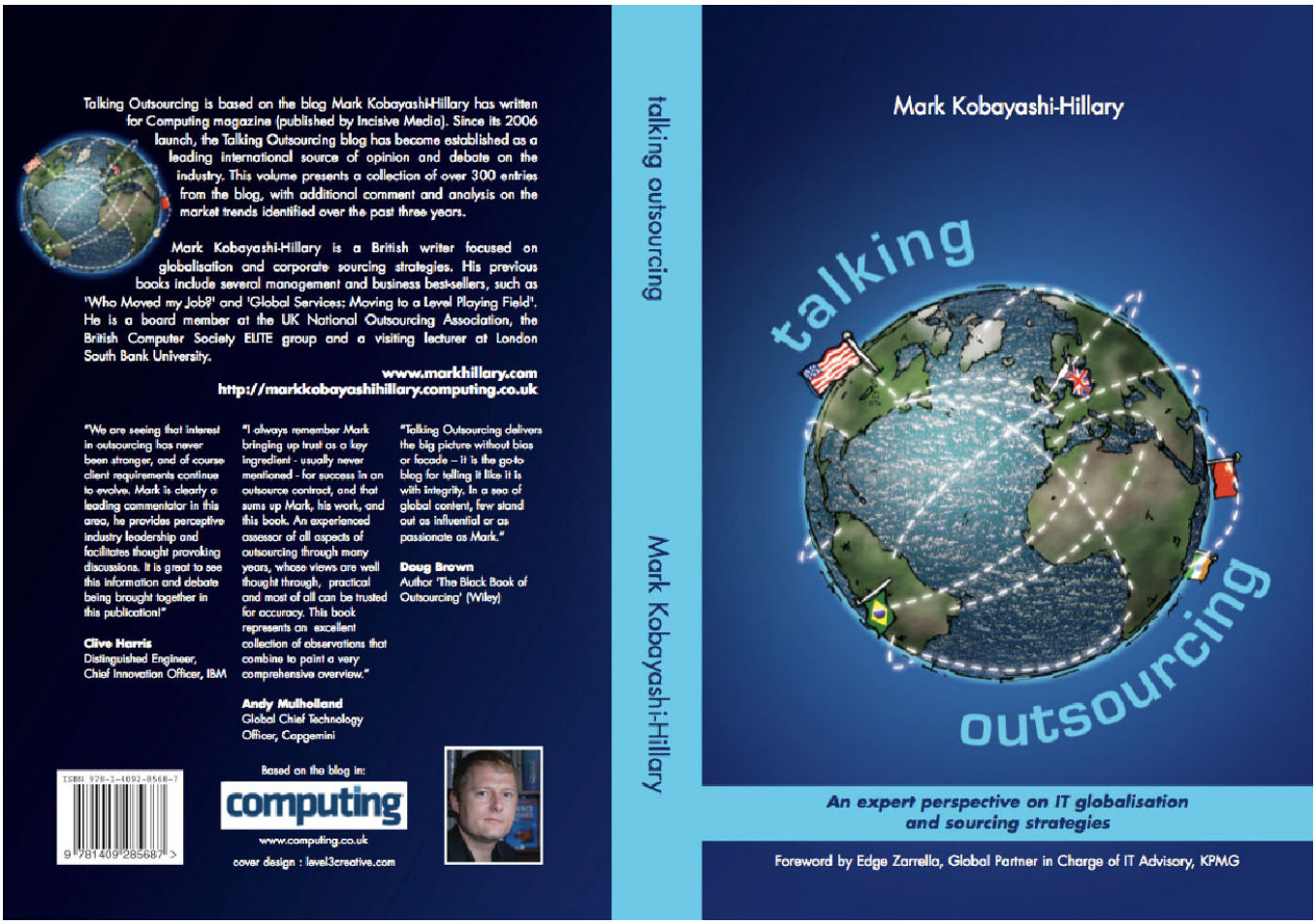


Figure 6.8: Learning about the book you're reading can provide good context and information. Look for an author's biography and forward on the back cover or in the first few pages. (Credit: Mark Hillary / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Remember, many books use quotations about the book or author as testimonials in a marketing approach to sell more books, so these may not be the most reliable sources of unbiased opinions, but it's a start. Sometimes you can find a list of other books the author has written near the front of a book. Do you recognize any of the other titles? Can you do an Internet search for the name of the book or author? Go beyond the search results that want you to buy the book and see if you can glean any other relevant information about the author or the reading selection. Beyond a standard Internet search, try the library article database. These are more relevant to academic disciplines and contain resources you typically will not find in a standard search engine. If you are unfamiliar with how to use the library database, ask a reference librarian on campus. They are often underused resources that can point you in the right direction.

Understanding Your Own Preset Ideas on a Topic

Laura really enjoys learning about environmental issues. She has read many books and watched numerous televised documentaries on this topic and actively seeks out additional information on the environment. While Laura's interest can help her understand a new reading encounter about the environment, Laura also has to be aware that with this interest, she also brings forward her preset ideas and biases about the topic. Sometimes these prejudices against other ideas relate to religion or nationality or even just tradition. Without evidence, thinking the way we always have is not a good enough reason; evidence can change, and at the very

least it needs honest review and assessment to determine its validity. Ironically, we may not want to learn new ideas because that may mean we would have to give up old ideas we have already mastered, which can be a daunting prospect.

With every reading situation about the environment, Laura needs to remain open-minded about what she is about to read and pay careful attention if she begins to ignore certain parts of the text because of her preconceived notions. Learning new information can be very difficult if you balk at ideas that are different from what you've always thought. You may have to force yourself to listen to a different viewpoint multiple times to make sure you are not closing your mind to a viable solution your mindset does not currently allow.

Analysis Question

Can you think of times you have struggled reading college content for a course? Which of these strategies might have helped you understand the content? Why do you think those strategies would work?

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6.4: Are You Ready for the Big Leagues?

Think back to a high school history or literature class. Those were probably the classes in which you had the most reading. You would be assigned a chapter, or a few pages in a chapter, with the expectation that you would be discussing the reading assignment in class. In class, the teacher would guide you and your classmates through a review of your reading and ask questions to keep the discussion moving. The teacher usually was a key part of how you learned from your reading.

If you have been away from school for some time, it's likely that your reading has been fairly casual. While time spent with a magazine or newspaper can be important, it's not the sort of concentrated reading you will do in college. And no one will ask you to write in response to a magazine piece you've read or quiz you about a newspaper article.

In college, reading is much different. You will be expected to read much more. For each hour you spend in the classroom, you will be expected to spend two or more additional hours studying between classes, and most of that will be reading. Assignments will be longer (a couple of chapters is common, compared with perhaps only a few pages in high school) and much more difficult. College textbook authors write using many technical terms and include complex ideas. Many college authors include research, and some textbooks are written in a style you may find very dry. You will also have to read from a variety of sources: your textbook, ancillary materials, primary sources, academic journals, periodicals, and online postings. Your assignments in literature courses will be complete books, possibly with convoluted plots and unusual wording or dialects, and they may have so many characters you'll feel like you need a scorecard to keep them straight.

In college, most instructors do not spend much time reviewing the reading assignment in class. Rather, they expect that you have done the assignment before coming to class and understand the material. The class lecture or discussion is often based on that expectation. Tests, too, are based on that expectation. This is why active reading is so important—it's up to you to do the reading and comprehend what you read.

Note: It may not always be clear on an instructor's syllabus, but a reading assignment listed on any given class date should be read *before* coming to class on that date.

Key Takeaways

- College reading is very different from high school reading.
- You must take personal responsibility for understanding what you read.
- Expect to spend about two or more hours on homework, most of it reading, for every hour you spend in class.
- Reading is a primary means for absorbing ideas in the learning cycle, but it is also very important for the other three aspects of the learning cycle.

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6.5: How Do You Read to Learn?

The four steps of active reading are almost identical to the four phases of the learning cycle—and that is no coincidence! Active reading is learning through reading the written word, so the learning cycle naturally applies. Active reading involves these steps:

1. Preparing
2. Reading
3. Capturing the key ideas
4. Reviewing

Let's take a look at how to use each step when reading.

Preparing to Read

Start by thinking about why your instructor has chosen this text. Has the instructor said anything about the book or the author? Look at the table of contents; how does it compare with the course syllabus? What can you learn about the author from the front matter of the book? Understanding this background will give you the context of the book and help define what is most important in the text. Doing this exercise once per textbook will give you a great deal of insight throughout the course.

Now it is time to develop a plan of attack for your assignment. Your first step in any reading assignment is to understand the context of what you are about to read. Think of your reading assignment in relation to the large themes or goals the instructor has spelled out for the class. Remember that you are not merely reading—you are reading for a purpose. What parts of a reading assignment should you pay special attention to, and what parts can you browse through? As we mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, you will be expected to do a considerable amount of reading in college, and you will not get through it all by reading each and every word with a high level of focus and mental intensity. This is why it is so important to learn to define where to invest your efforts.

Open your text to the assigned pages. What is the chapter title? Is the chapter divided into sections? What are the section titles? Which sections are longer? Are there any illustrations? What are they about? Illustrations in books cost money, so chances are the author and publisher thought these topics were particularly important, or they would not have been included. How about tables? What kinds of information do they show? Are there bold or italicized words? Are these terms you are familiar with, or are they new to you? Are you getting a sense for what is important in the chapter? Why did the author choose to cover certain ideas and to highlight specific ideas with graphics or boldface fonts? What do they tell you about what will be most important for you in your course? What do you think your instructor wants you to get out of the assignment? Why?

Anatomy of a Textbook

Good textbooks are designed to help you learn, not just to present information. They differ from other types of academic publications intended to present research findings, advance new ideas, or deeply examine a specific subject. Textbooks have many features worth exploring because they can help you understand your reading better and learn more effectively. In your textbooks, look for the elements listed in the table below.

Table 6.1 Anatomy of a Textbook

Textbook Feature	What It Is	Why You Might Find It Helpful
Preface or Introduction	A section at the beginning of a book in which the author or editor outlines its purpose and scope, acknowledges individuals who helped prepare the book, and perhaps outlines the features of the book.	You will gain perspective on the author's point of view, what the author considers important. If the preface is written with the student in mind, it will also give you guidance on how to "use" the textbook and its features.
Foreword	A section at the beginning of the book, often written by an expert in the subject matter (different from the author) endorsing the author's work and explaining why the work is significant.	A foreword will give you an idea about what makes this book different from others in the field. It may provide hints as to why your instructor selected the book for your course.

Textbook Feature	What It Is	Why You Might Find It Helpful
Author Profile	A short biography of the author illustrating the author's credibility in the subject matter.	This will help you understand the author's perspective and what the author considers important.
Table of Contents	A listing of all the chapters in the book and, in most cases, primary sections within chapters.	The table of contents is an outline of the entire book. It will be very helpful in establishing links among the text, the course objectives, and the syllabus.
Chapter Preview or Learning Objectives	A section at the beginning of each chapter in which the author outlines what will be covered in the chapter and what the student should expect to know or be able to do at the end of the chapter.	These sections are invaluable for determining what you should pay special attention to. Be sure to compare these outcomes with the objectives stated in the course syllabus.
Introduction	The first paragraph(s) of a chapter, which states the chapter's objectives and key themes. An introduction is also common at the beginning of primary chapter sections.	Introductions to chapters or sections are "must reads" because they give you a road map to the material you are about to read, pointing you to what is truly important in the chapter or section.
Applied Practice Elements	Exercises, activities, or drills designed to let students apply their knowledge gained from the reading. Some of these features may be presented via Web sites designed to supplement the text.	These features provide you with a great way to confirm your understanding of the material. If you have trouble with them, you should go back and reread the section. They also have the additional benefit of improving your recall of the material.
Chapter Summary	A section at the end of a chapter that confirms key ideas presented in the chapter.	It is a good idea to read this section before you read the body of the chapter. It will help you strategize about where you should invest your reading effort.
Review Material	A section at the end of the chapter that includes additional applied practice exercises, review questions, and suggestions for further reading.	The review questions will help you confirm your understanding of the material.
Endnotes and Bibliographies	Formal citations of sources used to prepare the text.	These will help you infer the author's biases and are also valuable if doing further research on the subject for a paper.

Now, before actually starting to read, try to give your reading more direction. Are you ever bored when reading a textbook? Students sometimes feel that about some of their textbooks. In this step, you create a purpose or quest for your reading, and this will help you become more actively engaged and less bored.

Start by checking your attitude: if you are unhappy about the reading assignment and complaining that you even have to read it, you *will* have trouble with the reading. You need to get "psyched" for the assignment. Stoke your determination by setting yourself a reasonable time to complete the assignment and schedule some short breaks for yourself. Approach the reading with a sense of curiosity and thirst for new understanding. Think of yourself more as an investigator looking for answers than a student doing a homework assignment.

Take out your notebook for the class for which you are doing the reading. Remember the Cornell method of note taking from Chapter 4 "Listening, Taking Notes, and Remembering"? You will use the same format here with a narrow column on the left and a wide column on the right. This time, with reading, approach taking notes slightly differently. In the Cornell method used for class

notes, you took notes in the right column and wrote in questions and comments in the left column after class as you reviewed your notes. When using this system with reading, write your questions about the reading first in the left column (spacing them well apart so that you have plenty of room for your notes while you read in the right column). From your preliminary scanning of the pages, as described previously, you should already have questions at your fingertips.

Use your critical thinking skill of questioning what the author is saying. Turn the title of each major section of the reading into a question and write it down in your left column of your notes. For example, if the section title is “The End of the Industrial Revolution,” you might write, “What caused the Industrial Revolution to end?” If the section title is “The Chemistry of Photosynthesis,” you might write, “What chemical reactions take place to cause photosynthesis, and what are the outcomes?” Note that your questions are related to the kind of material you are hearing about in class, and they usually require not a short answer but a thoughtful, complete understanding. Ideally, you should not already know the answer to the questions you are writing! (What fun is a quest if you already know each turn and strategy? Expect to learn something new in your reading even if you are familiar with the topic already.) Finally, also in the left column, jot down any keywords that appear in boldface. You will want to discover their definitions and the significance of each as you read.

Activity: Try It Now!

OK. Time to take a break from reading this book. Choose a textbook in which you have a current reading assignment. Scan the assigned pages, looking for what is really important, and write down your questions using the Cornell method.

Now answer the following questions with a journal entry.

- Do you feel better prepared to read this assignment? How?
- Do you feel more confident?
- Do you feel less overwhelmed?
- Do you feel more focused?

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Alternative Approaches for Preparing to Read

You may have determined that you are more comfortable with the outline or concept map methods of note taking. You can use either of these methods also to prepare for reading. With the outline method, start with the chapter title as your primary heading, then create subheadings for each section, rephrasing each section title in terms of a question.

If you are more comfortable using the concept map method, start with the chapter title as your center and create branches for each section within the chapter. Make sure you phrase each item as a question.

Now Read

Now you are ready to start reading actively. Start by taking a look at your notes; they are your road map. What is the question you would like to answer in the first section? Before you start reading, reflect about what you already know about the subject. Even if you don’t know anything, this step helps put you in the right mind-set to accept new material. Now read through the entire section with the objective of understanding it. Follow these tips while reading, but do not start taking notes or highlighting text at this point:

- Look for answers to the questions you wrote.
- Pay particular attention to the first and last lines of each paragraph.
- Think about the relationships among section titles, boldface words, and graphics.

- Skim quickly over parts of the section that are not related to the key questions.

After reading the section, can you answer the section question you earlier wrote in your notes? Did you discover additional questions that you should have asked or that were not evident from the title of the section? Write them down now on your notes page. Can you define the keywords used in the text? If you can't do either of these things, go back and reread the section.

Capture the Key Ideas

Once you can answer your questions effectively and can define the new and keywords, it is time to commit these concepts to your notes and to your memory. Start by writing the answers to your questions in your notes in the right column. Also define the keywords you found in the reading.

Now is also the time to go back and reread the section with your highlighter or pencil to call out key ideas and words and make notes in your margins. Marking up your book may go against what you were told in high school, when the school owned the books and expected to use them year after year. In college, *you* bought the book. Make it truly yours. Although some students may tell you that you can get more cash by selling a used book that is not marked up, this should *not* be a concern at this time—that's not nearly as important as understanding the reading and doing well in the class!

The purpose of marking your textbook is to make it your personal studying assistant with the key ideas called out in the text. Most readers tend to highlight too much, however, hiding key ideas in a sea of yellow lines. When it comes to highlighting, less is more. Think critically before you highlight. Your choices will have a big impact on what you study and learn for the course. Make it your objective to highlight no more than 10 percent of the text.

Use your pencil also to make annotations in the margin. Use a symbol like an exclamation mark (*!*) or an asterisk (*) to mark an idea that is particularly important. Use a question mark (*?*) to indicate something you don't understand or are unclear about. Box new words, then write a short definition in the margin. Use "TQ" (for "test question") or some other shorthand or symbol to signal key things that may appear in test or quiz questions. Write personal notes on items where you disagree with the author. Don't feel you have to use the symbols listed here; create your own if you want, but be consistent. Your notes won't help you if the first question you later have is "I wonder what I meant by that?"

If you are reading an essay from a magazine or an academic journal, remember that such articles are typically written in response to other articles. Be on the lookout for signal words when you listen. This applies to reading, too. You'll need to be especially alert to signals like "according to" or "Jones argues," which make it clear that the ideas don't belong to the author of the piece you are reading. Be sure to note when an author is quoting someone else or summarizing another person's position. Sometimes, students in a hurry to get through a complicated article don't clearly distinguish the author's ideas from the ideas the author argues against. Other words like "yet" or "however" indicate a turn from one idea to another. Words like "critical," "significant," and "important" signal ideas you should look at closely.

After annotating, you are ready to read the next section.

Reviewing What You Read

When you have completed each of the sections for your assignment, you should review what you have read. Start by answering these questions: "What did I learn?" and "What does it mean?" Next, write a summary of your assigned reading, in your own words, in the box at the base of your notepaper. Working from your notes, cover up the answers to your questions and answer each of your questions aloud. (Yes, out loud. Remember, memory is improved by using as many senses as possible?) Think about how each idea relates to material the instructor is covering in class. Think about how this new knowledge may be applied in your next class.

If the text has review questions at the end of the chapter, answer those, too. Talk to other students about the reading assignment. Merge your reading notes with your class notes and review both together. How does your reading increase your understanding of what you have covered in class and vice versa?

Strategies for Textbook Reading

The four steps to active reading provide a proven approach to effective learning from texts. Following are some strategies you can use to enhance your reading even further:

- **Pace yourself.** Figure out how much time you have to complete the assignment. Divide the assignment into smaller blocks rather than trying to read the entire assignment in one sitting. If you have a week to do the assignment, for example, divide the

work into five daily blocks, not seven; that way you won't be behind if something comes up to prevent you from doing your work on a given day. If everything works out on schedule, you'll end up with an extra day for review.

- **Schedule your reading.** Set aside blocks of time, preferably at the time of the day when you are most alert, to do your reading assignments. Don't just leave them for the end of the day after completing written and other assignments.
- **Get yourself in the right space.** Choose to read in a quiet, well-lit space. Your chair should be comfortable but provide good support. Libraries were designed for reading—they should be your first option! Don't use your bed for reading textbooks; since the time you were read bedtime stories, you have probably associated reading in bed with preparation for sleeping. The combination of the cozy bed, comforting memories, and dry text is sure to invite some shut-eye!
- **Avoid distractions.** Active reading takes place in your short-term memory. Every time you move from task to task, you have to "reboot" your short-term memory and you lose the continuity of active reading. Multitasking—listening to music or texting on your cell while you read—will cause you to lose your place and force you to start over again. Every time you lose focus, you cut your effectiveness and increase the amount of time you need to complete the assignment.
- **Avoid reading fatigue.** Work for about fifty minutes, and then give yourself a break for five to ten minutes. Put down the book, walk around, get a snack, stretch, or do some deep knee bends. Short physical activity will do wonders to help you feel refreshed.
- **Read your most difficult assignments early** in your reading time, when you are freshest.
- **Make your reading interesting.** Try connecting the material you are reading with your class lectures or with other chapters. Ask yourself where you disagree with the author. Approach finding answers to your questions like an investigative reporter. Carry on a mental conversation with the author.

Key Takeaways

- Consider why the instructor has selected the particular text. Map the table of contents to the course syllabus.
- Understand how your textbook is put together and what features might help you with your reading.
- Plan your reading by scanning the reading assignment first, then create questions based on the section titles. These will help you focus and prioritize your reading.
- Use the Cornell method for planning your reading and recording key ideas.
- Don't try to highlight your text as you read the first time through. At that point, it is hard to tell what is really important.
- End your reading time by reviewing your notes.
- Pace yourself and read in a quiet space with minimal distractions.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. List the four steps to active reading. Which one do you think will take most time? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Think of your most difficult textbook. What features can you use to help you understand the material better?

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3. What things most commonly distract you when you are reading? What can you do to control these distractions?

_____

_____

4. List three specific places on your campus or at home that are appropriate for you to do your reading assignments. Which is best suited? What can you do to improve that reading environment?

_____

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6.6: Dealing with Special Texts

While the active reading process outlined earlier is very useful for most assignments, you should consider some additional strategies for reading assignments in other subjects.

Mathematics Texts

Mathematics present unique challenges in that they typically contain a great number of formulas, charts, sample problems, and exercises. Follow these guidelines:

- Do not skip over these special elements as you work through the text.
- Read the formulas and make sure you understand the meaning of all the factors.
- Substitute actual numbers for the variables and work through the formula.
- Make formulas real by applying them to real-life situations.
- Do all exercises within the assigned text to make sure you understand the material.
- Since mathematical learning builds upon prior knowledge, do not go on to the next section until you have mastered the material in the current section.
- Seek help from the instructor or teaching assistant during office hours if need be.

Reading Graphics

You read earlier about noticing graphics in your text as a signal of important ideas. But it is equally important to understand what the graphics intend to convey. Textbooks contain tables, charts, maps, diagrams, illustrations, photographs, and the newest form of graphics—Internet URLs for accessing text and media material. Many students are tempted to skip over graphic material and focus only on the reading. Don't. Take the time to read and understand your textbook's graphics. They will increase your understanding, and because they engage different comprehension processes, they will create different kinds of memory links to help you remember the material.

To get the most out of graphic material, use your critical thinking skills and question why each illustration is present and what it means. Don't just glance at the graphics; take time to read the title, caption, and any labeling in the illustration. In a chart, read the data labels to understand what is being shown or compared. Think about projecting the data points beyond the scope of the chart; what would happen next? Why?

Table 6.2 "Common Uses of Textbook Graphics" shows the most common graphic elements and notes what they do best. This knowledge may help guide your critical analysis of graphic elements.

Table 6.2 Common Uses of Textbook Graphics

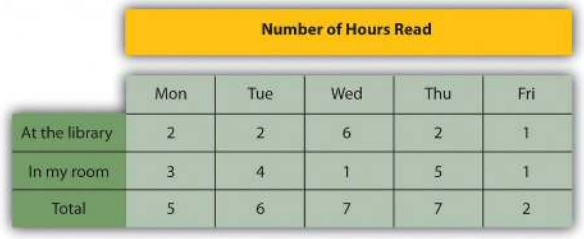
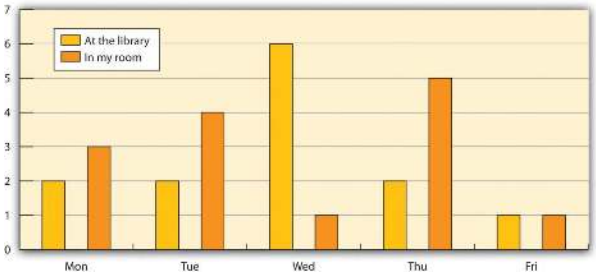
Textbook Graphics	
Figure 6.9 Table  	Most often used to present raw data. Understand what is being measured. What data points stand out as very high or low? Why? Ask yourself what might cause these measurements to change.

Figure 6.9 Table

	Number of Hours Read				
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
At the library	2	2	6	2	1
In my room	3	4	1	5	1
Total	5	6	7	7	2

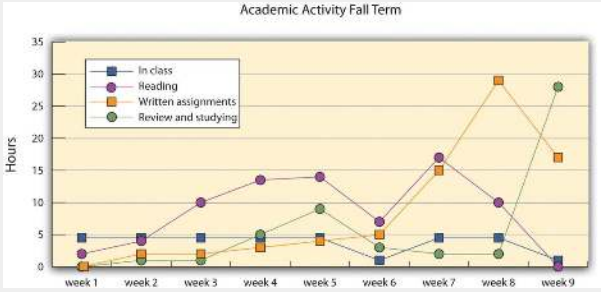
Most often used to present raw data. Understand what is being measured. What data points stand out as very high or low? Why? Ask yourself what might cause these measurements to change.

Figure 6.10 Bar Chart



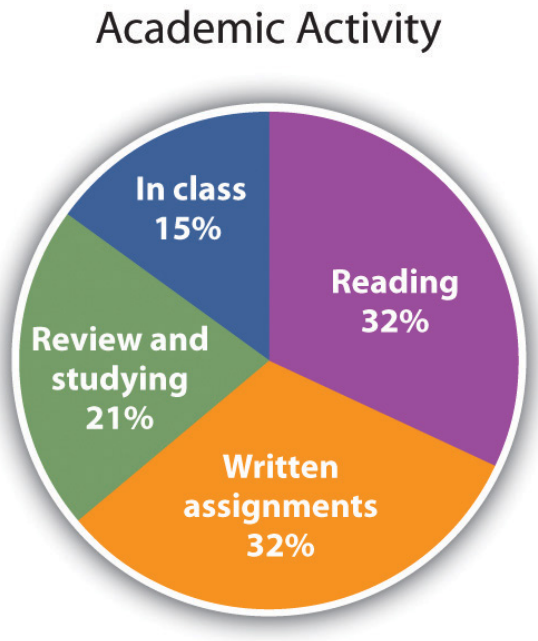
Used to compare quantitative data or show changes in data over time. Also can be used to compare a limited number of data series over time. Often an illustration of data that can also be presented in a table.

Figure 6.11 Line Chart



Used to illustrate a trend in a series of data. May be used to compare different series over time.

Figure 6.12 Pie Chart



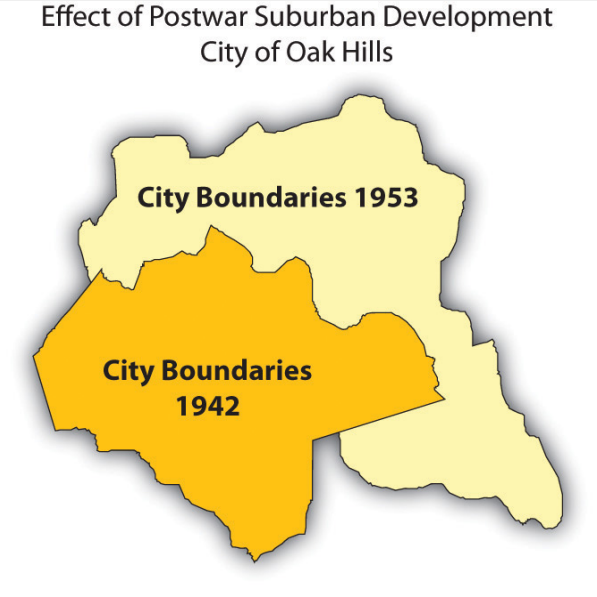
Used to illustrate the distribution or share of elements as a part of a whole. Ask yourself what effect a change in distribution of factors would have on the whole.

Figure 6.9 Table

	Number of Hours Read				
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
At the library	2	2	6	2	1
In my room	3	4	1	5	1
Total	5	6	7	7	2

Most often used to present raw data. Understand what is being measured. What data points stand out as very high or low? Why? Ask yourself what might cause these measurements to change.

Figure 6.13 Map



Used to illustrate geographic distributions or movement across geographical space. In some cases can be used to show concentrations of populations or resources. When encountering a map, ask yourself if changes or comparisons are being illustrated. Understand how those changes or comparisons relate to the material in the text.

Figure 6.14 Photograph

Used to represent a person, a condition, or an idea discussed in the text. Sometimes photographs serve mainly to emphasize an important person or situation, but photographs can also be used to make a point. Ask yourself if the photograph reveals a biased point of view.

Figure 6.9 Table

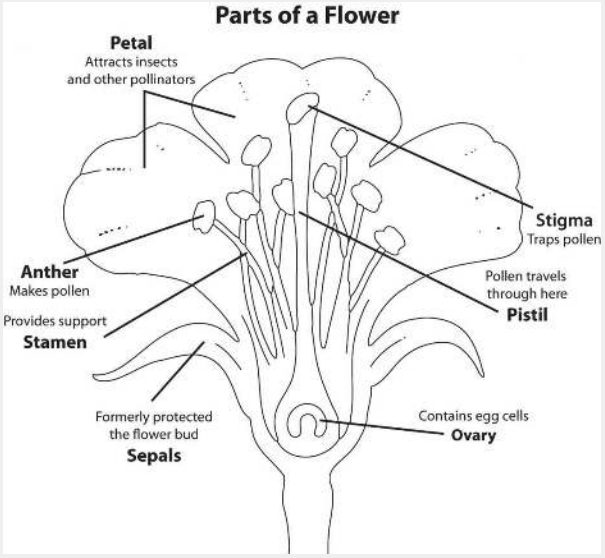
	Number of Hours Read				
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
At the library	2	2	6	2	1
In my room	3	4	1	5	1
Total	5	6	7	7	2

Most often used to present raw data. Understand what is being measured. What data points stand out as very high or low? Why? Ask yourself what might cause these measurements to change.



Wikimedia Commons – public domain.

Figure 6.15 Illustration



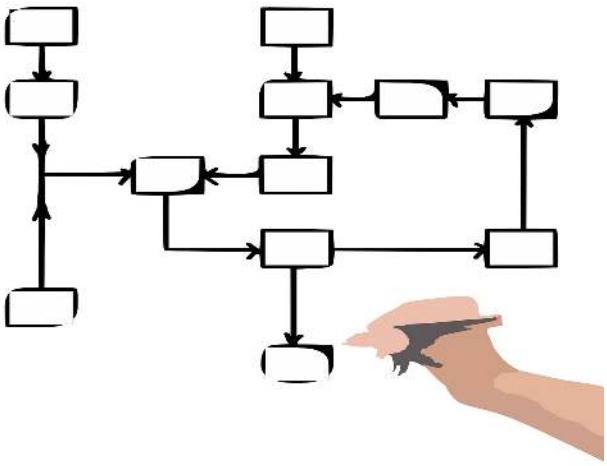
Used to illustrate parts of an item. Invest time in these graphics. They are often used as parts of quizzes or exams. Look carefully at the labels. These are vocabulary words you should be able to define.

Figure 6.9 Table

	Number of Hours Read				
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
At the library	2	2	6	2	1
In my room	3	4	1	5	1
Total	5	6	7	7	2

Most often used to present raw data. Understand what is being measured. What data points stand out as very high or low? Why? Ask yourself what might cause these measurements to change.

Figure 6.16 Flowchart or Diagram



Commonly used to illustrate processes. As you look at diagrams, ask yourself, “What happens first? What needs to happen to move to the next step?”

Scientific Texts

Science occurs through the experimental process: posing hypotheses, and then using experimental data to prove or disprove them. When reading scientific texts, look for hypotheses and list them in the left column of your notes pages. Then make notes on the proof (or disproof) in the right column. In scientific studies these are as important as the questions you ask for other texts. Think critically about the hypotheses and the experiments used to prove or disprove them. Think about questions like these:

- Can the experiment or observation be repeated? Would it reach the same results?
- Why did these results occur? What kinds of changes would affect the results?
- How could you change the experiment design or method of observation? How would you measure your results?
- What are the conclusions reached about the results? Could the same results be interpreted in a different way?

Social Sciences Texts

Social sciences texts, such as those for history, economics, and political science classes, often involve interpretation where the authors’ points of view and theories are as important as the facts they present. Put your critical thinking skills into overdrive when you are reading these texts. As you read, ask yourself questions such as the following:

- Why is the author using this argument?
- Is it consistent with what we’re learning in class?
- Do I agree with this argument?
- Would someone with a different point of view dispute this argument?
- What key ideas would be used to support a counterargument?

Record your reflections in the margins and in your notes.

Social science courses often require you to read primary source documents. Primary sources include documents, letters, diaries, newspaper reports, financial reports, lab reports, and records that provide firsthand accounts of the events, practices, or conditions

you are studying. Start by understanding the author(s) of the document and his or her agenda. Infer their intended audience. What response did the authors hope to get from their audience? Do you consider this a bias? How does that bias affect your thinking about the subject? Do you recognize personal biases that affect how you might interpret the document?

Foreign Language Texts

Reading texts in a foreign language is particularly challenging—but it also provides you with invaluable practice and many new vocabulary words in your "new" language. It is an effort that really pays off. Start by analyzing a short portion of the text (a sentence or two) to see what you do know. Remember that all languages are built on idioms as much as on individual words. Do any of the phrase structures look familiar? Can you infer the meaning of the sentences? Do they make sense based on the context? If you still can't make out the meaning, choose one or two words to look up in your dictionary and try again. Look for longer words, which generally are the nouns and verbs that will give you meaning sooner. Don't rely on a dictionary (or an online translator); a word-for-word translation does not always yield good results. For example, the Spanish phrase "Entre y tome asiento" might correctly be translated (word for word) as "Between and drink a seat," which means nothing, rather than its actual meaning, "Come in and take a seat."

Reading in a foreign language is hard and tiring work. Make sure you schedule significantly more time than you would normally allocate for reading in your own language and reward yourself with more frequent breaks. But don't shy away from doing this work; the best way to learn a new language is practice, practice, practice.

Note to English-language learners: You may feel that every book you are assigned is in a foreign language. If you do struggle with the high reading level required of college students, check for college resources that may be available to ESL (English as a second language) learners. Never feel that those resources are only for weak students. As a second-language learner, you possess a rich linguistic experience that many American-born students should envy. You simply need to account for the difficulties you'll face and (like anyone learning a new language) practice, practice, practice.

Activity: Lost in Translation

Go online and open a Web-based language translator such as Babel Fish (www.babelfish.yahoo.com). In the translation window, type in a phrase that you or your friends might say in your daily conversations, including any slang terms. Translate it to another language (any language will do) and then copy the translation. Then open a new translation window, paste the translated phrase, and translate back from that language to English. Does it match your original phrase? Try this with other languages to see if your results vary. What does this tell you about automated translation programs?

Integrating Reading with Your Family Life

If you are a parent of young children, you know how hard it is to get your schoolwork done with them around. You might want to consider some of these strategies.

- Don't expect that you will often get long periods of uninterrupted reading time. Find or create short periods of time to do things like scanning the assignment and preparing your questions.
- Schedule your heavy reading for early in the morning or late at night when the children are sleeping. Don't use that precious uninterrupted time for watching television or washing the dishes; those can be done when the kids are awake.
- Read to your children and then tell them it's time for everybody to read their own book. (Even very young children like to "read" books by looking at the pictures.) You'll be surprised how long kids will read, especially when they see Mommy and Daddy reading, too.
- Take your reading with you. You can get a lot of reading done while waiting for your children during music or dance class or soccer practice, or while you wait to pick them up at school.
- Share child-care responsibilities with other students who also have children. This can buy an additional big block of reading time for each of you.

Online Reading

When accessing materials online, you should ask additional questions in order to fully understand the assignment. The Internet provides access to virtually endless numbers of articles on just about any subject. The following five steps will help you understand the "story behind the story" in online materials and also evaluate the reliability of the material, especially if this is a reading you selected yourself for research or independent work.

Consider what others are saying about the site. Does the author offer references, reviews, or quotes about the material? Check blogs to see what other people think of the author or Web site by searching for the title of the article together with the word “review” or “blog.” Enter the Web site’s URL in the search engine at Alexa.com(opens in new window) [www.Alexa.com(opens in new window)] to see what other Web sites link to the one you are reading.

1. Look at the URL, the Web address. It can give you important information about the reliability and intentions of the site. Start with the page publisher (the words following the “www” or between the “http//” and the first single backslash). Have you heard of this source before? If so, would you consider it a reliable source for the kind of material you are about to read? For example, you might happen upon an article about cholesterol with this URL: AmericanHeart.org(opens in new window) [www.americanheart.org]. The page publisher identifier shows this is the Web site of the American Heart Association, a reputable source of health information. Now consider the domain type in the URL, which follows the period after the publisher. “.com” and “.biz” are used by commercial enterprises, “.org” is normally used by nonprofit organizations, and “.edu” is reserved for educational institutions. None of these is necessarily bad or good, but it may give you a sense of the motivation for publishing this material. For example, a different article about cholesterol on a pharmaceutical company’s Web site might be biased toward treatment of high cholesterol with a drug the company makes.
2. Look at the page’s perimeter and the “masthead” at the top of the page. What name is listed there? Is it the same entity as the one listed as the publisher in the URL? Are you dealing with a company or the Web site of an individual—and how might that affect the quality of the information on this site? What can you learn from poking around with navigation tabs or buttons: what do they tell you about the objective of the Web site? Look for a tab labeled “About Us” or “Biography”; those pages will give you additional background on the writer.
3. Check the quality of the information. Based on what you learned earlier, ask yourself if the information from this Web site is reliable for your needs. If the material you are reading was originally published elsewhere, was that publication reputable, such as an academic or peer-reviewed journal or a well-known newspaper? If you need the most up-to-date information, check the bottom of the page, where a “last modified” date may be shown. Does the author reference reliable sources? What links does the author offer to other Web sites? Are they active and reputable?
4. Trust your impressions about the material. You have recently been exposed to related material in your class and textbooks. What does your “gut” say about the material? Ask yourself why the Web site was written. (To inform and provide data or facts? To sell something? To promote a cause? To parody?) If you are unsure of the quality of the information, don’t use it or check first with your instructor or college librarian before you do.

Additional Resources

University of California Berkeley Library. [www.lib.berkeley.edu]

Cornell University Olin and Uris Libraries [guides.library.cornell.edu]

Key Takeaways

- Do all the exercises in math textbooks; apply the formulas to real-world situations.
- Each type of graphic material has its own strength; those strengths are usually clues about what the author wants to emphasize by using the graphic.
- Look for statements of hypotheses and experimental design when reading science texts.
- History, economics, and political science texts are heavily influenced by interpretation. Think critically about what you are reading.
- Working with foreign language texts requires more time and more frequent breaks. Don’t rely on word-for-word translations.
- If you need to read with children around, don’t put off your reading until you have a large block of time; there is much you can do with short reading periods.
- Online materials offer endless possibilities, but select Web sites for information carefully to ensure reliability and currency.

Checkpoint Exercise

Go online and find an article about something you are reading about in a textbook. (Use the five steps to evaluate the article.) Scan both the Web page and the equivalent textbook section and list your questions for both. Are the questions different, or are many similar? How does each author answer those questions? Which do you think is better written and more authoritative? Why?

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6.7: Building Your Vocabulary

Both leaders and advertisers inspire people to take action by choosing their words carefully and using them precisely. A good vocabulary is essential for success in any role that involves communication, and just about every role in life requires good communication skills. We include this section on vocabulary in this chapter on reading because of the connections between vocabulary building and reading. Building your vocabulary will make your reading easier, and reading is the best way to build your vocabulary.

Learning new words can be fun and does not need to involve tedious rote memorization of word lists. The first step, as in any other aspect of the learning cycle, is to prepare yourself to learn. Consciously decide that you want to improve your vocabulary; decide you want to be a student of words. Work to become more aware of the words around you: the words you hear, the words you read, the words you say, and those you write.

Do you have a lazy vocabulary? Wake it up with the "lazy speech" exercise.

Activity: Lazy Speech

Recruit a friend you spend a lot of time with. Give them an index card with the following words written on it and ask them to keep a tally of the number of times you say these words sometime when you are together for an hour or more. If you have a small recorder, give it to the person and ask them to record you at a time you are not aware of it.

- Ummm or Uhh
- Like
- They
- You know
- OK
- Yeah
- Ohmigawd

Include in this list any other words, including expletives, that you may be using without thinking.

Are there words you constantly overuse? Were you surprised at how often you used some of these expressions? Now that you are aware of the frequency you use certain expressions, what strategies can you use to control or substitute more articulate and expressive words for them?

Building a stronger vocabulary should start with a strong foundation of healthy word use. Just as you can bring your overuse of certain words to your conscious awareness in the previous activity, think about the kinds of words you should be using more frequently. Some of the words you might consciously practice are actually very simple ones you already know but significantly underuse or use imprecisely. For example, many students say he or she "goes" instead of he or she "says." If you take it a step further, you can consider more accurate choices still. Perhaps, he "claims" or she "argues." Maybe he "insists" or "assumes." Or it could be that she "believes" or she "suggests." This may seem like a small matter, but it's important from both a reader's and a writer's perspective to distinguish among the different meanings. And you can develop greater awareness by bringing some of these words into your speech.

These habits are easier to put into action if you have more and better material to draw upon: a stronger vocabulary. The following tips will help you gain and correctly use more words.

- **Be on the lookout for new words.** Most will come to you as you read, but they may also appear in an instructor's lecture, a class discussion, or a casual conversation with a friend. They may pop up in random places like billboards, menus, or even online ads!
- **Write down the new words you encounter, along with the sentences in which they were used.** Do this in your notes with new words from a class or reading assignment. If a new word does not come from a class, you can write it on just about anything, but make sure you write it. Many word lovers carry a small notepad or a stack of index cards specifically for this purpose.
- **Infer the meaning of the word.** The context in which the word is used may give you a good clue about its meaning. Do you recognize a common word root in the word? (Check Table 6.3 "Common Latin and Greek Word Roots" for common roots.) What do *you* think it means?

- **Look up the word in a dictionary.** Do this as soon as possible (but only after inferring the meaning). When you are reading, you should have a dictionary at hand for this purpose. In other situations, do this within a couple hours, definitely during the same day. How does the dictionary definition compare with what you inferred?
- **Write the word in a sentence, ideally one that is relevant to you.** If the word has more than one definition, write a sentence for each.
- **Say the word out loud** and then say the definition and the sentence you wrote.
- **Use the word.** Find occasion to use the word in speech or writing over the next two days.
- **Schedule a weekly review** with yourself to go over your new words and their meanings.

Table 6.3 Common Latin and Greek Word Roots

Common Word Roots

Root	Meaning	Examples
auto	self	automatic, automobile
bi	two	bicycle, biplane
bio	life	biography, biology
chrono	time	synchronize, chronicle
dict	say	predict, dictate
gen	give birth	generate, genetic
geo	earth	geology, geography, geometry
log	thought	biology, logic, pathology
manu	hand	manufacture, manual
phil	love	philosophy, anglophile
port	carry	transport, portable
sub	under	submarine, subtract
vac	empty	vacuum, evacuate

Where Have You Been All My Life?

The following are some fun ways to find new words:

- Read.
- When you look up a word in the dictionary, look at other interesting words on the same page.
- Solve crossword puzzles.
- Play word games like Scrabble, Boggle, or Pictionary.
- Watch movies.
- Listen to speeches and attend lectures.
- Go to comedy clubs.
- Have discussions (not just casual conversations) with friends.
- Read some more.
- Consider using a vocabulary application on your smartphone:
  - Elevate
  - Word of the Day
  - FluentU
  - Magoosh Vocabulary Builder
  - Vocab Genius
  - Word Pal
  - Vocabulary.com

- Quizlet
- Vocabulary Builder
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Retrieved on July 18, 2024 from: Scorebeyond.com [scorebeyond.com]

Key Takeaways

- The best way to build your vocabulary is to read, and a stronger vocabulary makes it easier and more fun to read.
- Be aware of your own lazy vocabulary and try to avoid those words and expressions.
- Look for new words everywhere, not just in class readings.
- Before you look up a word in the dictionary, infer its meaning based on its context and roots.
- After you look up a word in the dictionary, write your own sentence using the new word. Say the word and definition out loud.
- Use the new word as soon as possible.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Which words do you habitually overuse? Do your friends overuse the same words? How can you collaborate to correct that overuse?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. During the course of the day, find five new words in five different places. What were those words, and where did you uncover them?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. What do the words “manuscript,” “scribe,” and “scribble” have in common? Can you detect the same root in these words?

   _____

4. What do you think the root means?

   _____

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6.8: Success Before Class - Pre-reading

Success before Class

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 had adequate 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 and learning are processes that work together. As with learning from lectures and discussions, the learning of information and skills presented in readings, textbooks, and written text from a website should be viewed as a process: preparation to take in the new information, the act of taking in the new information, and then reviewing the information so that it is later accessible (recalled from memory) to use for a project, paper, or test..

Preparing for class by reading assigned texts related to the lecture material is extremely important to optimize the lecture experience. If you have a professor who tends to lecture at a fast pace, you have the foundational information and only need to focus on writing down unfamiliar information. If you are taking an online class with recorded lectures, this approach can apply too. If your professor expects class participation in discussions or utilizes active classroom techniques, such as case studies, small group activities and discussions, simulations, or demonstrations, you will understand what is happening and be able to contribute to the learning experience.

It's Not All Equal

NOTES FOR NURSING Reading a nursing textbook is going to be different than reading a mathematics textbook or a psychology textbook. Further, nursing 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.

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 materials 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. 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.

The Seven Reading Principles

1) Read the assigned material. 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.

2) 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.

3) Take notes when you read. A significant amount of the 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. See the information below for help in finding the main ideas.

4) 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.

5) Read with a dictionary or use an online dictionary. We may not always recognize all the words in a textbook or their meanings, especially when concepts are new to us. 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.

6) Use your resources when you have questions or if there are concepts you do not understand. Visiting an instructor's office hours or emailing a professor are some of the most underutilized college resources. If you do, 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.

7) 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.

Taking Reading notes: in Search of Main Ideas

Some students do not actively take notes or mark their readings and texts because they determine it is a lot of extra work to write down so much information. However, the problem is that students are usually writing down too much information and not really cluing in to the main ideas. Here are some tips for identifying the main ideas when reading. The Table of Contents and chapter outlines provide a broad view of the main points tat will be covered in a reading. Flesh out the outlines that are already provided for you.

- Often in a textbook, the main idea is the first or last sentence of a paragraph. If it is not the first or the last sentence, then look back at the entire paragraph to see what the overall issue seems to be. Look for the overall patterns of your textbooks.
- Titles, headings, and subheadings announce the major subject. Make these headings into questions, and the answers to the questions will likely be the main ideas.
- Bold and italic words point to a main idea or key concept that you need to understand.
- Repetition of key words or phrases throughout the text point to a main idea.
- Questions at the end of the chapter are about the main ideas of the text. Answer those questions and you will identify your main ideas.
- Summaries presented at the end of the chapter also tend to restate the main ideas briefly. Flesh these ideas out with some supporting ideas, and you would have a good view of the entire chapter.
- Stop and look at the visuals—pictures, diagrams, tables, etc. Often, the message depicted in the graph or picture is a main idea.
- Detailed statistics, several examples in a row, and other details often signal that a main idea is being clarified, proven, supported, etc. Track back or ahead to find the main idea they are trying to illustrate.
- Text that includes bullet points, numbering, or sequences is often a main idea.
- Look for organizational patterns in the reading that might highlight the main ideas. For instance, are two issues being compared or contrasted? What was the effect of a certain event? Are problems and various solutions being presented? Is there a timeline of events that is important?
- Be intentional about searching for the main ideas. Ask yourself at the end of each section or paragraph, "What is the point?" or "What is it that the author wants me to know?"

Activity – Pre-Reading Practice

Pre-Reading Practice

Utilizing what you have learned from the previous section called, "In Search of Main Ideas", select a text chapter to read. When you are finished, close the book and 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.

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6.9: Success During Class- Effective Note-Taking

Leslie Jennings, RN

Effective Note Taking

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. Different systems work best for different people. Experiment in different ways to find the most success.

Taking notes during lectures is a skill, just like riding a bike. 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.

Attending class and taking the notes is important primarily because the professor may be presenting information that is not presented in the text. It should also be seen as a structured opportunity to engage with the material that will further aid recall when needed. By attending class, students can also get clues as to what professor perceives as important material that will aid in test preparation.

Beyond providing a record of the information you are reading or hearing, notes help you organize the ideas and help you make meaning out of something about which you may not be familiar, so notetaking and reading are two compatible skill sets. Taking notes also helps you stay focused on the question at hand. Nanami often takes notes during presentations or class lectures so she can follow the speaker's main points and condense the material into a more readily usable format. Strong notes build on your prior knowledge of a subject, help you discuss trends or patterns present in the information, and direct you toward areas needing further research or reading.

It is not a good habit to transcribe every single word a speaker utters—even if you have an amazing ability to do that. Most of us don't have that court-reporter-esque skill level anyway, and if we try, we would end up missing valuable information. Learn to listen for main ideas and distinguish between these main ideas and details that typically support the ideas. Include examples that explain the main ideas, but do so using understandable abbreviations.

Think of all notes as potential study guides. In fact, if you only take notes without actively working on them after the initial notetaking session, the likelihood of the notes helping you is slim. Research on this topic concludes that without active engagement after taking notes, most students forget 60–75 percent of material over which they took the notes—within two days! That sort of defeats the purpose, don't you think? This information about memory loss was first brought to light by 19th-century German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus. Fortunately, you do have the power to thwart what is sometimes called the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve by reinforcing what you learned through review at intervals shortly after you take in the material and frequently thereafter.

If you are a musician, you'll understand this phenomenon well. When you first attempt a difficult piece of music, you may not remember the chords and notes well at all, but after frequent practice and review, you generate a certain muscle memory and cognitive recall that allows you to play the music more easily.

Notetaking may not be the most glamorous aspect of your higher-education journey, but it is a study practice you will carry throughout college and into your professional life. Setting yourself up for successful notetaking is almost as important as the actual taking of notes, and what you do after your notetaking session is equally significant. Well-written notes help you organize your thoughts, enhance your memory, and participate in class discussion, and they prepare you to respond successfully on exams. With all that riding on your notes, it would behoove you to learn how to take notes properly and continue to improve your notetaking skills.

Analysis Question

Do you currently have a preferred way to take notes? When did you start using it? Has it been effective? What other strategy might work for you?

Tips for Taking Notes During Lecture

- Arrive early and find a good seat- front and center are best for being able to see and hear information.
- Accept responsibility as a listener with a positive attitude; listening is a choice.
- Don't try and write everything down the instructor talks about; distinguish the most important topics and ideas only.

- Use abbreviations and don't worry about writing in complete sentences, correct spelling, or punctuation.
- Leave space to add information later.
- Monitor your concentration throughout the class period and continually refocus.

Key Information in Lectures

NONVERBAL CUES

As the lecturer, live or video, presents the material, there are two types of key information cues to be aware of. A speaker will often have unique facial and body nonverbal cues that alert you to several things, as you learn to "read" your professor:

Notes for Nursing Success! Remember that content you learn in many of your courses build upon themselves, so organized notes that you can review will help you prepare for the required exams at each level, as well as for your NCLEX.

- 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 cues, below).

VERBAL CUES

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

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. Ideally, if you can avoid taking back-to-back classes without 30 minutes in between, you could have adequate review time and 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. Online flash cards are another option. Students can make them for free and test themselves online or on their phone.

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.

Note-Taking Methods: What Is Right for You?

Preparing to Take Notes

Preparing to take notes means more than just getting out your laptop or making sure you bring pen and paper to class. You'll do a much better job with your notes if you understand why we take notes, have a strong grasp on your preferred notetaking system, determine your specific priorities depending on your situation, and engage in some version of efficient shorthand.

Like handwriting and fingerprints, we all have unique and fiercely independent notetaking habits. These understandably and reasonably vary from one situation to the next, but you can only improve your skills by learning more about ways to take effective

notes and trying different methods to find a good fit.

The very best notes are the ones you take in an organized manner that encourages frequent review and use as you progress through a topic or course of study. For this reason, you need to develop a way to organize all your notes for each class so they remain together and organized. As old-fashioned as it sounds, a clunky three-ring binder is an excellent organizational container for class notes. You can easily add to previous notes, insert handouts you may receive in class, and maintain a running collection of materials for each separate course. If the idea of carrying around a heavy binder has you rolling your eyes, then transfer that same structure into your computer files. If you don't organize your many documents into some semblance of order on your computer, you will waste significant time searching for improperly named or saved files.

You may be interested in relatively new research on what is the more effective notetaking strategy: handwriting versus typing directly into a computer. While individuals have strong personal opinions on this subject, most researchers agree that the format of student notes is less important than what students do with the notes they take afterwards. Both handwriting notes and using a computer for notetaking have pros and cons.

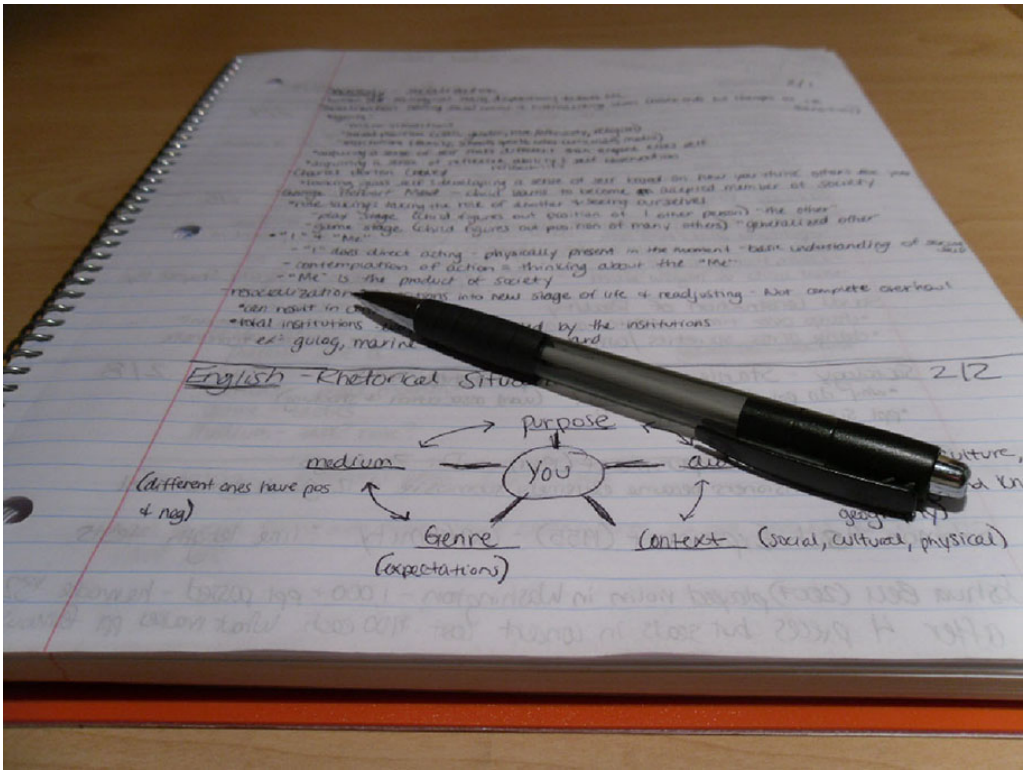


Figure 6.17: The best notes are the ones you take in an organized manner. Frequent review and further annotation are important to build a deep and useful understanding of the material. (Credit: English106 / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Managing Notetaking Systems (Computer, Paper/Pen, Note Cards, Textbook)

Whichever of the many notetaking systems you choose (and new ones seem to come out almost daily), the very best one is the one that you will use consistently. The skill and art of notetaking is not automatic for anyone; it takes a great deal of practice, patience, and continuous attention to detail. Add to that the fact that you may need to master multiple notetaking techniques for different classes, and you have some work to do. Unless you are specifically directed by your instructor, you are free to combine the best parts of different systems if you are most comfortable with that hybrid system.

Just to keep yourself organized, all your notes should start off with an identifier, including at the very least the date, the course name, the topic of the lecture/presentation, and any other information you think will help you when you return to use the notes for further study, test preparation, or assignment completion. Additional, optional information may be the number of notetaking sessions about this topic or reminders to cross-reference class handouts, textbook pages, or other course materials. It's also always a good idea to leave some blank space in your notes so you can insert additions and questions you may have as you review the material later.

Notetaking Strategies

You may have a standard way you take all your notes for all your classes. When you were in high school, this one-size-fits-all approach may have worked. Now that you're in college, reading and studying more advanced topics, your general method may still work some of the time, but you should have some different strategies in place if you find that your method isn't working as well with college content. You probably will need to adopt different notetaking strategies for different subjects. The strategies in this section represent various ways to take notes in such a way that you are able to study after the initial notetaking session.

Types of Note-Taking Methods

Outline Method

The Outline Method provides a running list of statements that capture the main ideas and supporting ideas for the main points. The highest level of main idea is justified on the left, followed by the next level of supporting ideas that are right indented, followed by the next level of supporting ideas that are further indented, etc. The statements you write down at each level could be key phrases or could utilize the Sentence Method of note taking (see below). It is key for students who utilize the Outline Method to avoid getting so immersed in the "proper" number method for outlining that they lose sight of the information; use a simple numbering or bulleted method. This method is ideal for note taking while reading or listening to a lecturer with a highly structured presentation style.

You don't absolutely have to use the formal numerals and letter, but you have to then be careful to indent so you can tell when you move from a higher level topic to the related concepts and then to the supporting information. The main benefit of an outline is how organized it is. You have to be on your toes when you are taking notes in class to ensure you keep up the organizational format of the outline, which can be tricky if the lecture or presentation is moving quickly or covering many diverse topics.

The following formal outline example shows the basic pattern:

I. Dogs *(main topic–usually general)*
   A. German Shepherd *(concept related to main topic)*
      1. Protection *(supporting info about the concept)*
      2. Assertive
      3. Loyal
   B. Weimaraner *(concept related to main topic)*
      1. Family-friendly *(supporting info about the concept)*
      2. Active
      3. Healthy

II. Siamese

You would just continue on with this sort of numbering and indenting format to show the connections between main ideas, concepts, and supporting details. Whatever details you do not capture in your notetaking session, you can add after the lecture as you review your outline.

Cornell Method (sometimes called Split Page Method)

The Cornell Method is a well-known note-taking method that not only encourages documentation of information but also builds in critical thinking and self-testing methods for future review of the material.

One of the most recognizable notetaking systems is called the *Cornell Method*, a relatively simple way to take effective notes devised by Cornell University education professor Dr. Walter Pauk in the 1940s. In this system, you take a standard piece of note paper and divide it into three sections by drawing a horizontal line across your paper about one to two inches from the bottom of the page (the summary area) and then drawing a vertical line to separate the rest of the page above this bottom area, making the left side about two inches (the recall column) and leaving the biggest area to the right of your vertical line (the notes column). You may want to make one page and then copy as many pages as you think you'll need for any particular class, but one advantage of this system is that you can generate the sections quickly. Because you have divided up your page, you may end up using more paper than you would if you were writing on the entire page, but the point is not to keep your notes to as few pages as possible. The Cornell Method provides you with a well-organized set of notes that will help you study and review your notes as you move through the course. If you are taking notes on your computer, you can still use the Cornell Method in Word or Excel on your own or by using a template someone else created.

Topic/Objective:	Name:
	Class/Period:
	Date:
Essential Question:	
Questions:	Notes:
Summary:	

Figure 6.18: The Cornell Method provides a straightforward, organized, and flexible approach

Now that you have the notetaking format generated, the beauty of the Cornell Method is its organized simplicity. Just write on one side of the page (the right-hand notes column)—this will help later when you are reviewing and revising your notes. During your notetaking session, use the notes column to record information over the main points and concepts of the lecture; try to put the ideas into your own words, which will help you not transcribe the speaker's words verbatim. Skip lines between each idea in this column. Practice the shortcut abbreviations covered in the next section and avoid writing in complete sentences. Don't make your notes too cryptic, but you can use bullet points or phrases equally well to convey meaning—we do it all the time in conversation. If you know you will need to expand the notes you are taking in class but don't have time, you can put reminders directly in the notes by adding and underlining the word *expand* by the ideas you need to develop more fully.

As soon as possible after your notetaking session, preferably within eight hours but no more than twenty-four hours, read over your notes column and fill in any details you missed in class, including the places where you indicated you wanted to expand your notes. Then in the recall column, write any key ideas from the corresponding notes column—you can't stuff this smaller recall column as if you're explaining or defining key ideas. Just add the one- or two-word main ideas; these words in the recall column serve as cues to help you remember the detailed information you recorded in the notes column.

Once you are satisfied with your notes and recall columns, summarize this page of notes in two or three sentences using the summary area at the bottom of the sheet. This is an excellent time to get with another classmate or a group of students who all heard the same lecture to make sure you all understood the key points. Now, before you move onto something else, cover the large notes column, and quiz yourself over the key ideas you recorded in the recall column. Repeat this step often as you go along, not

just immediately before an exam, and you will help your memory make the connections between your notes, your textbook reading, your in-class work, and assignments that you need to succeed on any quizzes and exams.

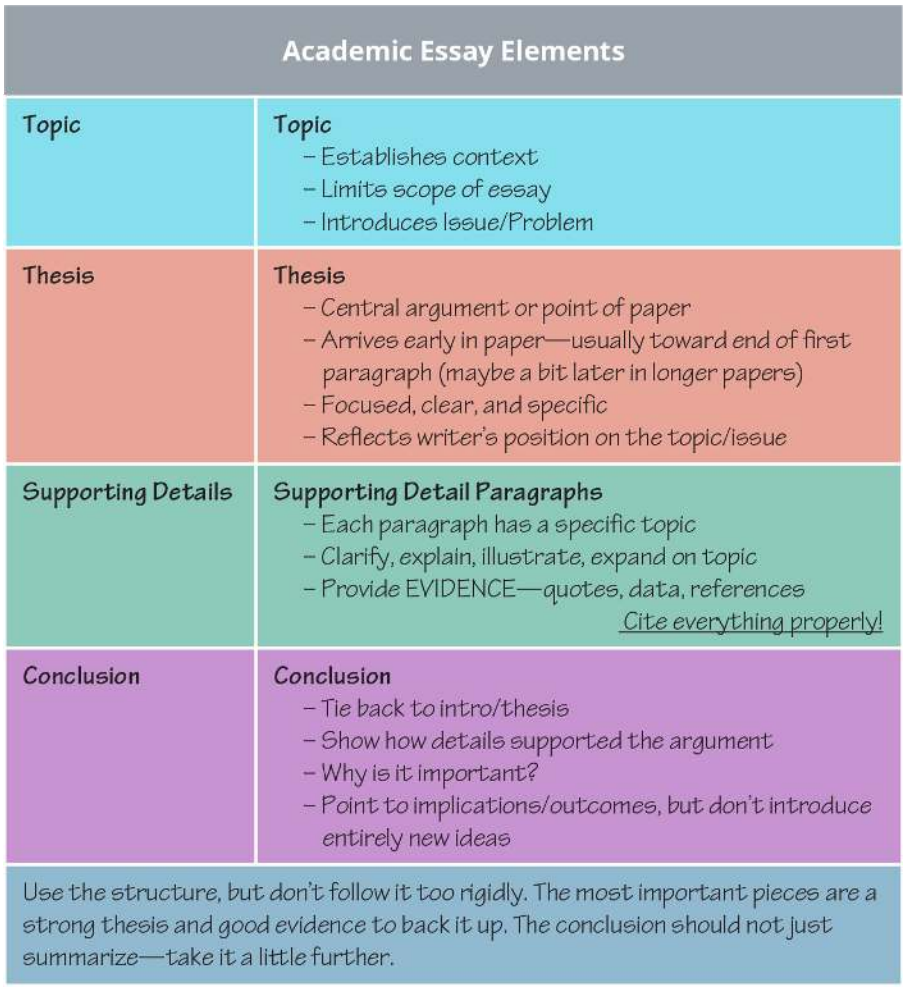


Figure 6.19: This sample set of notes in the Cornell Method is designed to make sense of a large amount of information. The process of organizing the notes can help you retain the information more effectively than less consistent methods.

The main advantage of the Cornell Method is that you are setting yourself up to have organized, workable notes. The neat format helps you move into study-mode without needing to re-copy less organized notes or making sense of a large mass of information you aren't sure how to process because you can't remember key ideas or what you meant. If you write notes in your classes without any sort of system and later come across something like "Napoleon—short" in the middle of a glob of notes, what can you do at this point? Is that important? Did it connect with something relevant from the lecture? How would you possibly know? You are your best advocate for setting yourself up for success in college.

Text-Class Integration Method (sometimes also called Split Page Method)

For this method, students split their notebook paper in half with a line in the middle. On the left side, students take notes from their course reading, and on the right side, they take notes in class for the corresponding text material. This method allows for easy integration of material from both sources.

Mapping Method

One additional notetaking method that appeals to learners who prefer a visual representation of notes is called *mapping* or sometimes *mind mapping* or *concept mapping*, although each of these names can have slightly different uses. Variations of this method abound, so you may want to look for more versions online, but the basic principles are that you are making connections between main ideas through a graphic depiction; some can get rather elaborate with colors and shapes, but a simple version may be more useful at least to begin. Main ideas can be circled or placed in a box with supporting concepts radiating off these ideas shown

with a connecting line and possibly details of the support further radiating off the concepts. You can present your main ideas vertically or horizontally, but turning your paper long-ways, or in landscape mode, may prove helpful as you add more main ideas.

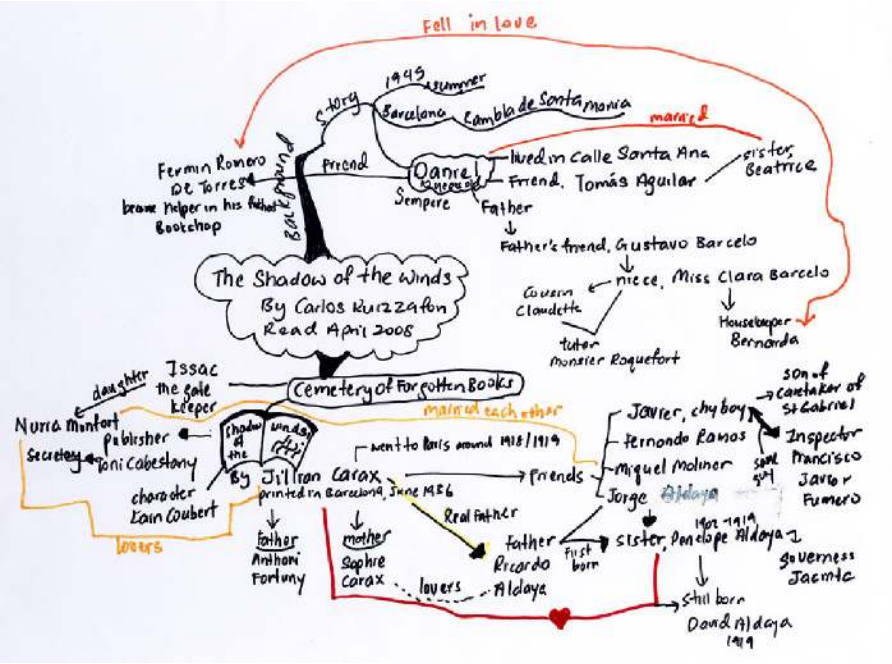


Figure 6.20: Concept mapping, sometimes referred to as mind mapping, can be an effective and very personalized approach to capturing information. (Credit: ArtistIvanChew / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

You may be interested in trying visual notetaking or adding pictures to your notes for clarity. Sometimes when you can't come up with the exact wording to explain something or you're trying to add information for complex ideas in your notes, sketching a rough image of the idea can help you remember. According to educator Sherrill Knezel in an article entitled "The Power of Visual Notetaking," this strategy is effective because "When students use images and text in notetaking, it gives them two different ways to pull up the information, doubling their chances of recall." Don't shy away from this creative approach to notetaking just because you believe you aren't an artist; the images don't need to be perfect. You may want to watch Rachel Smith's TEDx Talk called "Drawing in Class"(opens in new window) to learn more about visual notetaking.

You can play with different types of notetaking suggestions and find the method(s) you like best, but once you find what works for you, stick with it. You will become more efficient with the method the more you use it, and your notetaking, review, and test prep will become, if not easier, certainly more organized, which can delete decrease your anxiety.

The Mapping Method represents the lecture in a visual or graphic format. It helps to utilize 11″ 17″ inch paper or 8 1⁄2″ 11″ inch paper in landscape profile. Students should start with documenting the main idea and placing that in the center of the paper. Then additional ideas feed off of that center point in a hierarchical manner. It allows students to see quickly the main point and relationships to follow. Typically, it is better if students stick with brief statements—one or two words—that capture the ideas. Mapping Methods are also useful to summarize notes taken in another method.

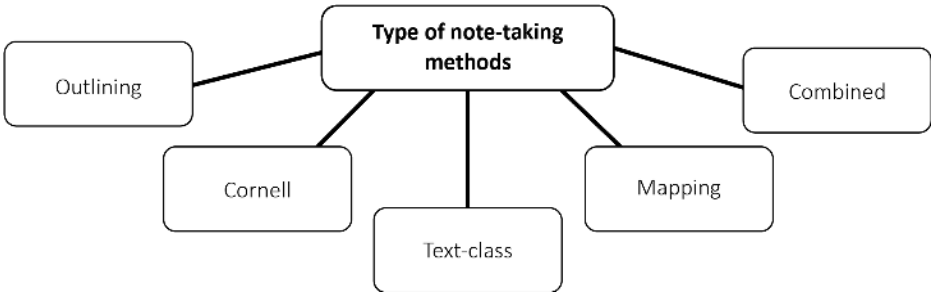


Figure 6.21 Note Taking Methods

Sentence Method (sometimes also called the Paragraph Method)

This is a simple method in which students write down a main point, fact, or topic, each on separate lines, numbering as they go. It is a useful technique when a lecture is somewhat organized and material is presented at a fast pace. However, relationships may be lost without reorganization of notes at a later time.

Combined Method

You may start with a particular method described above. However, as you become more skilled in your note taking abilities, you may begin combining methodologies to suit the type of information that is being presented. For instance, you may start off the session using the Sentence Method but then use the Mapping Method as you see a pattern emerge in a new concept that is conducive to mapping. You may opt to use the Outline Method in your Political Science course, because the faculty member presents a very organized lecture and use the Text-Class Integration Method in your Math class so that you can see parallel steps between examples from the textbook and the class. The key is to try out some of the different methods and use what works for you.

*Should I use my laptop for note-taking?

Many students use laptop computers for taking notes. It is noteworthy that many students report missing information. You may find that you try to type everything you hear because you can type faster than you can write. In addition, you may be distracted with formatting issues or even other activities that you can opt to do with your laptop. Whichever method you choose to do, remember that the most important part of note-taking may very well be the act of reviewing your notes after.

Instructor Handouts

Some instructors hand out or post their notes or their PowerPoint slides from their lectures. These handouts should *never* be considered a substitute for taking notes in class. They are a very useful complement and will help you confirm the accuracy of your notes, but they do not involve you in the process of learning as well as your own notes do. After class, review your notes with highlighter in hand and mark keywords and ideas in your notes. This will help you write the summary of the class in your own words.

General Tips on Note Taking

Regardless of what note-taking method you choose, there are some note-taking habits you should get into for all circumstances and all courses:

1. **Be prepared.** Make sure you have the tools you need to do the job. If you are using a notebook, be sure you have it with you and that you have enough paper. Also be sure to have your pen (as well as a spare) and perhaps a pen with different colored ink to use for emphasis. If you are taking notes on your laptop, make sure the battery is charged! Select the application that lends itself best to your style of note taking. Microsoft Word works very well for outline notes, but you might find taking notes in Excel to work best if you are working within the Cornell method. (It's easier to align your thoughts in the cue or recall column to your notes in the right column. Just be sure you keep one idea per row!)
2. **Write on only one side of the paper.** This will allow you to integrate your reading notes with your class notes.
3. **Label, number, and date all notes at the top of each page.** This will help you keep organized.
4. **When using a laptop, position it such that you can see the instructor and white board right over your screen.** This will keep the instructor in your field of vision even if you have to glance at your screen or keyboard from time to time. Make sure your focus remains with the instructor and not on your laptop. A word of caution about laptops for note taking: use them if you are very adept at keyboarding, but remember that not all note-taking methods work well on laptops because they do not easily allow you to draw diagrams and use special notations (scientific and math formulas, for example).
5. **Don't try to capture everything that is said.** Listen for the big ideas and write them down. Make sure you can recognize the instructor's emphasis cues and write down all ideas and keywords the instructor emphasizes. Listen for clues like "the four causes were…" or "to sum up.…"
6. **Copy anything the instructor writes on the board.** It's likely to be important.
7. **Leave space between ideas.** This allows you to add additional notes later (e.g., notes on the answer to a question you or one of your classmates asked).
8. **Use signals and abbreviations.** Which ones you use is up to you, but be consistent so you will know exactly what you mean by "att." when you review your notes. You may find it useful to keep a key to your abbreviations in all your notebooks.
9. **Use some method for identifying your own thoughts and questions to keep them separate from what the instructor or textbook author is saying.** Some students use different color ink; others box or underline their own thoughts. Do whatever

works for you.

10. **Create a symbol to use when you fall behind** or get lost in your note taking. Jot down the symbol, leave some space, and focus on what the instructor is covering now. Later you can ask a classmate or the professor to help you fill in what you missed, or you can find it in your textbook.
11. **Review your notes as soon after class as possible (the same day is best).***This is the secret to making your notes work!* Use the recall column to call out the key ideas and organize facts. Fill in any gaps in your notes and clean up or redraw hastily drawn diagrams.
12. **Write a summary of the main ideas of the class in your own words.** This process is a great aid to recall. Be sure to include any conclusions from the lecture or discussion.

You will have noticed that all methods end with the same step: reviewing your notes as soon as possible after class. Any review of your notes is helpful (reading them, copying them into your computer, or even recasting them using another note-taking method). But THINK! Make your review of notes a thoughtful activity, not a mindless process. When you review your notes, think about questions you still have and determine how you will get the answers. (From the next class? Studying with a friend? Looking up material in your text or on the net?) Examine how the material applies to the course; make connections with notes from other class sessions, with material in your text, and with concepts covered in class discussions. Finally, it's fun to think about how the material in your notes applies to real life. Consider this both at the very strategic level (as in "What does this material mean to me in relation to what I want to do with my life?") as well as at a very mundane level (as in "Is there anything cool here I can work into a conversation with my friends?").

Activity – Improving Your Listening Skills

Improving Your Listening Skills

Watch the TED talk below:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: Nursing School Success [uta.pressbooks.pub]

Video: 5 Ways to Listen Better, Julian Treasure at TED Global 2011(opens in new window)

Write a one-page (250-300 words) reflection summary covering these questions:

1. What are the three types of listening the speaker discusses?
2. How and why have we been "losing our ability to listen," as the speaker suggests?
3. What are some of the tools we can use to listen better?
4. 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?

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6.10: Summary

Chapter Takeaways

Reading

- Reading, like learning, involves a cycle of preparing, absorbing, recording, and reviewing.
- In college, you will be expected to do much reading; it is not unusual to do two or more hours of reading for every hour you spend in class. In college, you are also expected to think critically about what you read.
- Active reading involves four steps:
  1. Prepare for reading by scanning the assignment and developing questions for which you want to discover answers through your reading.
  2. Read the material and discover the answers to your questions.
  3. Capture the information by highlighting and annotating the text as well as by taking effective notes.
  4. Review the reading by studying your notes, by integrating them with your class notes, and by discussing the reading with classmates.
- Before you read, learn as much as you can about the author and his or her reason for writing the text. What is his or her area of expertise? Why did the instructor select this text?
- When scanning a reading, look for clues to what might be important. Read the section titles, study illustrations, and look for keywords and boldface text.
- Do not highlight your text until you have read a section completely to be sure you understand the context. Then go back and highlight and annotate your text during a second read-through.
- Think critically about what you are reading. Do you agree with what the author is saying? How does it relate to the rest of the material in the course? What does this new material mean to you in “real life”?

Special Texts and Situations

- Do all the exercises in math textbooks; apply the formulas to real-world situations.
- Practice “reading” the illustrations. Each type of graphic material has its own strength or purpose.
- Look for statements of hypotheses and experimental design when reading science texts.
- History, economics, and political science texts are heavily influenced by interpretation. Think critically about what you are reading.
- Working with foreign language texts requires more time and more frequent breaks. Don’t rely on word-for-word translations.
- If you need to read with children around, don’t put off your reading until you have a large block of time; learn to read in short periods as available.
- When reading on the Internet, be extra diligent to evaluate the source of the material to decide how reliable that source may be.
- If English is your second language, seek out resources that may be offered on campus. In any case, be patient with the process of mastering college-level English. And always remember this: what feels like a disadvantage in one situation can be a great gift in another situation.

Vocabulary

- Reading and vocabulary development are closely linked. A stronger vocabulary makes reading easier and more fun; the best way to build a vocabulary is to read.
- Look for new words everywhere, not just in class.
- When you encounter a new word, follow these steps:
  1. Write it down and write down the sentence in which it was used.
  2. Infer its meaning based on the context and word roots.
  3. Look it up in a dictionary.
  4. Write your own sentence using the word.
  5. Say the word, its definition, and your sentence out loud.
  6. Find an opportunity to use the word within two days.

Note Taking

- There are four primary ways of taking notes (lists, outlines, concept maps, and the Cornell method).
- Select the note-taking method that best serves your learning style and the instructor's teaching style. Remember that methods may be combined for maximum effect.
- Completing assignments and reviewing the syllabus can help you define the relative importance of the ideas the instructor presents.
- Don't expect to capture everything the instructor says. Look for keywords and central ideas.
- Anything the instructor writes on the board is likely to be important.
- Review your notes as soon as possible after the class, to annotate, correct, complete, and summarize.

Reading and note taking are major elements of college studying and learning. The expectations in college is that you read considerable amounts of text for each subject. You may encounter reading situations, such as professional journal articles and long textbook chapters, that are more difficult to understand than texts you have read previously. As you progress through your college courses, you can employ reading strategies to help you complete your college reading assignments. Likewise, you will take notes in college that need to be complete so you can study and recall the information you learn in lectures and lab sessions. With so much significant information that you need to collect, study, and recall for your college courses, you need to be deliberate in your reading and note taking.

Chapter Review

1. Describe the four steps of active reading.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What part of a textbook should you compare with a class syllabus? Why?

   _____

   _____

3. Why is it important to know something about a textbook's author?

   _____

   _____

4. What time of the day should you plan to do your reading? Why?

   _____

   _____

5. What is the difference between using the Cornell method for taking class notes and using the Cornell method for reading notes?

   _____

   _____

6. Why do you think it is important to pose some questions about the material before you read?

   _____

   _____

7. What should you do if you are getting tired when reading?

   _____

   _____

8. List three requirements for a good reading location.

9. Can you multitask while doing a reading assignment? Why or why not?

10. Describe the process of evaluating a Web-based reading selection.

Career Connection

Sanvi is a pre-nursing student who is having trouble between all the reading she is expected to complete, her general dislike of reading, and her need to comprehend both her reading assignments and her own notes to be successful in nursing school. She has spoken with several of her instructors and a tutor at the Student Success Center on campus, and their advice centers around Sanvi's reluctance to read in general. She is working on how to manage her time so she has more dedicated time to read her assignments in between her classes and her work schedule.

That is helping some, but Sanvi is still worried because she knows one problem is that she doesn't exactly know what types of reading or notetaking she would need to know how to do as a professional nurse. This confusion makes her doubt that the extra reading she is doing now is really beneficial. After some reflection on what was holding her back, Sanvi mentioned this aspect of her studying to one of her instructors who had been a hospital RN for years before coming to the college to teach. She recalled that the first time she read a patient chart in the hospital, she had to think quickly about how to get all the meaning out of the chart in the same way she would have read a complex textbook chapter.

Sanvi's nursing instructor reminded her that all professions need their personnel to read. They may not all need to read books or articles, but all jobs involve reading to some extent. For example, consider this list of disciplines and the typical types of reading they do. You may be surprised that not all reading is in text form.

Table 6.4 Professions and types of reading

Reading types and professions	
Nurses/doctors	Patient charts, prescription side effects, medical articles
Teachers	Student work, lesson plans, educational best practices
Architects	Blueprints, construction contracts, permit manuals
Accountants	Financial spreadsheets, tax guidelines, invoices, trend diagrams
Beauticians	Client hair and facial features, best practices articles, product information
Civil engineers	Work site maps, government regulations, financial spreadsheets
Auto mechanics	Car engines, auto manuals, government regulations

As this incomplete list shows, not every job you pursue will require you to read text-based documents, but all jobs require some reading.

- How could Sanvi and her instructor use this list to make more sense of how college reading will prepare Sanvi to be a stronger nurse?
- How would understanding the types of professional reading help you complete your reading assignments?

- If your chosen field of study is not listed above, can you think of what sort of reading those professionals would need to do?

Think about the questions that opened this chapter and what you have read. How do you feel about your reading and note taking skills now that you have some more strategies?

Where do you go from here?

Reading is such a part of our everyday lives that we sometimes take it for granted. And even we don't formally write down our thoughts, we take notes in our heads far more often than we use our note taking skills to make sense of a textbook passage or a graphic. Honing these fundamental skills can only help you succeed in college and beyond. What else about reading and note taking would you like to learn more about? Choose topics form the list below to research more.

- How to maximize e-readers to comprehend texts.
- How professional use reading and note taking in their careers.
- Is speed-reading a myth or a viable strategy?
- Compare reading and note taking strategies from different countries to those you use

Activity: Make an Action List

Action List

Two things I will do to improve	Actions	By when I expect to take the action	How I will know I accomplished the action
My reading comprehension/understanding	1.		
	2.		
My reading speed	1.		
	2.		
My vocabulary	1.		
	2.		

Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter, and consider one option you learned in this chapter that might change your answer to one of them.

1. I am reading on a college level
2. I take good notes that help me study for exams
3. I understand how to manage all the reading I need to do for college
4. I recognize the need for different note taking strategies for different college subjects

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Studying, Memory, and Test Taking

7.1: Prelude to Studying, Memory, and Test Taking
7.2: The Basics of Study Skills
7.3: Remembering Course Materials
7.4: Success After Class - Reviewing Material
7.5: The Honest Truth
7.6: Dealing with Test Anxiety- Managing Your Stress for Success
7.7: The Secrets of the Q and A's
7.8: Taking Tests, Quizzes and Nursing School Tests
7.9: Using Test Results
7.10: Summary

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7.1: Prelude to Studying, Memory, and Test Taking

Learning Objectives

1. Analyze and apply effective study skills to enhance understanding and retention of course material.
2. Evaluate strategies for improving memory and recall of important information covered in classes.
3. Implement techniques for reviewing and reinforcing material after class to maximize learning and retention.
4. Develop strategies for managing test anxiety and stress to improve performance on exams and quizzes.
5. Utilize test results effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to inform future study strategies and academic planning.



Figure 7.1: How we study is as important as what we study. The environment is a critical element of success.

Student Survey

How confident are you in preparing for and taking tests? Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.” These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As you are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We’ll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed.

1. I set aside enough time to prepare for tests.
2. If I don’t set aside enough time, or if life gets in the way, I can usually cram and get positive results.
3. I prefer to pull all-nighters. The adrenaline and urgency help me remember what I need come test time.
4. I study my notes, highlight book passages, and use flash cards, but I still don’t feel like I’m as successful as I should be on tests.

You can also take the Chapter 7 Survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

“I didn’t have to study much for tests in high school, but I learned really quick that you have to for college. One of the best strategies is to test yourself over the material. This will help you improve your retrieval strength and help you remember more when it comes to the test. I also learned about reviewing your graded tests. This will help you see where you went wrong and why. Being able to see your mistakes and correct them helps the storage and retrieval strength as well as building those dendrites. Getting a question wrong will only improve those things helping you remember the next time it comes up.”

—Lilli Branstetter, University of Central Arkansas

About this Chapter

By the time you finish this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Outline the importance of memory when studying, and note some opportunities to strengthen memory.
- Discuss specific ways to increase the effectiveness of studying.
- Articulate test-taking strategies that minimize anxiety and maximize results.

Kerri didn't need to study in high school. She made good grades, and her friends considered her lucky because she never seemed to sweat exams or cram. In reality, Kerri did her studying during school hours, took excellent notes in class, asked great questions, and read the material before class meetings—all of these are excellent strategies. Kerri just seemed to do them without much fuss.

Then when she got to college, those same skills weren't always working as well. Sound familiar? She discovered that, for many classes, she needed to read paragraphs and textbook passages more than once for comprehension. Her notes from class sessions were longer and more involved—the subject material was more complicated and the problems more complex than she had ever encountered. College isn't high school, as most students realize shortly after enrolling in a higher ed program. Some old study habits and test-taking strategies may serve as a good foundation, but others may need major modification.

It makes sense that, the better you are at studying and test taking, the better results you'll see in the form of high grades and long-term learning and knowledge acquisition. And the more experience you have using your study and memorization skills and employing success strategies during exams, the better you'll get at it. But you have to keep it up—maintaining these skills and learning better strategies as the content you study becomes increasingly complex is crucial to your success. Once you transition into a work environment, you will be able to use these same skills that helped you be successful in college as you face the problem-solving demands and expectations of your job. Earning high grades is one goal, and certainly a good one when you're in college, but true learning means committing content to long-term memory.

Nursing school and Health Careers Challenge

Entering nursing school requires more than just a shift in academic focus—it demands a fundamental reorientation in studying methods, memory retention strategies, and test-taking approaches compared to other disciplines. Unlike traditional science classes, where memorization and theoretical understanding dominate assessments, nursing education necessitates a deeper integration of knowledge with practical application and critical thinking skills. Aspiring nurses must not only grasp complex medical concepts but also master the art of clinical reasoning, patient-centered care, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Successfully navigating nursing school exams requires a holistic approach to learning that prepares students not just to recall facts, but to apply them in dynamic healthcare environments where lives are at stake. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for any student embarking on the challenging yet rewarding journey toward becoming a nurse.

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7.2: The Basics of Study Skills

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Studying is hard work, but you can still learn some techniques to help you be a more effective learner. Two major and interrelated techniques involve avoiding distractions to the best of your ability and creating a study environment that works to help you concentrate.

IN the classroom

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

Even if your faculty says, "Sit wherever you want — sit where you are most comfortable," think about where you would want to be if you were to attend a concert for your favorite artist. The answer is most often 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 both a visual and auditory perspective.

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. 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, ask a lot of questions via the preferred method your instructor recommends. Since the delivery method is different to what most students are used to, students in online courses tend to have more questions. Online students may ask questions to understand the material and to be able to successfully navigate through the course content.

Outside of the classroom

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.

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, and 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.

Use Your Calendar Wisely

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.

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.

Complete All of Your Assigned Readings & Assignments (On Time)

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.

College courses have a significant amount of assigned reading 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. (See Chapter 3.2 for more help with pre-reading).

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 an academic advisor or counselor about what resources may be helpful for you.

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.

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.

Your Study Space

Study At a Time and Location 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 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

Most students 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 they are 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.

Avoiding Distractions

We have always had distractions—video games, television shows, movies, music, friends—even housecleaning can distract us from doing something else we need to do, like study for an exam. That may seem extreme, but sometimes vacuuming is the preferred activity to buckling down and working through calculus problems! Cell phones, tablets, and portable computers that literally bring a world of possibilities to us anywhere have brought *distraction* to an entirely new level. When was the last time you were with a large group of people when you didn't see at least a few people on devices?



Figure 7.2: Video games are a common distraction, but we need to be aware that even tedious activities like cleaning can be a distraction from studying.

When you study, your biggest challenge may be to block out all the competing noise. And letting go of that connection to our friends and the larger world, even for a short amount of time, can be difficult. Perhaps the least stressful way to allow yourself a distraction-free environment is to make the study session a definite amount of time: long enough to get a significant amount of studying accomplished but short enough to hold your attention.

You can increase that attention time with practice and focus. Pretend it is a professional appointment or meeting during which you cannot check e-mail or texts or otherwise engage with your portable devices. We have all become very attached to the ability to check in—anonymously on social media or with family and friends via text, chat, and calls. If you set a specific amount of time to study without interruptions, you can convince your wandering mind that you will soon be able to return to your link to the outside world. Start small and set an alarm—a 30-minute period to review notes, then a brief break, then another 45-minute study session to quiz yourself on the material, and so on.

When you prepare for your optimal study session, remember to do these things:

- Put your phone out of sight—in another room or at least some place where you will not see or hear it vibrate or ring. Just flipping it over is not enough.
- Turn off the television or music (more on that in the next section).
- Unless you are deliberately working with a study group, study somewhere alone if possible or at least away from others enough to not hear them talking.

If you live with lots of other people or don't have access to much privacy, see if you can negotiate some space alone to study. Ask others to leave one part of the house or an area in one room as a quiet zone during certain hours. Ask politely for a specific block of time; most people will respect your educational goals and be willing to accommodate you. If you're trying to work out quiet zones with small children in the house, the bathtub with a pillow can make a fine study oasis.

Study Environment

You may not always be in the mood or inspired to study. And if you have a long deadline, maybe you can blow off a study session on occasion, but you shouldn't get into the habit of ignoring a strong study routine. Jane Austen once wrote in a letter, "I am not at all in a humor for writing; I must write on till I am." Sometimes just starting is the hard part; go ahead and begin. Don't wait around for your study muse; start working, and she'll show up.

Sometimes you just need to plop down and study whenever and wherever you can manage—in the car waiting for someone, on the bus, at the Little League field as you cheer on your shortstop. And that's OK if this is the exception. For long-term success in studying, though, you need a better study setting that will help you get the most out of your limited study time. Whatever your space limitations, carve out a place that you can dedicate to reading, writing, note taking, and reviewing. This doesn't need to be elaborate and expensive—all you truly need is a flat surface large enough to hold either your computer or writing paper, book or notes, pens/pencils/markers, and subject-specific materials you may need (e.g., stand-alone calculators, drawing tools, and notepads). Your space should be cool or warm enough for you to be comfortable as you study. What do you have now that you consider your study space? Is it set up for your optimal success?



Figure 7.3: Which is before, and which is after? (Credit: Ali West / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

If it is at all possible, try to make this area exclusive to your study sessions and something you can leave set up all the time and a place out of the way of family or roommate traffic. For example, Martina thought setting up her study station on the dining room table was a good idea at first. The view was calming, and the table was big enough to spread out and could even hold all her materials to study architectural drawings, her favorite subject. But then she needed the table for a small family dinner party, so she had to find a cubbyhole to hide away her supplies with some needing to go into a closet in the next room. Now she was spread out over multiple study spaces. And the family TV was in an adjacent room, not visible from the table but certainly an auditory distraction. Martina ultimately decided to forgo her view and create a smaller station in an unused bedroom so she could leave her supplies out and have a quieter area. You may have to try out numerous places to determine what works best for you.

Wherever you study, try to make it a welcoming place you want to be in—not an uncomfortable environment that makes you want to just do the minimum you must complete and leave. You should include the basics: a good chair, a work surface, and whatever materials, books, notes, and other supplies you need for the subject you are studying. If you want to make it even more of a productive place, you can look in magazines for ideas or search the web to see how others have set up simple areas or more elaborate arrangements. Don't let decorating your workspace be an excuse to get out of studying!

You don't need an elaborate setting, but you may want to consider including a few effective additions if you have the space:

- small bulletin board for often-used formulas
- encouraging quotes or pictures of your goal
- whiteboard for brainstorming
- sticky notes for reminders in texts and notes
- file holder for most-used documents
- bookshelf for reference books

Activity

Describe every element in your ideal study environment and explain why it's there as well as how it will make more efficient use of your time, limit distractions, or in some other way strengthen your ability to study.

After you have described your ideal study environment, think about how you can adapt that environment if you cannot be in your favorite place to study. How do you *make your own space* in the library, a student lounge, or a dedicated space on campus for student studying?

Debunking Study Myths

MYTH #1: You can multitask while studying.

How many times do you eat in the car? Watch TV while you write out a grocery list? Listen to music while you cook dinner? What about type an e-mail while you're on the phone with someone else and jot down notes about the call? The common term for this attempt to do more than one thing at a time is multitasking, and almost everyone does it at some point. On some days, you simply cannot accomplish all that you want to get done, so you double up. The problem is, multitasking doesn't really work. Of course, it exists, and we do it. For instance, we walk and chew gum or drive and talk, but we are not really thinking about two or more distinct things or doing multiple processes simultaneously.

MYTH #2: Highlighting main points of a text is useful.

Another myth of studying that seems to have a firm hold is that the idea of highlighting text—in and of itself—is the best way to review study material. It is one way, and you can get some benefit from it, but don't trick yourself into spending too much time on this surface activity and consider your study session complete. Annotating texts or notes is a first-step type of study practice. If you allow it to take up all your time, you may want to think you are fully prepared for an exam because you put in the time. Actually, you need much more time reviewing and retrieving your lessons and ideas from the text or class lecture as well as quizzing yourself to accomplish your goal of learning so you can perform well on the exam. Highlighting is a task you can do rather easily, and it makes you feel good because you are actively engaging with your text, but true learning needs more steps.

MYTH #3: Studying effectively is effortless.

There is nothing effortless, or even pleasant at times, about studying. This is why so many students don't put in the time necessary to learn complex material: it takes time, effort, and, in some cases, a little drudgery. This is not to say that the outcome, learning—and maybe making an A—is not pleasant and rewarding. It is just that when done right, learning takes focus, deliberate strategies, and time. Think about a superstar athlete who puts in countless hours of drills and conditioning so that she makes her work on the field look easy. If you can also *enjoy* the studying, the skill development, and the knowledge building, then you will most likely be more motivated to do the work.

Analysis Question

When are you most liable to multitask? How could you be more aware of this practice and try to eliminate it, especially when it comes to studying? How can you make your initial text highlighting more time efficient so you can include other study practices?

Study Strategies

Everyone wishes they had a better memory or a stronger way to use memorization. You can make the most of the memory you have by making some conscious decisions about how you study and prepare for exams. Incorporate these ideas into your study sessions:

Practicing effective memorization is when you use a trick, technique, or strategy to recall something—for another class, an exam, or even to bring up an acquaintance's name in a social situation. Really whatever works for you to recall information is a good tool to have. You can create your own quizzes and tests to go over material from class. You can use mnemonics to jog your memory. You can work in groups to develop unique ways to remember complex information. Whatever methods you choose to enhance your memory, keep in mind that repetition is one of the most effective tools in any memory strategy. Do whatever you do over and over for the best results.

Using Mnemonics

Mnemonics (pronounced new-monics) are a way to remember things using reminders. Did you learn the points of the compass by remembering NEWS (north, east, west, and south)? Or the notes on the music staff as FACE or EGBDF (every good boy does fine)? These are mnemonics. When you're first learning something and you aren't familiar with the foundational concepts, these help you bring up the information quickly, especially for multistep processes or lists. After you've worked in that discipline for a while, you likely don't need the mnemonics, but you probably won't forget them either.

Here are some familiar mnemonics you may find useful:

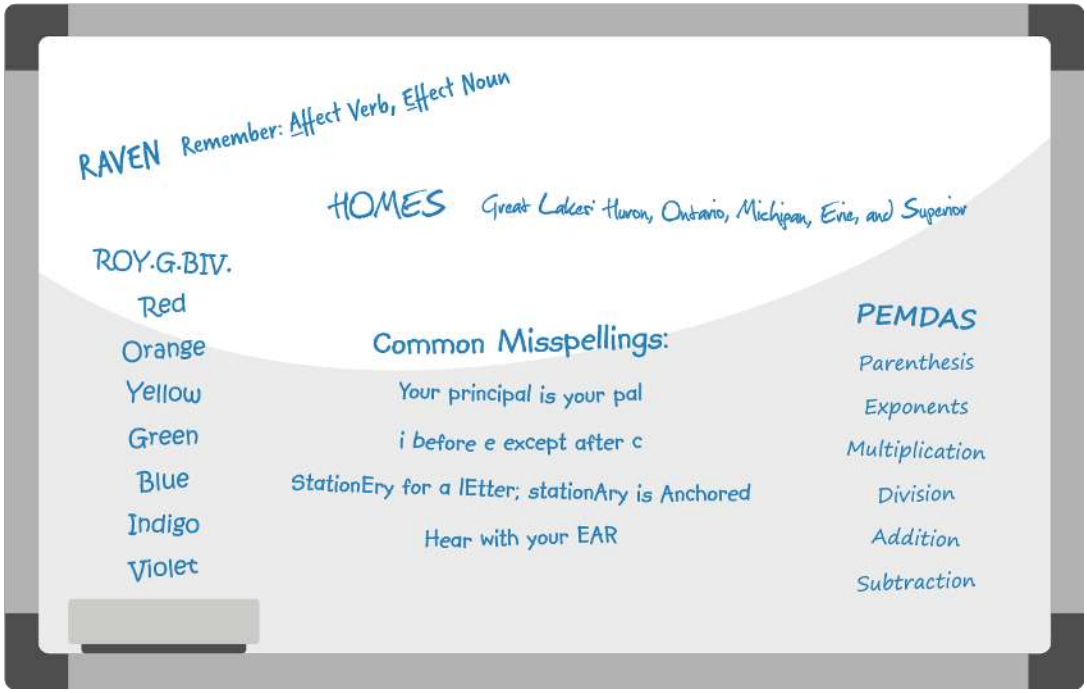


Figure 7.4

You can certainly make up your own mnemonics, but be careful that your reminder isn't so complex and convoluted that it is more difficult to remember than the information you were relating it to!

Analysis Question

Do you have other mnemonics that help you remember difficult material? What are they? How have they helped you with remembering important things?

Practicing Concept Association

When you study, you're going to make connections to other things—that's a good thing. It shows a highly intelligent ability to make sense of the world when you can associate like and even somewhat unlike components. If, for instance, you were reading Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," and you read the line that he had been in Birmingham, you may remember a trip you took with your family last summer through Alabama and that you passed by and visited the civil rights museum in Birmingham. This may remind you of the different displays you saw and the discussions you had with your family about what had happened concerning civil rights in the 1950s,'60s, and '70s in the United States.

This is a good connection to make, but if your assignment is to critique the literary aspects of King's long epistle, you need to be able to come back to the actual words of the letter and see what trends you can see in his writing and why he may have used his actual words to convey the powerful message. The connection is fine, but you can't get lost in going down rabbit holes that may or may not be what you're supposed to be doing at the time. Make a folder for this assignment where you can put things such as a short summary of your trip to Alabama. You may eventually include notes from this summary in your analysis. You may include something from a website that shows you information about that time period. Additionally, you could include items about Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and death and his work for civil rights. All of these elements may help you understand the significance of this one letter, but you need to be cognizant of what you're doing at the time and remember it is not usually a good idea to just try to keep it all in your head. The best idea is to have a way to access this information easily, either electronically or in hard copy, so that if you are able to use it, you can find it easily and quickly.

Generating Idea Clusters

Like mnemonics, idea clusters are nothing more than ways to help your brain come up with ways to recall specific information by connecting it to other knowledge you already have. For example, Andrea is an avid knitter and remembers how to create complicated stitches by associating them with nursery rhymes she read as a child. A delicate stitch that requires concentration because it makes the yarn look like part of it is hiding brings to mind Red Riding Hood, and connecting it to that character helps

Andrea recall the exact order of steps necessary to execute the design. You can do the same thing with song lyrics, lines from movies, or favorite stories where you draw a connection to the well-known phrase or song and the task you need to complete.

Application

Choose one of the following, and create an idea cluster to group and organize:

- Example A: aviation jobs in North America
- Example B: the use of analytics in sports to determine team rosters
- Example C: how social media affects political campaigns

Start the idea cluster with the topic circled in the middle of the page. For Example A, you might make one cluster off the main circle for specific positions; you could add another cluster for salary ranges and another for geographic regions.

Three Effective Study Strategies

There are more than three study strategies, but focusing on the most effective strategies will make an enormous difference in how well you will be able to demonstrate learning (also known as "acing your tests"). Here is a brief overview of each of the three strategies:

- Spacing—This has to do with *when* you study. Hint: Don't cram; study over a period of days, preferably with "breaks" in between.
- Interleaving—This has to do with *what* you study. Hint: Don't study just one type of content, topic, chapter, or unit at a time; instead, mix up the content when you study.
- Practice testing—This has to do with *how* you study. Hint: Don't just reread content. You must quiz or test your ability to retrieve the information from your brain.

Spacing

We all know that cramming is not an effective study strategy, but do we know why? Research on memory suggests that giving yourself time in between study sessions actually helps you forget the information. And forgetting, which sounds like it would be something you *don't* want to do, is actually good for your ability to remember information long-term. That's because every time you forget something, you need to relearn it, leading to gains in your overall understanding and "storage" of the material. The table below demonstrates how spacing works. Assume you are going to spend about four hours studying for a Sociology exam. Cramming would have you spending most of those four hours the night before the exam. With spacing, on the other hand, you would study a little bit each day.

Table 7.1

Spacing							
	Sunday	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**	**Saturday**
Cramming				Study for 1 hour	Study for 3		
Spacing	Study for 1 hour		Study for 30 minutes	Study for 1 hour	Study for 90 minutes		

Interleaving

One particular studying technique is called interleaving, which calls for students to mix up the content that is being studied. This means not just spending the entire study session on one sort of problem and then moving on to a different sort of problem at a later time.

If you take the schedule we used for the spacing example above, we can add the interleaving concepts to it. Notice that interleaving includes revisiting material from a previous chapter or unit or revisiting different types of problems or question sets. The benefit is that your brain is "mixing up" the information, which can sometimes lead to short-term forgetting but can lead to long-term memory and learning.

Table 7.2

Interleaving					
Sunday	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
Reread Sociology, Chapter 1. Reorganize notes		Reread Sociology, Chapter 1 and 2 Take Ch 1 online quiz. Create Chapter 2 concept map	Reread Sociology, Chapters 1-3. Take online quizzes for chapters 2 and 3. Reorganize notes. Create practice test	Reread notes. Review items missed on online quizzes. Take practice test and review challenge areas.	**TEST in sociology, Chapters 1-3**

Practice Testing

You can do a practice "test" in two ways. One is to test yourself as you are reading or taking in information. This is a great way to add a little variety to your studying. You can ask yourself what a paragraph or text section means as you read. To do this, read a passage in a text, cover up the material, and ask yourself, "What was the main idea of this section?" Recite aloud or write down your answer, and then check it against the original information.

Another, more involved, way to practice test is to create flashcards or an actual test by writing a test. This takes more time, but there are online programs such as Quizlet that make it a little easier. Practice testing is an effective study strategy because it helps you practice *retrieving* information, which is what you want to be able to do when you are taking the real test.

One of the best ways to learn something is to teach it to someone else, so ask a friend or family member if you can explain something to them, and *teach* them the lesson. You may find you know more about the subject than you thought . . . or you may realize quickly that you need to do more studying. Why does teaching someone else rank as one of the most effective ways to learn something? It is a form of practice testing that requires you to demonstrate you know something in front of someone else! No one wants to look like they don't know what they are talking about, even if it your audience is another classmate.

Recognizing Strengths/Weaknesses of Preferred Study Approaches

Most children don't learn to ride a bicycle by reading a manual; they learn by watching other kids, listening to instructions, and getting up on the seat and learning to balance—sometimes with training wheels or a proud parent holding on, but ultimately without any other support. They may fall over and feel insecure, but usually, they learn to make the machine go. Most of us employ multiple methods of study all the time. You usually only run into trouble if you stubbornly rely on just one way to learn or study and the material you're studying or the task you want to accomplish doesn't lend itself to that preference. You can practice specific strategies to help you learn in your preferred learning approach. Can you think of a time when the way you usually study a situation didn't work?

When deciding on a study approach, consider what you know about the material and the type of knowledge it involves. Is it a group of concepts related to problem-solving methods, such as those you'd find in a physics class? Or is it a literary analysis of a novel? Consider as many elements as possible about the material -- and the way the material will be assessed -- to help choose a study approach.

You should also consider your instructor's preferred method of teaching and learning. Watching the way they teach lessons or convey necessary course information to the class. Do they almost always augment lessons with video clips to provide examples or create a memorable narrative? Do they like to show you how something works by demonstrating and working with their hands—for instance, assembling a piece of equipment by taking it apart and putting it back together again? Echoing their teaching approach may help your study. That doesn't mean you have to change your entire learning approach to match your instructors' methods. Many instructors understand that their students will have different ways of learning and try to present information in multiple ways.

Practicing Active Continuous Improvement for All Preferences

You can certainly learn through specific approaches or according to specific preferences, but you will also need to adapt to different situations, skills, and subject areas. Don't limit yourself to thinking you can *only* learn one way or another. That mindset induces anxiety when you encounter a learning situation that doesn't match your preference. What if your instructor *only* uses a spoken lecture to teach concepts in your chemistry class, and you consider yourself a visual learner? Or what if the only method presented to you for learning mathematical computations is to see videos of others working problems, and you're more hands-on? You may

have to concentrate in a different way or devise other strategies to learn, but you can do it. In fact, you should sometimes work on the styles/preferences that you feel are your least favorite; it will actually strengthen your overall ability to learn and retain information.[10]

Dr. Stephen Covey, famous leadership coach and businessman, called this attention to knowing and honing all your skill sets, not just your favorites, *sharpening the saw.* He advised that people should be aware of their strengths but should always hone their weaknesses by saying, "We must never become too busy sawing to take time to sharpen the saw."[11] For instance, in the chemistry lecture example, you may need to take good notes from the spoken lecture and then review those notes as you sketch out any complex ideas or formulas. If the math videos are not enough for you to grasp difficult problems, you may ask for or find your own problems for additional practice covering that particular mathematical concept to solve on your own.

Effective studying is an ongoing process of reviewing course material. The first and most important thing you should know is that studying is not something you do a few days before an exam. To be effective, studying is something you do as part of an ongoing learning process, throughout the duration of the term.

Studying Every Day

Studying begins after each class or assignment when you review your notes. Each study session should involve three steps:

1. **Gather your learning materials.** Take time to merge your class notes with your reading notes. How do they complement each other? Stop and think. What do the notes tell you about your material? What aspects of the material are you unsure about? Do you need to reread a part of your text? Write down any questions you have for your instructor and pay a visit during office hours. It is better to clear up any misconceptions and get your questions answered soon after you are exposed to the material, rather than to wait, for two reasons: (1) the question or doubt is fresh in your mind and you won't forget about it and (2) instructors usually build their lessons on material already presented. If you don't take these steps now, you are setting yourself up for problems later in the course.
2. **Apply or visualize.** What does this material mean to *you*? How will *you* use this new knowledge? Try to find a way to apply it in your own life or thoughts. If you can't use the knowledge right away, visualize yourself using the knowledge to solve a problem or visualize yourself teaching the material to other students.
3. **Cement your knowledge.** If you use the two-column note-taking method, cover up the right side of your notes with a piece of paper, leaving the questions in the left column exposed. Test yourself by trying to answer your questions without referring to your notes. How did you do? If you are unsure about anything, look up the answer and write it down right away. Don't let a wrong answer be the last thing you wrote on a subject, because you will most likely continue to remember the wrong answer.

Studying in Course Units

At the end of each unit, or at least every two weeks or so, use your notes and textbook to write an outline or summary of the material in your own words. (Remember the paragraphs you wrote to summarize each class or reading? They'll be very helpful to you here.) After you have written the summary or outline, go back and reread your outline from the prior unit followed by the one you just wrote. Does the new one build on the earlier one? Do you feel confident you understand the material?

Studying before the Exam

At least a week before a major exam, ask yourself these questions: What has the instructor said about what is included on the exam? Has the instructor said anything about what types of questions will be included? If you were the instructor, what questions would you ask on an exam? Challenge yourself to come up with some really tough open-ended questions. Think about how you might answer them. Be sure to go to any review sessions the instructor or your section leader holds.

Now go back and review your outlines. Do they cover what the instructor has suggested might be on the exam? After reviewing your outlines, reread the sections of your notes that are most closely associated with expected exam questions. Pay special attention to those items the instructor emphasized during class. Read key points aloud and write them down on index cards. Make flash cards to review in downtimes, such as when you're waiting for a bus or for a class to start.

More Tips for Success

- **Schedule a consistent study-review time for each course at least once a week**, in addition to your class and assignment time. Keep to that schedule as rigorously as you do your class schedule. Use your study time to go through the steps outlined earlier; this is not meant to be a substitute for your assignment time.

- **Get yourself in the right space.** Choose to study in a quiet, well-lit space. Your chair should be comfortable but provide good support. Remember that libraries were designed for reading and should be your first option.
- **Minimize distractions.** Turn off your cell phone and get away from Facebook, television, other nearby activities, and chatty friends or roommates. All of these can cut into the effectiveness of your study efforts. Multitasking and studying don't mix.
- **If you will be studying for a long time, take short breaks at least once an hour.** Get up, stretch, breathe deeply, and then get back to work. (If you keep up with your daily assignments and schedule weekly review sessions for yourself—and keep them—there should be almost no need for long study sessions.)

Studying in Groups

Figure 7.5



A study group that is too large is more likely to digress into casual conversation.

clemsonunivlibrary – Study groups are back studying in Cooper! All is right with the world – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Study groups are a great idea—as long as they are thoughtfully managed. A study group can give you new perspectives on course material and help you fill in gaps in your notes. Discussing course content will sharpen your critical thinking related to the subject, and being part of a group to which you are accountable will help you study consistently. In a study group, you will end up "teaching" each other the material, which is the strongest way to retain new material. But remember, being in a group working together doesn't mean there will be less work for you as an individual; your work will just be much more effective.

Here are some tips for creating and managing effective study groups:

- **Think small.** Limit your study group to no more than three or four people. A larger group would limit each student's participation and make scheduling of regular study sessions a real problem.
- **Go for quality.** Look for students who are doing well in the course, who ask questions, and who participate in class discussions. Don't make friendship the primary consideration for who should be in your group. Meet up with your friends instead during "social time"—study time is all about learning.
- **Look for complementary skills and learning styles.** Complementary skills make for a good study group because your weaknesses will be countered by another student's strengths. When a subject requires a combination of various skills, strengths in each of those skills is helpful (e.g., a group with one student who is really good at physics and another at math would be perfect for an engineering course). Finally, a variety of learning styles is helpful because each of you pick up differing signals and emphases from the instructor that you can share with each other, so you will not likely miss important points.
- **Meet regularly.** When you first set up a study group, agree to a regular meeting schedule and stick to it. Moving study session times around can result in nonparticipation, lack of preparation, and eventually the collapse of the study group. Equally important is keeping your sessions to the allotted times. If you waste time and regularly meet much longer than you agreed to, participants will not feel they are getting study value for their time invested.
- **Define an agenda and objectives.** Give your study sessions focus so that you don't get sidetracked. Based on requests and comments from the group, the moderator should develop the agenda and start each session by summarizing what the group expects to cover and then keep the group to task.

- **Include some of the following items on your agenda:**
  - Review and discuss class and assignment notes since your last meeting.
  - Discuss assigned readings.
  - Quiz each other on class material.
  - "Reteach" aspects of the material team participants are unsure of.
  - Brainstorm possible test questions and responses.
  - Review quiz and test results and correct misunderstandings.
  - Critique each other's ideas for paper themes and approaches.
  - Define questions to ask the instructor.
- **Assign follow-up work.** If there is any work that needs to be done between meetings, make sure that all team members know specifically what is expected of them and agree to do the work.
- **Rotate the role of moderator or discussion leader.** This helps ensure "ownership" of the group is spread equally across all members and ensures active participation and careful preparation.

Key Takeaways

- Effective studying happens over time, not just a few days before an exam. Consistent and regular review time helps you learn the material better and saves you time and anguish as exam time approaches.
- The following are three steps to follow in each study session:
  - Gather your knowledge.
  - Apply or visualize your knowledge.
  - Cement your knowledge.
- Study groups are a great idea—provided they are thoughtfully managed.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. What do we mean by "gathering your knowledge"?

   _____

   _____

2. What study habits recommended in this section do you want to develop or improve? What specific steps will you take to start working on them?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Think of your toughest course. Which students in that class would you want to include in a study group? Why?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Footnotes

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Activity – Improving Your Study Space

Improving Your Study Space

> Think about your current study area at home–the good, the bad, the ugly. Be thorough. 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.

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7.3: Remembering Course Materials

Up to now we have covered how to capture material in your notes. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to strategies for recording ideas and facts in your memory.

The Role of Memorization in Learning

Have you ever gone into an exam you have studied for and drawn a blank on a particular question? Have you ever walked into a room only to forget for a moment why you went there? Have you ever forgotten where you left your keys? How about finding yourself in a conversation with someone whose name you can't remember? The fact is, memory fails everyone from time to time. It is not surprising that students, with a huge amount of information they must commit to memory (not to mention frequent distractions and interruptions), are often frustrated by their memory.

Let's start by taking some of the pressure off you. You will not be required to memorize everything your instructor says in a class—nor should you try to. There is way too much to capture. People speak at a rate of 100 to 150 words per minute. An average 50-minute lecture may contain around 7,500 words. By listening effectively and taking notes, your job is to distill the main ideas and a few keywords. *These* are the things you should choose to memorize.

In your early and high school education, memorization was a key aspect of learning. You memorized multiplication tables, the names of the states, and vocabulary words. Memorized facts ensured your success on multiple-choice questions. In college, however, most of your work is focused on understanding the material in depth. Remembering the year of the 9/11 attack (2001) is far less important than grasping the impact of that attack on American foreign policy. Understanding themes and ideas and being able to think critically about them is really the key to your success in college learning. Although memorization is not the primary key to success, having a good memory is important to capture ideas in your mind, and it helps tremendously in certain subjects like sciences and foreign languages.

How Memory Works

Memory is the process of storing and retrieving information. Think of a computer. In many ways it is an electronic model of the human memory. A computer stores, retrieves, and processes information similarly to how the human mind does. Like the human version, there are two types of memory: short-term or active memory (RAM in the computer) and long-term or passive memory (the computer's hard drive). As its name suggests, short-term or active memory is made up of the information we are processing at any given time. Short-term memory involves information being captured at the moment (such as listening in class) as well as from information retrieved from our passive memory for doing complex mental tasks (such as thinking critically and drawing conclusions). But short-term memory is limited and suffers from the passing of time and lack of use. We begin to forget data within thirty seconds of not using it, and interruptions (such as phone calls or distractions) require us to rebuild the short-term memory structure—to get "back on task." To keep information in our memory, we must either use it or place it into our long-term memory (much like saving a document on your computer).

How we save information to our long-term memory has a lot to do with our ability to retrieve it when we need it at a later date. Our mind "saves" information by creating a complex series of links to the data. The stronger the links, the easier it is to recall. You can strengthen these links by using the following strategies. You should note how closely they are tied to good listening and note-taking strategies.

- **Make a deliberate decision to remember the specific data.** "I need to remember Richard's name" creates stronger links than just wishing you had a better memory for names.
- **Link the information to your everyday life.** Ask yourself, "Why is it important that I remember this material?"—and answer it.
- **Link the information to other information you already have "stored,"** especially the key themes of the course, and you will recall the data more easily. Ask yourself how this is related to other information you have. Look for ways to tie items together. Are they used in similar ways? Do they have similar meanings? Do they sound alike?
- **Mentally group similar individual items into "buckets."** By doing this, you are creating links, for example, among terms to be memorized. For example, if you have to memorize a vocabulary list for a Spanish class, group the nouns together with other nouns, verbs with verbs, and so forth. Or your groupings might be sentences using the vocabulary words.
- **Use visual imagery.** Picture the concept vividly in your mind. Make those images big, bold, and colorful—even silly! Pile concepts on top of each other or around each other; exaggerate their features like a caricature; let your imagination run wild.

Humor and crazy imagery can help you recall key concepts.

- **Use the information.** Studies have generally shown that we retain only 5 percent of what we hear, 10 percent of what we read, 20 percent of what we learn from multimedia, and 30 percent of what is demonstrated to us, but we do retain 50 percent of what we discuss, 75 percent of what we practice by doing, and 90 percent of what we teach others or use immediately in a relevant activity. Review your notes, participate in class, and study with others.
- **Break information down into manageable "chunks."** Memorizing the ten-digit number "3141592654" seems difficult, but breaking it down into two sets of three digits and one of four digits, like a phone number—(314) 159-2654—now makes it easier to remember. (Pat yourself on the back if you recognized that series of digits: with a decimal point after the three, that's the value of pi to ten digits. Remember your last math class?)
- **Work from general information to the specific.** People usually learn best when they get the big picture first, and then look at the details.
- **Eliminate distractions.** Every time you have to "reboot" your short-term memory, you risk losing data points. Multitasking—listening to music or chatting on Facebook while you study—will play havoc with your ability to memorize because you will need to reboot your short-term memory each time you switch mental tasks.
- **Repeat, repeat, repeat.** Hear the information; read the information; say it (yes, out loud), and say it again. The more you use or repeat the information, the stronger the links to it. The more senses you use to process the information, the stronger the memorization. Write information on index cards to make flash cards and use downtime (when waiting for the subway or during a break between classes) to review key information.
- **This is a test.** Test your memory often. Try to write down everything you know about a specific subject, from memory. Then go back and check your notes and textbook to see how you did. Practicing retrieval in this way helps ensure long-term learning of facts and concepts.
- **Location, location, location.** There is often a strong connection between information and the place where you first received that information. Associate information to learning locations for stronger memory links. Picture where you were sitting in the lecture hall as you repeat the facts in your mind.

Just for Fun

Choose a specific fact from each of your classes on a given day. Now find a way of working that information into your casual conversations during the rest of the day in a way that is natural. Can you do it? What effect do you think that will have on your memory of that information?

Exercise Your Memory

Read the following list for about twenty seconds. After you have read it, cover it and write down all the items you remember.

memory list

Arch				Pen
Chowder				Maple
Airplane				Window
Kirk				Scotty
Paper clip				Thumb drive
Column				Brownies
Oak				Door
Subway				Skateboard
Leia				Cedar
Fries				Luke

How many were you able to recall? Most people can remember only a fraction of the items.

Now read the following list for about twenty seconds, cover it, and see how many you remember.

memory list

Fries				Skateboard
Chowder				Subway
Brownies				Luke
Paper clip				Leia
Pen				Kirk
Thumb drive				Scotty
Oak				Column
Cedar				Window
Maple				Door
Airplane				Arch

Did your recall improve? Why do you think you did better? Was it easier? Most people take much less time doing this version of the list and remember almost all the terms. The list is the same as the first list, but the words have now been grouped into categories. Use this grouping method to help you remember lists of mixed words or ideas.

Using Mnemonics

What do the names of the Great Lakes, the makings of a Big Mac, the order of auscultating heart valves, and the number of days in a month have in common? They are easily remembered by using mnemonic devices. Mnemonics (pronounced neh-MA-nicks) are tricks for memorizing lists and data. They create artificial but strong links to the data, making recall easier. The most commonly used mnemonic devices are acronyms, acrostics, rhymes, and jingles.

Acronyms are words or phrases made up by using the first letter of each word in a list or phrase. Need to remember the names of the Great Lakes? Try the acronym HOMES using the first letter of each lake:

- **H**uron
- **O**ntario
- **M**ichigan
- **E**rie
- **S**uperior

To create an acronym, first write down the first letters of each term you need to memorize. Then rearrange the letters to create a word or words. You can find acronym generators online (just search for “acronym generator”) that can help you by offering options. Acronyms work best when your list of letters includes vowels as well as consonants and when the order of the terms is not important. If no vowels are available, or if the list should be learned in a particular order, try using an acrostic instead.

Acrostics are similar to acronyms in that they work off the first letter of each word in a list. But rather than using them to form a word, the letters are represented by entire words in a sentence or phrase. If you’ve studied music, you may be familiar with “Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge” to learn the names of the notes on the lines of the musical staff: E, G, B, D, F. The ridiculous and therefore memorable line “My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas” was used by many of us to remember the names of the planets (at least until Pluto was downgraded):

Acrostics

My	Mercury
Very	Venus
Educated	Earth
Mother	Mars
Just	Jupiter

My	Mercury
Served	Saturn
Us	Uranus
Nine	Neptune
Pizzas	Pluto

To create an acrostic, list the first letters of the terms to be memorized in the order in which you want to learn them (like the planet names). Then create a sentence or phrase using words that start with those letters.

Rhymes are short verses used to remember data. A common example is “In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.” Need to remember how many days a given month has? “Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November…,” and so forth. Writing rhymes is a talent that can be developed with practice. To start, keep your rhymes short and simple. Define the key information you want to remember and break it down into a series of short phrases. Look at the last words of the phrases: can you rhyme any of them? If they don’t rhyme, can you substitute or add a word to create the rhyme? (For example, in the Columbus rhyme, “ninety-two” does not rhyme with “ocean,” but adding the word “blue” completes the rhyme and creates the mnemonic.)

Jingles are phrases set to music, so that the music helps trigger your memory. Jingles are commonly used by advertisers to get you to remember their product or product features. Remember “Two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions on a sesame seed bun”—the original Big Mac commercial. Anytime you add rhythm to the terms you want to memorize, you are activating your auditory sense, and the more senses you use for memorization, the stronger the links to the data you are creating in your mind. To create a jingle for your data, start with a familiar tune and try to create alternate lyrics using the terms you want to memorize. Another approach you may want to try is reading your data aloud in a hip-hop or rap music style.

Creative Memory Challenge

Create an acrostic to remember the noble gasses: helium (He), neon (Ne), argon (Ar), krypton (Kr), xenon (Xe), and the radioactive radon (Rn).

Create an acronym to remember the names of the G8 group of countries: France, the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, Japan, Italy, and Canada. (Hint: Sometimes it helps to substitute terms with synonyms—“America” for the United States or “England” for the United Kingdom—to get additional options.)

Create a jingle to remember the names of the Seven Dwarfs: Bashful, Doc, Dopey, Grumpy, Happy, Sleepy, and Sneezy.

Mnemonics are good memory aids, but they aren’t perfect. They take a lot of effort to develop, and they also take terms out of context because they don’t focus on the meaning of the words. Since they lack meaning, they can also be easily forgotten later on, although you may remember them through the course.

Obstacles to Remembering

If remembering things we need to know for exams or for learning new disciplines were easy, no one would have problems with it, but students face several significant obstacles to remembering, including a persistent lack of sleep and an unrealistic reliance on cramming. Life is busy and stressful for all students, so you have to keep practicing strategies to help you study and remember successfully, but you also must be mindful of obstacles to remembering.

Lack of Sleep

Let’s face it, sleep and college don’t always go well together. You have so much to do! All that reading, all those papers, all those extra hours in the science lab or tutoring center or library! And then we have the social and emotional aspects of going to school, which may not be the most critical aspect of your life as you pursue more education but are a significant part of who you are. When you consider everything you need to attend to in college, you probably won’t be surprised that sleep is often the first thing we give up as we search for more time to accomplish everything we’re trying to do. That seems reasonable—just wake up an hour earlier or stay up a little later. But you may want to reconsider picking away at your precious sleep time.

Sleep benefits all of your bodily functions, and your brain needs sleep time to dream and rest through the night. You probably can recall times when you had to do something without adequate sleep. We say things like “I just can’t wake up” and “I’m walking

around half asleep."

In fact, you may actually be doing just that. Lack of sleep impairs judgment, focus, and our overall mood. Do you know anyone who is always grumpy in the morning? A fascinating medical study from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) claims that sleep deprivation is as dangerous as being drunk, both in what it does to our bodies and in the harm we may cause to ourselves and others in driving and performing various daily tasks.[56]

If you can't focus well because you didn't get enough sleep, then you likely won't be able to remember whatever it is you need to recall for any sort of studying or test-taking situation. Most exams in a college setting go beyond simple memorization, but you still have a lot to remember for exams. For example, when Saanvi sits down to take an exam on introductory biology, she needs to recall all the subject-specific vocabulary she read in the textbook's opening chapters, the general connections she made between biological studies and other scientific fields, and any biology details introduced in the unit for which she is taking the exam.

Trying to make these mental connections on too little sleep will take a large mental toll because Saanvi has to concentrate even harder than she would with adequate sleep. She isn't merely tired; her brain is not refreshed and primed to conduct difficult tasks. Although not an exact comparison, think about when you overtax a computer by opening too many programs simultaneously. Sometimes the programs are sluggish or slow to respond, making it difficult to work efficiently; sometimes the computer shuts down completely and you have to reboot the entire system. Your body is a bit like that on too little sleep.

On the flip side, though, your brain on adequate sleep is amazing, and sleep can actually assist you in making connections, remembering difficult concepts, and studying for exams. The exact reasons for this is still a serious research project for scientists, but the results all point to a solid connection between sleep and cognitive performance.

If you're interested in learning more about this research, the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) is a good place to start. One article is entitled "College Students: Getting Enough Sleep Is Vital to Academic Success."

Analysis Question

How long do you sleep every night on average? Do you see a change in your ability to function when you haven't had enough sleep? What could you do to limit the number of nights with too little sleep?

Downside of Cramming

At least once in their college careers, most students will experience the well-known pastime called *cramming*. See if any of this is familiar: Shelley has lots of classes, works part-time at a popular restaurant, and is just amazingly busy, so she puts off serious study sessions day after day. She isn't worried because she has set aside time she would have spent sleeping to cram just before the exam. That's the idea anyway. Originally, she planned to stay up a little late and study for four hours from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. and still get several hours of refreshing sleep. But it's Dolphin Week or Beat State Day or whatever else comes up, and her study session doesn't start until midnight—she'll pull an *all-nighter* (to be more precise, this is actually an *all-really-early-morning-er*, but it doesn't quite have the same ring to it). So, two hours after her original start time, she tries to *cram* all the lessons, problems, and information from the last two weeks of lessons into this one session. Shelley falls asleep around 3 a.m. with her notes and books still on her bed. After her late night, she doesn't sleep well and goes into the morning exam tired.

Shelley does OK but not great on the exam, and she is not pleased with her results. More and more research is showing that the stress Shelley has put on her body doing this, combined with the way our brains work, makes cramming a seriously poor choice for learning.

One sleep researcher, Dr. Susan Redline from Boston, says, "Sleep deficiency can affect mood and the ability to make memories and learn, but it also affects metabolism, appetite, blood pressure, levels of inflammation in the body and perhaps even the immune response."[7]

Your brain simply refuses to cooperate with cramming—it sounds like a good idea, but it doesn't work. Cramming causes stress, which can lead to paralyzing test anxiety; it erroneously supposes you can remember and understand something fully after only minimal exposure; and it overloads your brain, which, however amazing it is, can only focus on one concept at a time and a limited number of concepts all together for learning and retention.

Leading neuroscientist John Medina claims that the brain begins to wander at about 10 minutes, at which point you need a new stimulus to spark interest.[8] That doesn't mean you can't focus for longer than 10 minutes; you just have to switch gears a lot to keep your brain engaged. Have you ever heard a speaker drone on about one concept for, say, 30 minutes without somehow

changing pace to engage the listeners? It doesn't take much to re-engage—pausing to ask the listeners questions or moving to a different location in the room will do it—but without these subtle attention markers, listeners start thinking of something else. The same thing happens to you if you try to cram all reading, problem-solving, and note reviewing into one long session; your brain will wander.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. Which of the following is your most common method of studying?
    a. Reading or rereading the text or my class notes.
    b. Watching videos of my instructor's lecture or other people discussing the topics.
    c. Taking practice quizzes/tests.
    d. Creating/using study tools (flashcards, mnemonic devices, etc.)
    e. Working with a study group, tutor, or academic support.
2. Which of the following do you have the most difficulty remembering?
    a. Vocabulary and facts (such as Biology vocab, Historical facts.)
    b. Problem-solving methods (such as in Math)
    c. Details from text and literature
    d. Skills and processes (such as a lab technique or a building process)
    e. Computer functions/locations/processes
    f. Which formulas, processes, or categories to apply in situations (such as in Physics or Accounting)
3. How much anxiety do you feel when an exam or other major course evaluation is approaching?
    a. A great deal
    b. A lot
    c. A moderate amount
    d. A little
    e. None at all

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say(opens in new window) surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

Which of the following is your most common method of studying?

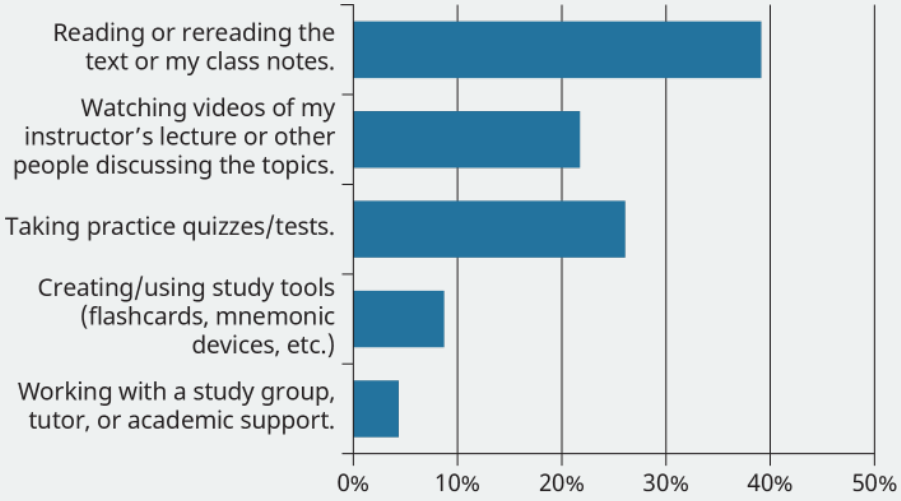


Figure 7.6

Which of the following do you have the most difficulty remembering?

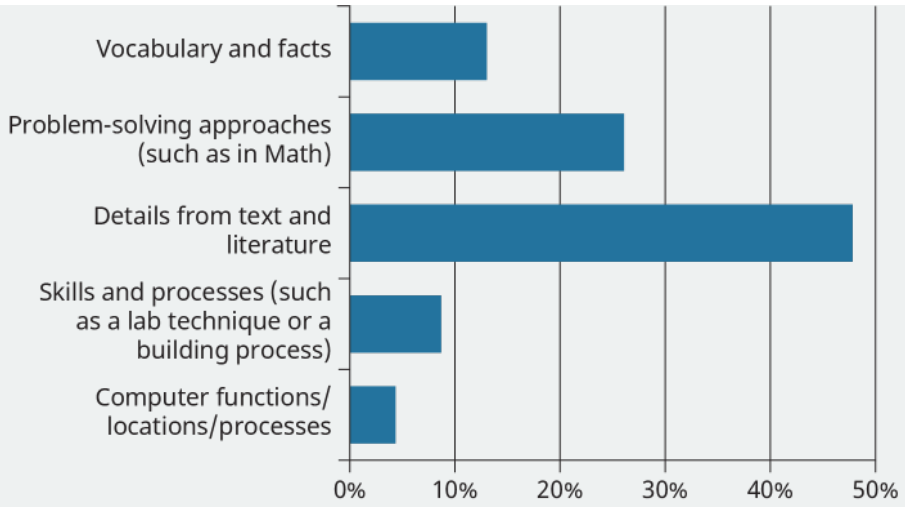


Figure 7.7

How much anxiety do you feel when an exam or other major course evaluation is approaching?

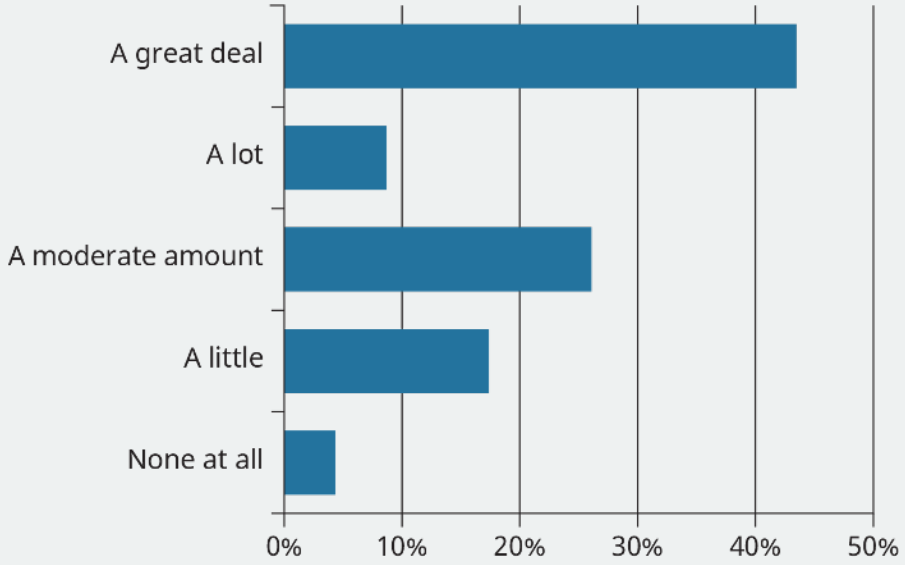


Figure 7.8

Determining When/What to Memorize

In the realm of learning and studying, some conditions warrant memorization as the most effective way to work with information. For instance, if you are expected to have a working knowledge of conversational French or Spanish, you will have to memorize some words. Simply knowing a long list of terms isn't going to help you order food in a café or ask for directions in a foreign country because you also need to understand the other language's grammar and have some sort of context for what needs to be said from your vocabulary list. But you cannot say the words in a different language if you cannot remember your vocabulary. From this scenario, you can assume that memorization is a good fit for some parts of language acquisition.

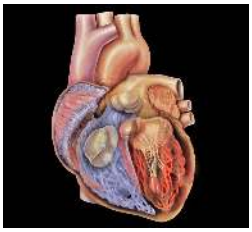
A worthwhile book on memory, thinking, and learning is a short study called *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* by Peter Brown, Henry Roediger, and Mark McDaniel. The authors conclude, after extensive research, that our attempts to speed up learning and make studying easier are not good ideas. Studying is hard work, and it should be. For learning to *stick*, we need to work hard to pull the information out of our memory and use it by continually pushing ourselves to accomplish increasingly difficult tasks.[9]

Footnotes

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Career Connection

When trying to remember the best way to listen to the heart sounds when completing a patient assessment, use the acrostic: All Physicians Take Money (Aortic, Pulmonic, Tricuspid, Mitral). From left to right across your chest: A is the right upper sternal border (the second right interspace), P is the left upper sternal border (the second left interspace), T is the left lower sternal border, and M is the apex.



Patrick J. Lynch, medical illustrator, CC BY 2.5 <Creatives Commons.org [creativecommons.org]>, via Wikimedia Commons

Key Takeaways

- Understanding ideas is generally more important in college than just memorizing facts.
- To keep information in our memory, we must use it or build links with it to strengthen it in long-term memory.
- Key ways to remember information include linking it to other information already known; organizing facts in groups of information; eliminating distractions; and repeating the information by hearing, reading, and saying it aloud.
- To remember specific pieces of information, try creating a mnemonic that associates the information with an acronym or acrostic, a rhyme or a jingle.

Checkpoint Exercise

1. For each of the following statements, circle T for true or F for false:

Checkpoint

T	F	Preparing for class is important for listening, for taking notes, and for memory.
T	F	Multitasking enhances your active memory.
T	F	If you listen carefully, you will remember most of what was said for three days.

T	F	Preparing for class is important for listening, for taking notes, and for memory.
T	F	“Use it or lose it” applies to information you want to remember.
T	F	Mnemonics should be applied whenever possible.

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7.4: Success After Class - Reviewing Material

Original content by Leslie Jennings, RN

Supplemental material provided by Lisa Harding DNP RN CEN

Planning a review period prior to an 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. 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 have to be able to apply their preparation accordingly and perform well on the exam.

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. Planning for a review period over five days prior to the exam and healthy eating and sleep habits cannot be overemphasized. Without a plan, preparation would not be the same and this may affect your test score. Binge studying and cramming also are not healthy. Careful review of the material prior to each exam is required for optimal performance, and student reports tell us that the habit of "cramming" the night before the exam is not going to lead to positive, long-term results. Staying up late puts stress on our brain and body, and not getting adequate sleep places our bodies at risk for getting sick.

Students need to develop a mindset that every time they attend class or complete a reading assignment they are preparing for the next exam, because so much of their grade rides on those exams. In college, it is not uncommon for your entire course grade to be based on two or three exams with no options for a retake or extra credit. Instead of an exam being over one or two chapters, exams are more likely to cover 5+ chapters of material, and in the case of a comprehensive exam, an entire semester's worth of material. Intentionally working through the process of preparing for, taking, and learning from the testing process will facilitate successful outcomes.

Notes for Nursing Success! During nursing school, you have multiple exams in the same week, so creating a study plan will help you avoid stress and feel prepared!

Often, students jump right in to taking an exam feeling stressed and rushed with a need to regurgitate information immediately. However, approaching a test in a careful and methodical way can help ensure the best results. You can best utilize your exam time by taking the time to survey the exam directions and point values and planning how to approach sections of the test. Strategy is particularly important for tests with mixed types of questions (i.e., multiple choice and essay) or tests with multiple essay questions. For example, if you were to spend too much time on the multiple choice questions and not allocate enough time to complete an essay question, you may have answered the majority of the total number of questions but still do poorly on the exam if the essay question was worth a larger portion of the exam's total points. Plan your time carefully and manage your stress.

Activity – Creating a Study Plan

Creating a Study Plan

Identify when your next substantial exam will be given in a class. Create a five-day study plan using the formula described in "Create a Five-Day Study Plan for Exams". Once you have created this plan, incorporate the schedule into your time management calendar for implementation.

Create a Five-Day Study Plan for Exams

Making a plan that will allow for the careful review of all of the assigned and presented material leads to less stress the day of an exam and the best conditions for recall and performance. Here is a simple method for creating a study plan:

1. Break the material for the exam into four manageable "chunks." If material can be logically divided by chapters, use that method. If not, make up your own chunks based on the content of the material. Note: It is not a good idea to break up information by the method of delivery (i.e., one chunk equals notes, one chunk equals readings, etc.). You want to include all

information on specific topics together in one chunk (e.g., information about the topic of osmosis from the lecture notes and the textbook in a chunk).
2. Plan to spend about two hours studying on each of the five days.
3. You should work with the material on the exam in two ways, by preparing that material for review and by reviewing that material. Preparation of material incorporates study techniques discussed earlier in this chapter such as combining and clarifying lecture and textbook notes and creating visual organizers for topics.

Example of the Schedule for a Five-Day Study Plan

Day One
Prepare 1st Chunk – 2 hours

Day Two
Prepare 2nd Chunk – 2 hours
Review 1st Chunk – 30 minutes

Day Three
Prepare 3rd Chunk – 1.5 hours
Review 2nd Chunk – 30 minutes
Review 1st Chunk – 15 minutes

Day Four
Prepare 4th Chunk – 1 hour
Review 3rd Chunk – 30 minutes
Review 2nd Chunk – 15 minutes
Review 1st Chunk – 10 minutes

Day Five
Review 4th Chunk – 1 hour
Review 3rd Chunk – 30 minutes
Review 2nd Chunk – 30 minutes
Review 1st Chunk – 30 minutes

Taking some time to plan out what material will go into each chunk will ensure that you do not miss anything.

This method typically works very well for courses that offer two or three tests throughout the semester; however, a similar method could be modified by the number of days or the amount of time spent each day if a course offers more exams with less material on each exam.

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7.5: The Honest Truth

Throughout this book we have focused on the active process of *learning*, not just on how to get good grades. The attitude of some students that grades are the end-all in academics has led many students to resort to academic dishonesty to try to get the best possible grades or handle the pressure of an academic program. Although you may be further tempted if you've heard people say, "Everybody does it," or "It's no big deal at my school," you should be mindful of the consequences of cheating:

- **You don't learn as much.** Cheating may get you the right answer on a particular exam question, but it won't teach you how to apply knowledge in the world after school, nor will it give you a foundation of knowledge for learning more advanced material. When you cheat, you cheat yourself out of opportunities.
- **You risk failing the course or even expulsion from school.** Each institution has its own definitions of and penalties for academic dishonesty, but most include cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification. The exact details of what is allowed or not allowed vary somewhat among different colleges and even instructors, so you should be sure to check your school's Web site and your instructor's guidelines to see what rules apply. Ignorance of the rules is seldom considered a valid defense.
- **Cheating causes stress.** Fear of getting caught will cause you stress and anxiety; this will get in the way of performing well with the information you *do* know.
- **You're throwing away your money and time.** Getting a college education is a big investment of money and effort. You're simply not getting your full value when you cheat, because you don't learn as much.
- **You are trashing your integrity.** Cheating once and getting away with it makes it easier to cheat again, and the more you cheat, the more comfortable you will feel with giving up your integrity in other areas of life—with perhaps even more serious consequences.
- **Cheating lowers your self-esteem.** If you cheat, you are telling yourself that you are simply not smart enough to handle learning. It also robs you of the feeling of satisfaction from genuine success.

Figure 7.9



Resist the temptation to cheat by using material from the Internet.

Thomas Favre-Bulle – Working on UML – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Technology has made it easier to cheat. Your credit card and an Internet connection can procure a paper for you on just about any subject and length. You can copy and paste for free from various Web sites. Students have made creative use of texting and video on their cell phones to gain unauthorized access to material for exams. But be aware that technology has also created ways for instructors to easily detect these forms of academic dishonesty. Most colleges make these tools available to their instructors. Instructors are also modifying their testing approaches to reduce potential academic misconduct by using methods that are harder to cheat at (such as in-class essays that evaluate *your* thinking and oral presentations).

If you feel uneasy about doing something in your college work, trust your instincts. Confirm with the instructor that your intended form of research or use of material is acceptable. Cheating just doesn't pay.

Examples of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty can take many forms, and you should be careful to avoid them. The following list from Northwestern University is a clear and complete compilation of what most institutions will consider unacceptable academic behavior.

1. **Cheating:** using unauthorized notes, study aids, or information on an examination; altering a graded work after it has been returned, then submitting the work for regrading; allowing another person to do one's work and submitting that work under one's own name; submitting identical or similar papers for credit in more than one course without prior permission from the course instructors.
2. **Plagiarism:** submitting material that in part or whole is not entirely one's own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source.
3. **Fabrication:** falsifying or inventing any information, data or citation; presenting data that were not gathered in accordance with standard guidelines defining the appropriate methods for collecting or generating data and failing to include an accurate account of the method by which the data were gathered or collected.
4. **Obtaining an Unfair Advantage:** (a) stealing, reproducing, circulating or otherwise gaining access to examination materials prior to the time authorized by the instructor; (b) stealing, destroying, defacing or concealing library materials with the purpose of depriving others of their use; (c) unauthorized collaboration on an academic assignment; (d) retaining, possessing, using or circulating previously given examination materials, where those materials clearly indicate that they are to be returned to the instructor at the conclusion of the examination; (e) intentionally obstructing or interfering with another student's academic work; or (f) otherwise undertaking activity with the purpose of creating or obtaining an unfair academic advantage over other students' academic work.
5. **Aiding and Abetting Academic Dishonesty:** (a) providing material, information, or other assistance to another person with knowledge that such aid could be used in any of the violations stated above, or (b) providing false information in connection with any inquiry regarding academic integrity.
6. **Falsification of Records and Official Documents:** altering documents affecting academic records; forging signatures of authorization or falsifying information on an official academic document, grade report, letter of permission, petition, drop/add form, ID card, or any other official University document.
7. **Unauthorized Access** to computerized academic or administrative records or systems: viewing or altering computer records, modifying computer programs or systems, releasing or dispensing information gained via unauthorized access, or interfering with the use or availability of computer systems or information.

Key Takeaways

- Being dishonest can have major consequences that can affect not only your college career but also your life beyond college.
- "Everybody does it" and "It's no big deal at my school" are not valid reasons for cheating.
- When you cheat, you are primarily cheating yourself.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. What are the most common forms of academic dishonesty you have heard about at your school? What should be done about them?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What resources do you have on campus to learn about correct forms of referencing other people's work in your own?

   _____

   _____

   _____

References

Undergraduate Academic Conduct Committee of Northwestern University, "Definitions of Academic Violations," northwestern.edu(opens in new window) [www.northwestern.edu] (accessed July 13, 2010).

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7.6: Dealing with Test Anxiety- Managing Your Stress for Success

Leslie Jennings, RN

THE DOS AND DON'TS OF MANAGING ANXIETY RELATED TO EXAMS

The stress brought on by a major exam in a course can be extreme enough that it impairs the clear thinking needed for optimal performance. Most of us have experienced this. It is normal to feel stress before an exam, and in fact, that may be a good thing. Stress motivates you to study and review, generates adrenaline to help sharpen your reflexes and focus while taking the exam, and may even help you remember some of the material you need. But suffering too many stress symptoms or suffering any of them severely will impede your ability to show what you have learned. Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which a person feels distress before, during, or after a test or exam to the point where stress causes poor performance. Anxiety during a test interferes with your ability to recall knowledge from memory as well as your ability to use higher-level thinking skills effectively. Consider the Do's and Don'ts listed below for managing anxiety related to exams.

DO…

- Do prepare for an exam using the "Five-Day Study Plan". Students who feel prepared will have less anxiety overall.
- Do stay positive about yourself and your ability to perform well.
- Do plan to reward yourself with something relaxing or fun after the exam. Think about that when stressful thoughts may occur.
- Do relax the last hour before the exam to reduce tension and stressful thoughts.
- Do eat a moderate breakfast that includes both protein and healthy carbohydrates.
- Do periodically conduct checks on the tension in certain areas of your body and try to relax those areas. Breathing deeply and engaging in some positive imagery can also reduce tension quickly during an exam.
- Do survey the entire exam and plan carefully.
- Do ask questions of your professor if you are unsure about what to do on a particular question.

DON'T…

- Don't cram for an exam. Underprepared students naturally have something to worry about.
- Don't let negative thoughts or worrying get in the way of clear thinking. If you catch yourself worrying about what you do not know, stop yourself and replace it with positive affirmations and what you do know.
- Don't spend time with classmates who might confuse you or generate stress about the exam on the day of the exam.
- Don't stay up late the night before the exam. A good night's sleep will improve your mental state and promote clearer thinking.
- Don't drink a lot of caffeine before the exam. Arousal from caffeine can add to stress and make you jumpy.
- Don't show up late for an exam. Feeling rushed to finish adds to the stress.
- Don't panic if you "go blank" on a question. Go answer other questions and come back to it later. If all else fails, guess or write down what you do know.
- Don't resort to looking at anyone else's paper if you are unsure of your performance. Maintaining your integrity is far more important than the results of this exam.

If you feel that you are unable to manage your stress, please utilize the resources through the health center at your school or university. You don't have to do this alone!

There are steps you should take if you find that stress is getting in your way:

- **Be prepared.** A primary cause of test anxiety is not knowing the material. If you take good class and reading notes and review them regularly, this stressor should be greatly reduced if not eliminated. You should be confident going into your exam (but not overconfident).
- **Bounce bad vibes.** Your own negative thoughts—"I'll never pass this exam" or "I can't figure this out, I must be really stupid!"—may move you into spiraling stress cycle that in itself causes enough anxiety to block your best efforts. When you feel you are brewing a storm of negative thoughts, stop what you are doing and clear your mind. Allow yourself to daydream a

little; visualize yourself in pleasant surroundings with good friends. Don't go back to work until you feel the tension release. Sometimes it helps to take a deep breath and shout "STOP!" and then proceed with clearing your mind. Once your mind is clear, repeat a reasonable affirmation to yourself—"I know this stuff"—before continuing your work.

- **Visualize success.** Picture what it will feel like to get that A. Translate that vision into specific, reasonable goals and work toward each individual goal. Take one step at a time and reward yourself for each goal you complete.
- **It's all about you!** Don't waste your time comparing yourself to other students in the class, especially during the exam. Keep focused on your own work and your own plan. Exams are not a race, so it doesn't matter who turns in their paper first. Certainly you have no idea how they did on their exam, so a thought like "Kristen is already done, she must have aced it, I wish I had her skills" is counterproductive and will only cause additional anxiety.
- **Have a plan and follow it.** As soon as you know that an exam is coming, you can develop a plan for studying. As soon as you get your exam paper, you should develop a plan for the exam itself. We'll discuss this more later in this chapter. Don't wait to cram for an exam at the last minute; the pressure you put on yourself and the late night will cause more anxiety, and you won't learn or retain much.
- **Make sure you eat well and get a good night's sleep before the exam.** Hunger, poor eating habits, energy drinks, and lack of sleep all contribute to test anxiety.
- **Chill!** You perform best when you are relaxed, so learn some relaxation exercises you can use during an exam. Before you begin your work, take a moment to listen to your body. Which muscles are tense? Move them slowly to relax them. Tense them and relax them. Exhale, then continue to exhale for a few more seconds until you feel that your lungs are empty. Inhale slowly through your nose and feel your rib cage expand as you do. This will help oxygenate your blood and reenergize your mind.

Exercise: Talking Back to Boogie Talk

You've learned how negative thoughts contribute to test anxiety and keep you from doing as well as you can. Take some time to disarm your most frequent offenders. From the following list, select three negative thoughts that you have experienced (or write your own). Then fill in the second and third columns for each statement, as shown in the example.

- I don't know anything.…What's the matter with me?
- If I fail this test, I'll flunk the course.
- I should have studied more.…I'll never make it through.
- I just can't think.…Why did I ever take this course?
- I know everyone's doing better than I am.
- If I fail this test, my dad (or husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend, teacher) will be mad. I don't know how I can face them again.
- I'm going to be the last one done again.…I must really be stupid.
- I'm getting really tense again; my hands are shaking.…I can't even hold the pen.
- I can't remember a thing.…This always happens to me.…I never do well on anything.

negative thoughts worksheet

My boogie statement	How rational is this thought? Do you have any evidence that it is true?	Reasonable reinforcing or affirmation statements you can use to replace it.
Example: I'm drawing a blank.…I'll never get the answer…I must really be stupid.	I've missed questions on things that I studied and knew before.	I studied this and know it. I'll visualize where it's written in my notes to help me trigger my memory.

Key Takeaways

- Some stress before a test or exam is common and beneficial.
- Test anxiety is stress that gets in the way of performing effectively.
- The most common causes of test anxiety are lack of preparation and negative attitudes.
- The key to combating test anxiety is to try to reduce stressors to a manageable level rather than try to eliminate them totally.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. List three things you should do before a test or exam to combat test anxiety.

_____

_____

_____

2. List three things you can do during an exam to reduce stress.

_____

_____

_____

Activity – Test anxiety Assessment

Test Anxiety Assessment

Do you experience test anxiety?

Rate yourself on these items.

From UT Arlington Counseling Services presentation by Ellen Myers on Stress Management, 2002.

	Usually	Sometimes	Not usually
I am so nervous on tests that I don't do my best, even when I have studied well and am prepared.			
My stomach gets tight and upset before or during a test			
My hands get cold and sweaty during a test.			
I get headaches before or during a test.			
I have trouble sleeping the night before a test.			
I find my mind racing or becoming dull and "muddy" so that I can't think clearly while taking a test.			
During a test, I forget material I have studied and learned, only to remember it again after the test is over.			
I "over-analyze" questions, see too many possibilities, choose complex answers, and overlook the simpler, correct answers.			
I make careless errors on a test.			

> The more checks you put in the “usually” or “sometimes” columns, the greater the likelihood that you may be experiencing test anxiety. This is a common issue, and there is help available.

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7.7: The Secrets of the Q and A's

You can gain even more confidence in your test-taking abilities by understanding the different kinds of questions an instructor may ask and applying the following proven strategies for answering them. Most instructors will likely use various conventional types of questions. Here are some tips for handling the most common types.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- Read the instructions carefully to determine if there may be more than one right answer. If there are multiple right answers, does the instructor expect you to choose just one, or do you need to mark all correct options?
- Read each question carefully and try to answer it in your head *before* reading the answer options. Then consider *all* the options. Eliminate first the options that are clearly incorrect. Compare the remaining answers with your own answer before choosing one and marking your paper.
- Look for clue words that hint that certain option answers might be correct or incorrect. Absolute words like "never," "always," "every," or "none" are rarely found in a correct option. Less absolute words like "usually," "often," or "rarely" are regularly found in correct options.
- Be on the lookout for the word "not" in the stem phrase and in the answer choice options; it is an easy word to miss if you are reading too quickly, but it completely changes the meaning of the possible statements.

True-or-False Questions

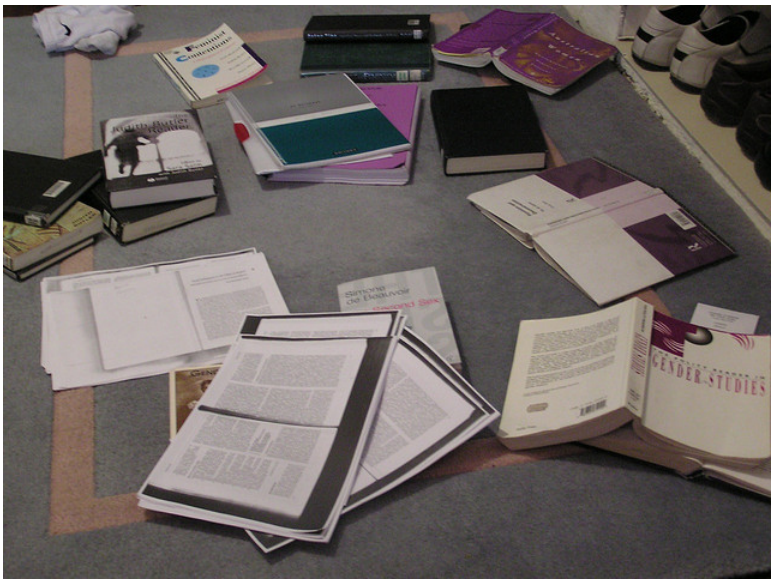
- Most of the tips for multiple-choice questions apply here as well. Be particularly aware of the words "never," "always," "every," "none," and "not" because they can determine the correct answer.
- Answer the questions that are obvious to you first. Then go back to statements that require more thought.
- If the question is stated in the positive, restate it to yourself in the negative by adding the word "not" or "never." Does the new statement sound truer or more false?
- If you still are unsure whether a statement is true or false and must guess, choose "true" because most tests include more true statements than false (but don't guess if a wrong answer penalizes you more than one left blank).

Matching Columns

- Start by looking at the two columns to be matched. Is there an equal number of items in both columns? If they are not equal, do you have to match some items in the shorter column to two or more items in the longer column, or can you leave some items unmatched? Read the directions to be sure.
- If one column has a series of single words to be matched to phrases in the other column, read all the phrases first, then all the single words before trying to make any matches. Now go back and read each phrase and find the word that best suits the phrase.
- If both columns have single words to be matched, look to cut down the number of potential matches by grouping them by parts of speech (nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, etc.).
- As always, start by making the matches that are obvious to you, and then work on the ones that require more thought. Mark off all items you have already used so you can easily see which words or phrases still remain to be matched.

Short Answer Questions

Figure 7.10



An essay test requires careful planning of what you want to write.

Tim Riley – Essay time (Postmodern Feminism): My Floor – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

- Short answer questions are designed for you to recall and provide some very *specific* information (unlike essay questions, which also ask you to apply critical thinking to that information). When you read the question, ask yourself what exactly the instructor wants to know. Keep your answers short and *specific*.

Essay Questions

- Essay questions are used by instructors to evaluate your thinking and reasoning applied to the material covered in a course. Good essay answers are based on *your* thoughts, supported by examples from classes and reading assignments.
- Careful planning is critical to answering essay questions effectively. Note how many essay questions you have to answer and how difficult each question seems. Then allocate your time accordingly.
- Read the question carefully and underline or circle keywords. Watch for words that describe the instructor's expectations for your response (see Table 7.3 "Words to Watch for in Essay Questions").
- If time allows, organize your thoughts by creating a quick outline for your essay. This helps ensure that you don't leave out key points, and if you run out of time, it may pick up a few points for your grade. Jot down specific information you might want to use, such as names, dates, and places.
- Introduce your essay answer, but get right to the point. Remember that the instructor will be grading dozens of papers and avoid "filler" text that does not add value to your answer. For example, rather than writing, "In our study of the Civil War, it is helpful to consider the many facets that lead to conflict, especially the economic factors that help explain this important turning point in our nation's history," write a more direct and concise statement like this: "Economic factors help explain the start of the Civil War."
- Write neatly and watch your grammar and spelling. Allow time to proofread your essay. You want your instructor to want to read your essay, not dread it. Remember that grading essays is largely subjective, and a favorable impression can lead to more favorable grading.
- Be sure to answer all parts of the question. Essay questions often have more than one part. Remember, too, that essay questions often have multiple acceptable answers.

Table 7.3 Words to Watch for in Essay Questions

Watch Words in Essays

Word	What It Means	What the Instructor Is Looking For
Analyze	Break concept into key parts	Don't just list the parts; show how they work together and illustrate any patterns.

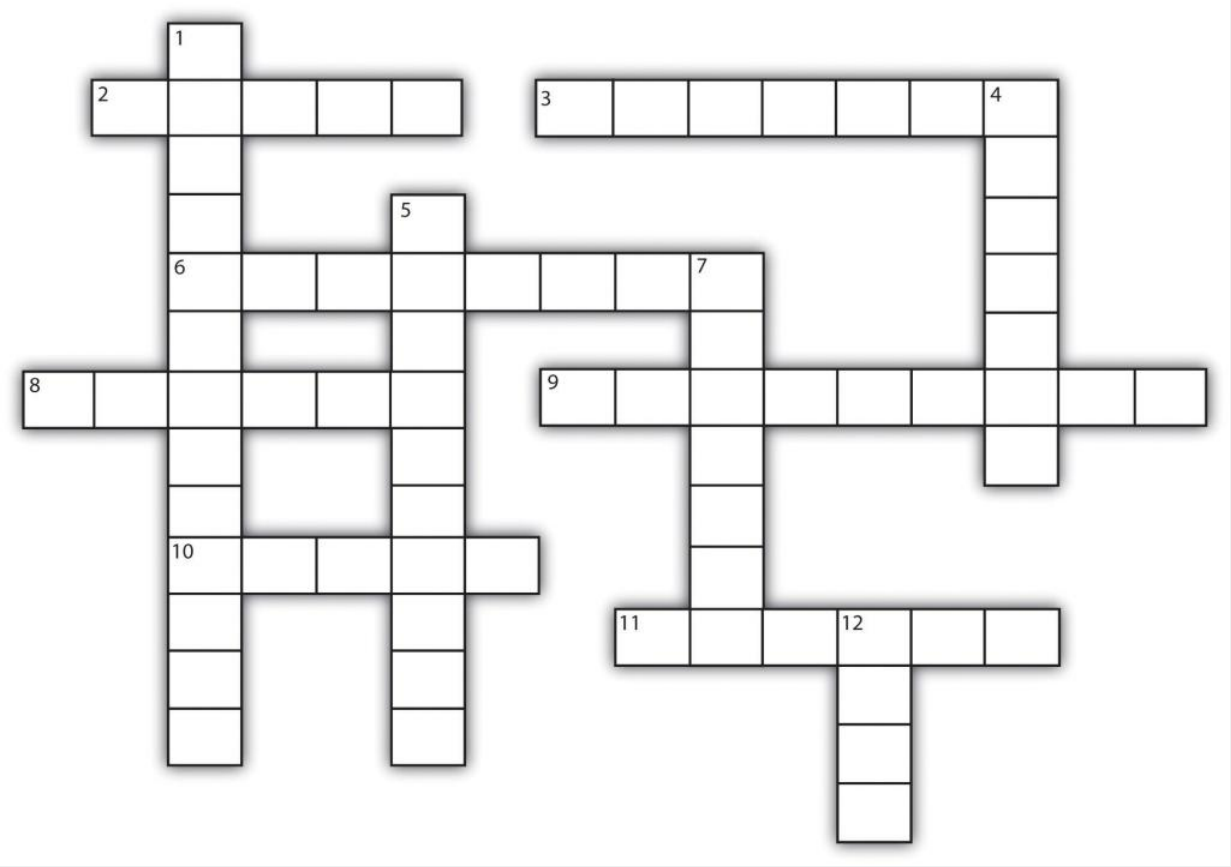
Word	What It Means	What the Instructor Is Looking For
Compare	Show similarities (and sometimes differences) between two or more concepts or ideas	Define the similarities and clearly describe how the items or ideas are similar. Do these similarities lead to similar results or effects? Note that this word is often combined with "contrast." If so, make sure you do both.
Contrast	Show differences between two or more concepts or ideas	Define the differences and clearly describe how the items or ideas are different. How do these differences result in different outcomes? Note that this word is often combined with "compare." If so, make sure you do both.
Critique	Judge and analyze	Explain what is wrong—and right—about a concept. Include your own judgments, supported by evidence and quotes from experts that support your point of view.
Define	Describe the meaning of a word, phrase, or concept	Define the concept or idea as your instructor did in class—but use your own words. If your definition differs from what the instructor presented, support your difference with evidence. Keep this essay short. Examples can help illustrate a definition, but remember that examples alone are *not* a definition.
Discuss	Explain or review	Define the key questions around the issue to be discussed and then answer them. Another approach is to define pros and cons on the issue and compare and contrast them. In either case, explore all relevant data and information.
Explain	Clarify, give reasons for something	Clarity is key for these questions. Outline your thoughts carefully. Proofread, edit, proofread, and proofread again! Good explanations are often lost in too many words.
Illustrate	Offer examples	Use examples from class material or reading assignments. Compare and contrast them to other examples you might come up with from additional reading or real life.
Prove	Provide evidence and arguments that something is true	Instructors who include this prompt in an exam question have often proven the hypothesis or other concepts in their class lectures. Think about the kind of evidence the instructor used and apply similar types of processes and data.

Word	What It Means	What the Instructor Is Looking For
Summarize	Give a brief, precise description of an idea or concept	Keep it short, but cover all key points. This is one essay prompt where examples should not be included unless the instructions specifically ask for them. (For example, “Summarize the steps of the learning cycle and give examples of the main strategies you should apply in each one.”)

Checkpoint Exercise

Test your test knowledge.

Crossword



Crossword Clues

Across	Down
2. “Always,” “never,” and “every” are words that usually indicate the answer is _____.	1. It helps to group words in matching columns by _____ ___ _____.
3. A way to organize your thoughts for an essay	4. Clarify, give reasons for something
6. Short answer questions require a _____ answer.	5. Essay questions often have more than one _____ answer.
8. Describe the meaning of a word	7. Show similarities and differences
9. Give a brief, precise description of an idea or concept	12. Most common answer in true and false questions
10. Type of question used to evaluate thinking and reasoning	

Across	Down
11. Since instructors need to read many essays, it is important to write _____.	

Nursing Test Question Types

In 2023 the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) made some significant changes to the nursing licensure exam referred to as NCLEX. Designed to evaluate the knowledge of the candidates ability to respond to significant patient and judgement in the clinical setting, several new question formats have been created to assess knowledge. Some of the question formats are:

- Case study: A case study presents a detailed scenario or patient situation. You'll analyze the information provided, identify problems, and propose nursing interventions. It tests your critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills.
- Matrix (Grid): In a matrix question, you'll match items from one category to another. For example, you might match nursing diagnoses with appropriate interventions or medications with their side effects.
- Bow-Tie: The bow-tie format involves visualizing a patient's condition as a "bow-tie." The center represents the patient, and the two tails represent potential outcomes (positive and negative). You'll identify risk factors, interventions, and preventive measures.
- Drop-Down (Cloze, Table, Rationale): These questions often appear in computerized exams. You'll select the correct answer from a dropdown menu. Cloze questions have missing words or phrases that you complete. Tables may present data, and you'll choose the appropriate action or interpretation. Rationale questions ask you to explain your choice.
- Drag and Drop: These interactive questions require you to move items (e.g., symptoms, medications, nursing actions) to their correct places. They assess your knowledge organization and prioritization skills.
- Extended Multiple Response: These questions are more complex than standard multiple-choice questions. You'll select multiple correct answers and may need to prioritize or sequence them. They test your depth of understanding.

A more comprehensive explanation of NCLEX item types can be found through many commercial publishers including Elsevier and the NCSBN website.

Activity – Test-Taking Tips

Test-Taking Tips

Write an email with advice to this friend, offering test-taking tips and strategies you think will help him.

RJ 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. He 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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7.8: Taking Tests, Quizzes and Nursing School Tests

Types of Tests

All tests are designed to determine how much you know about a particular subject at a particular point in time. But you should be aware of differences in types of tests because this will help guide how you prepare for them. Two general types of tests are based on their objectives, or how they are intended to be used: formative assessments and summative assessments.

Formative assessments include quizzes, unit tests, pop quizzes, and review quizzes from a textbook or its Web site. Their main objective is to make sure you know the fundamental material before moving on to more challenging topics. Because these quizzes usually don't count much toward your final grade, many students think they are not very important. In fact, these quizzes are very important, particularly to you; they can help you to identify what you know and what you still need to learn to be successful in the course and in applying the material. A poor result on a quiz may not negatively affect your final grade much—but learning from its results and correcting your mistakes *will* affect your final grade, on the positive side, when you take midterms and finals!

Summative assessments include midterms and finals. They are used by the instructor to determine if you are mastering a large portion of the material, and as such, they usually carry a heavy weight toward your final grade for the course. Because of this, they often result in high levels of test anxiety and long study periods.

In addition to this classification by objective, tests can also be grouped into various categories based on how they are delivered. Each type has its own peculiar strategies.

- **Paper tests** are still the most common type of test, requiring students to write answers on the test pages or in a separate test booklet. They are typically used for in-class tests. Neatness and good grammar count, even if it's not an English exam. Remember that the instructor will be reading dozens of test papers and will not likely spend much time trying to figure out your hieroglyphics, arrows, and cross-outs.
- **Open-book tests** allow the student to consult their notes, textbook, or both while taking the exam. Instructors often give this type of test when they are more interested in seeing your thoughts and critical thinking than your memory power. Be prepared to expose and defend your own viewpoints. When preparing, know where key material is present in your book and notes; create an index for your notes and use sticky notes to flag key pages of your textbook before the exam. Be careful when copying information or formulas to your test answers, because nothing looks worse in an open-book exam than misusing the material at your disposal.
- **Take-home tests** are like open-book tests except you have the luxury of time on your side. Make sure you submit the exam on time. Know what the instructor's expectations are about the content of your answers. The instructor will likely expect more detail and more complete work because you are not under a strict time limit and because you have access to reference materials. Be clear about when the test is due. (Some instructors will ask you to e-mail your exam to them by a specific time.) Also find out if the instructor allows or expects you to collaborate with classmates. Be sure to type your exam and don't forget to spell-check!
- **Online tests** are most commonly used for formative assessments, although they are starting to find their way into high-stakes exams, particularly in large lecture classes that fulfill a graduation requirement (like introductory psychology or history survey courses). The main advantage of online tests is that they can be computer graded, providing fast feedback to the student (with formative tests) and allowing the instructor to grade hundreds of exams easily (with summative assessments). Since these tests are computer graded, be aware that the instructor's judgment is not involved in the grading. Your answers will be either right or wrong; there is no room for partially correct responses. With online tests, be sure you understand the testing software. Are there practice questions? If so, make sure you use them. Find out if you will be allowed to move freely between test sections to go back and check your work or to complete questions you might have skipped. Some testing software does not allow you to return to sections once they are "submitted." Unless your exam needs to be taken at a specific time, don't wait until the last minute to take the test. Should you have technical problems, you want to have time to resolve the issues. To avoid any conflicts with the testing software, close all other software applications before beginning the testing software.
- **Electronic tests in the classroom** are becoming more common as colleges install "smart classrooms" with technology such as wireless "clicker" technology that instructors may use to get a quick read of students' understanding of a lecture. This testing method allows for only true-or-false and multiple-choice questions, so it is rarely used for summative assessments. When taking this kind of quick quiz, take notes on questions you miss so that you can focus on them when you do your own review.
- **Presentations and oral tests** are the most complete means for instructors to evaluate students' mastery of material, because the evaluation is highly interactive. The instructor can (and likely will) probe you on certain points, question your assumptions, or

ask you to defend your point of view. Make sure you practice your presentation many times with and without an audience (your study group is good for this). Have a clear and concise point of view and keep to the allotted time. (You don't want to miss delivering a killer close if your instructor cuts you off because you weren't aware of the time!)

Whole Person Approach to Testing

Just because you are facing a major exam in your engineering class (or math or science or English class) doesn't mean everything else in your life comes to a stop. Perhaps that's somewhat annoying, but that's reality. Allergies still flare up, children still need to eat, and you still need to sleep. You must see your academic life as one segment of who you are—it's an important segment, but just one aspect of who you are as a whole person. Neela tries to turn off everything else when she has exams coming up in her nursing program, which is pretty often. She ignores her health, puts off her family, tries to reschedule competing work tasks, and focuses all her energy on the pending exam. On the surface, that sounds like a reasonable approach, but if she becomes really sick by ignoring a minor head cold, or if she misses an important school deadline for one of her children, Neela risks making matters worse by attempting to compartmentalize so strictly. Taking care of her own health by eating and sleeping properly; asking for help in other aspects of her busy life, such as attending to the needs of her children; and seeing the big picture of how it all fits together would be a better approach. Pretending otherwise may work sporadically, but it is not sustainable for the long run.

A whole person approach to testing takes a lot of organization, scheduling, and attention to detail, but the life-long benefits make the effort worthwhile.

Establishing Realistic Expectations for Test Situations

Would you expect to make a perfect pastry if you've never learned how to bake? Or paint a masterpiece if you've never tried to work with paints and brushes? Probably not. But often we expect ourselves to perform at much higher levels of achievement than that for which we've actually prepared. If you become very upset and stressed if you make any score lower than the highest, you probably need to reevaluate your own expectations for test situations. Striving to always do your best is an admirable goal. Realistically knowing that your current *best* may not achieve the highest academic ratings can help you plot your progress.

Realistic continuous improvement is a better plan, because people who repeatedly attempt challenges for which they have not adequately prepared and understandably fail (or at least do not achieve the desired highest ranking) often start moving toward the goal in frustration. They simply quit. This doesn't mean you settle for mediocre grades or refrain from your challenges. It means you become increasingly aware of yourself and your current state and potential future. Know yourself, know your strengths and weaknesses, and be honest with yourself about your expectations.

Understanding Accommodations and Responsibilities

As with so many parts of life, some people take exams in stride and do just fine. Others may need more time or change of location or format to succeed in test-taking situations. With adequate notice, most faculty will provide students with reasonable accommodations to assist students in succeeding in test situations. If you feel that you would benefit from receiving these sorts of accommodations, first speak with your instructor. You may also need to talk to a student services advisor for specific requirements for accommodations at your institution.

If you need accommodations, you are responsible for understanding what your specific needs are and communicating your needs with your instructors. Before exams in class, you may be allowed to have someone else take notes for you, receive your books in audio form, engage an interpreter, or have adaptive devices in the classroom to help you participate. Testing accommodations may allow for additional time on the test, the use of a scribe to record exam answers, the use of a computer instead of handwriting answers, as well as other means to make the test situation successful. Talk to your instructors if you have questions about testing accommodations.

Prioritizing Time Surrounding Test Situations

Keep in mind that you don't have any more or less time than anyone else, so you can't *make time* for an activity. You can only use the time everyone gets wisely and realistically. Exams in college classes are important, but they are not the only significant events you have in your classes. In fact, everything leading up to the exam, the exam itself, and the post-exam activities are all one large continuum. Think of the exam as an event with multiple phases, more like a long-distance run instead of a 50-yard dash. Step back and look at the big picture of this timeline. Draw it out on paper. What needs to happen between now and the exam so you feel comfortable, confident, and ready?

If your instructor conducts some sort of pre-exam summary or prep session, make sure to attend. These can be invaluable. If this instructor does not provide that sort of formal exam prep, create your own with a group of classmates or on your own. Consider everything you know about the exam, from written instructions to notes you took in class, including any experiential notes you may have from previous exams, such as the possibility of bonus points for answering an extra question that requires some time management on your part.

Get Connected

Which apps can help you study for a test, increase your memory, and even help you overcome test anxiety?

Personal(opens in new window) Zen is a free online gaming app clinically proven to reduce stress and anxiety. The games retrain your brain to think more positively, reducing stress to help you focus on the experiences around you.

Games like solitaire, hangman, and Simon Says all build on your memory, keeping it sharp and active. There are loads of fun, free online memory games you can use to make time wasting a little less wasteful. For more than 250 options, visit the Memory Improvement Tips(opens in new window) website.

iTunes University(opens in new window) might be able to help you dig into a research topic or find additional content to help you if you're struggling with a course. Their library of free lectures and content comes from some of the most highly respected universities around the world.

Chegg Prep is a flashcard-based self-quizzing resource. It provides millions of pre-made flashcards and decks organized by course and topic, which you can search, sort, bookmark, and use in a variety of ways. The service is free and does not require a login unless you'd like to save or create your own cards.

Test Day

Once you get to the exam session, try your best to focus on nothing but the exam. This can be very difficult with all the distractions in our lives. But if you have done all the groundwork to attend the classes, completed the assignments, and scheduled your exam prep time, you are ready to focus intently for the comparatively short time most exams last.

Arriving to class:

Don't let yourself be sidetracked right at the end. Beyond the preparation we've discussed, give yourself some more advantages on the actual test day:

- Get to the testing location a few minutes early so you can settle into your place and take a few relaxing breaths.
- Don't let other classmates interrupt your calmness at this point.
- Just get to your designated place, take out whatever supplies and materials you are allowed to have, and calm your mind.

Taking the test:

Once the instructor begins the test:

- Listen carefully for any last-minute oral directions that may have changed some detail on the exam, such as the timing or the content of the questions.
- As soon as you receive the exam sheet or packet, make a quick scan over the entire test.
- Don't spend a lot of time on this initial glance, but make sure you are familiar with the layout and what you need to do.
- Using this first review, decide how you will allocate your available time for each section.
- You can even jot down how many minutes you can allow for the different sections or questions.

Then for each section, if the exam is divided this way, be sure you **read the section directions** very carefully so you don't miss an important detail. For example, instructors often offer options—so you may have four short-answer questions from which to choose, but you only need to answer two of them. If you had not read the directions for that section, you may have thought you needed to provide answers to all four prompts. Working on extra questions for which you likely will receive no credit would be a waste of your limited exam time. The extra time you spend at the beginning is like an investment in your overall results.

Answer every required question on the exam. Even if you don't complete each one, you may receive some credit for partial answers. Whether or not you can receive partial credit would be an excellent question to ask before the exam during the preparation

time. If you are taking an exam that contains multiple-choice questions, go through and answer the questions about which you are the most confident first.

Read the entire question carefully even if you think you know what the stem (the introduction of the choices) says, and read all the choices. Skip really difficult questions or ones where your brain goes blank. Then you can go back and concentrate on those skipped ones later after you have answered the majority of the questions confidently. Sometimes a later question will trigger an idea in your mind that will help you answer the skipped questions.

And, in a similar fashion to spending a few minutes right at the beginning of the test time to read the directions carefully and identify the test elements, **allow yourself a few minutes at the end of the exam session to review your answers.** Depending on what sort of exam it is, you can use this time to check your math computations, review an essay for grammatical and content errors, or answer the difficult multiple-choice questions you skipped earlier. Finally, **make sure you have completed the entire test:** check the backs of pages, and verify that you have a corresponding answer section for every question section on the exam. It can be easy to skip a section with the idea you will come back to it but then forget to return there, which can have a significant impact on your test results.

After the Test

As you leave the exam room, the last thing you may want to think about is that particular test. You probably have numerous other assignments, projects, and life obligations to attend to, especially if you pushed some of those off to study for this completed exam. Give yourself some space from this exam, but only for the duration of the time when your instructor is grading your exam. Once you have your results, study them—whether you did really well (Go, you!) or not as well as you had hoped (Keep your spirits up!). Both scenarios hold valuable information if you will use it.

Thandie had a habit of going all-out for exams before she took them, and she did pretty well usually, but once the instructor passed back the graded tests, she would look at the letter grade, glance half-heartedly at the instructor's comments, and toss the exam away, ready to move on to the next chapter, section, or concept. A better plan would be to learn from her exam results and analyze both what she did well and where she struggled. After a particularly unimpressive exam outing in her statistics class, Thandie took her crumpled-up exam to the campus tutoring center, where the tutor reviewed the test with her section by section. Together they discovered that Thandie did particularly well on the computational sections, which she admitted were her favorites, and not well at all on the short-answer essay questions that she did not expect to find in a stats class, which in her experience had been more geared toward the mathematical side of solving statistical problems.

Going forward in this class, Thandie should practice writing out her explanations of how to compute the problems and talk to her instructor about ways to hone this skill. This tutoring session also proved to Thandie the benefit of holding on to important class papers—either electronically or in hard copy, depending on the class setup—for future reference. For some classes, you probably don't need to keep every scrap of paper (or file) associated with your notes, exams, assignments, and projects, but for others, especially for those in your major, those early class materials may come in very handy in your more difficult later undergraduate courses or even in grad school when you need a quick refresher on the basic concepts.

Tips for Taking Tests

You've reviewed the material for a test and feel confident that you will do well. You have brought your test anxiety into control. What else can you do to ensure success on a test? Learn and apply these top ten test-taking strategies:

1. **Learn as much as you can about the test.** What has the instructor told you about the test? Will it be open book? What types of questions will be on it? Are there parts of the test that will be worth more points than others? Will it be cumulative or just cover the most recent material? Will you have choices about which questions to answer?
2. **Try to foresee the questions likely to be on the test.** What kinds of questions would you include if you were the instructor? Brainstorm possible questions with your study group. Look for possible questions in your notes. Review past quizzes and tests to see what kinds of questions the instructor likes to ask. Above all, take it seriously whenever your instructor warns, "This will be on the test."
3. **Don't be tempted to stay up late cramming. Get some exercise and watch what you eat.** Cramming is not a substitute for doing your assignments and studying consistently over time. It is far more important to get a good night's sleep and face your test fresh and well rested. A good workout the day before an exam will help you be fresh and stay focused during the exam (provided you already like to work out; if not, find time to take a long walk). A healthy diet the night before and the day of the exam will give you energy and concentration to do well on the exam. Include "brain foods," such as those rich in omega-3 oils,

and avoid “heavy” foods that are rich in fat and sugar. (After the exam, you can celebrate with a cheeseburger, fries, and milkshake—but not before the exam!)

4. **Get to the test site early.** Take out all your allowable tools (pencils, pens, calculator, etc.). Turn off your cell phone (yes, all the way off, not on vibrate) as a way of disconnecting from your everyday world. Do some of the relaxation exercises described earlier for controlling test anxiety.
5. **Create a test plan.** Listen carefully to the directions given by the instructor. When you receive your test, scan the entire test first. Evaluate the importance of each section. Then create a time allocation plan. Decide how much time you should dedicate to each section. You don’t want to spend 80 percent of your time on a question worth 10 percent of the grade.
6. **Write it down.** Take a couple minutes to write down key facts, dates, principles, statistics, and formulas on a piece of scratch paper or in the margin of the exam paper. Do this while you are still fresh and aren’t yet feeling time pressure (when it will be harder to remember them). Then you can refer to these notes as you take the exam.
7. **Read the directions carefully.** Then reread them. Do you understand what is expected of you? If not, ask the instructor to be sure you are clear. Too many students lose points simply by not following directions completely!
8. **Do the easy questions first.** By getting the easy questions out of the way, you’ll feel more confident about the test and have more time to think about the tougher questions. Start with the objective sections of the exam first (multiple choice, true or false, and matching columns). As you answer these questions, keep an eye out for facts or concepts you may want to use later in an essay question.
9. **Keep an eye on the time.** Keep as close to your plan as possible. If you see that you are running out of time, don’t panic. Move to those questions you think you can still answer accurately within the remaining time.
10. **Check your work.** This doesn’t mean going through all your calculations again. Start by ensuring that you have *complete* answers according to the directions. Then look for other common mistakes, such as a misplaced decimal point, dropped words (especially those that can modify the answer, like “not”), and any incomplete or incomprehensible phrases.

Strategies for Math and Science Exams

Math tests require some special strategies because they are often problem based rather than question based.

Do the following before the test:

- Attend all classes and complete all assignments. Pay special attention to working on all assigned problems. After reviewing problems in class, take careful notes about what you did incorrectly. Repeat the problem and do a similar one as soon as possible. It is important that the last solution to a problem in your mind is a correct solution.
- Think about how each problem solution might be applied in a real-world situation. This helps make even the most complex solutions relevant and easier to learn.
- In your study group, take turns presenting solutions to problems and observing and correcting everyone’s work.
- If you are having difficulty with a concept, get help right away. Remember that math especially builds new material on previous material, so if you are having trouble with a concept now, you are likely to have trouble going forward. Make an appointment with your instructor, your teaching assistant, or a skilled classmate. Check with your college’s academic support office to see about a tutor. Don’t be shy about asking for a tutor—tutoring is not just for students needing remedial help; many successful students seek them out, too.

Do the following during the test:

- Review the entire test before you start and work the problems you feel most confident with first.
- Approach each problem following three distinct steps:
  1. Read the problem through twice: the first time to get the full concept of the question, and the second time to draw out pertinent information. After you read through the problem the first time, ask yourself, “What is this problem about?” and “What is the answer likely to look like?” The second time through, consider these questions: “What facts do I have available?” “What do I know?” “What measurable units must the answer be in?” Think about the operations and formulas you will need to use. Try to estimate a ballpark answer.
  2. Compute your answer. First, eliminate as many unknowns as possible. You may need to use a separate formula for each unknown. Use algebraic formulas as far as you can before plugging in actual numbers; that will make it easier to cancel and combine factors. Remember that you may need two or more tries before you come up with the answer.
  3. Check your work. Start by comparing your actual answer to the estimate you made when you first read the problem. Does your final answer sound likely? Check your arithmetic by opposite operations: use multiplication to check division and

addition to check subtraction, and so on.

You should consider using these three steps whenever you are working with any math problems, not just when you get problems on tests.

Science tests also are often problem based, but they also generally use the scientific method. This is why science tests may require some specific strategies.

- Before the test, review your lab notes as well as your class notes and assignments. Many exam questions build upon lab experience, so pay close attention to your notes, assignments, and labs. Practice describing the experimental process.
- Read the question carefully. What does the instructor expect you to do? Prove a hypothesis? Describe an experiment? Summarize research? Underline the words that state the objective of the question.
- Look carefully at all the diagrams given with the question. What do they illustrate? Why are they included with the question? Are there elements on the diagram you are expected to label?
- Many science questions are based on the scientific method and experimental model. When you read the test question, identify the hypothesis the problem is proposing; be prepared to describe an experimental structure to prove a hypothesis. When you check your work, make sure the hypothesis, experimental steps, and a summary of results (or expected results) are clear. Some of these elements may be part of the question, while others you may need to provide in your answer.

Significant differences in Nursing Exams

Nursing school exams differ significantly from exams in regular science classes in several key ways, reflecting the unique demands and responsibilities of nursing as a profession. The following is a list describing some of the challenges in Nursing exams.

- **Application of Knowledge:** Nursing exams typically focus heavily on applying theoretical knowledge to real-world patient care scenarios. Unlike traditional science exams that often test factual recall and theoretical understanding, nursing exams require students to demonstrate how they would assess, diagnose, and intervene in various clinical situations. This application-based approach ensures that nurses are prepared to make critical decisions in dynamic healthcare settings.
- **Critical Thinking and Clinical Reasoning:** Nursing exams emphasize critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills. Students are frequently asked to prioritize nursing interventions based on patient needs, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and anticipate potential complications. This reflects the importance of quick, informed decision-making in nursing practice, where outcomes can be influenced by timely interventions and assessments.
- **Focus on Patient-Centered Care:** Nursing exams are designed to assess a student's ability to provide holistic, patient-centered care. Questions often revolve around understanding the patient's perspective, incorporating cultural considerations into care plans, and respecting patient preferences. This contrasts with traditional science exams that may focus more narrowly on theoretical concepts and principles.
- **Integration of Multiple Disciplines:** Nursing exams often integrate knowledge from various disciplines, including anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, psychology, and sociology. Nurses must understand how these disciplines intersect to provide comprehensive care to patients. Exams may therefore include questions that require students to draw connections between different areas of knowledge and apply them in a clinical context.
- **Emphasis on Communication and Collaboration:** Nursing exams frequently assess a student's ability to communicate effectively with patients, families, and healthcare team members. This includes skills such as therapeutic communication, patient education, and collaboration with interdisciplinary team members. These competencies are crucial for ensuring coordinated and patient-centered care, reflecting the collaborative nature of healthcare delivery.
- **Practical Skills and Assessments:** In addition to written exams, nursing education often includes practical skills assessments, such as clinical simulations and objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs). These assessments allow students to demonstrate their proficiency in performing nursing procedures, conducting assessments, and responding to clinical emergencies. Practical skills assessments ensure that students are competent in hands-on aspects of nursing practice, complementing theoretical knowledge tested in written exams.

Overall, nursing school exams are tailored to prepare students for the complex and multifaceted role of a nurse. They go beyond testing theoretical knowledge to assess critical thinking, clinical judgment, communication skills, and the ability to provide compassionate, evidence-based care to patients. This unique approach ensures that nursing graduates are well-equipped to meet the challenges and responsibilities of modern healthcare practice.

Key Takeaways

- There is no such thing as an unimportant quiz.
- In addition to studying, prepare for exams and quizzes by getting plenty of rest, eating well, and getting some exercise the day before the exam.
- Cramming is seldom a good strategy.
- Before the exam, learn as much as you can about the kinds of questions your instructor will be asking and the specific material that will be covered.
- The first step to successful completion of any exam is to browse the entire exam and develop a plan (including a "time budget") for completing the exam.
- Read questions carefully. Underline keywords in questions, particularly in essay questions and science questions.
- Unless points are deducted for a wrong answer, it pays to take educated guesses.

The following is adapted from Leslie Jennings, RN

Learning Objectives

At the end of this section, the learner will:

- Review test-taking strategies for before, during, and after an exam.
- Identify strategies specific to different types of test items.
- Apply test-taking tips and strategies to a scenario.

Test Taking Strategies

Approaching a test in a careful and methodical way can help ensure the best results. You can best utilize your exam time by taking the time to survey the exam directions and point values and planning how to approach sections of the test. Strategy is particularly important for tests with mixed types of questions (i.e., multiple choice and essay) or tests with multiple essay questions. For example, if you were to spend too much time on the multiple choice questions and not allocate enough time to complete an essay question, you may have answered the majority of the total number of questions but still do poorly on the exam if the essay question was worth a larger portion of the exam's total points. Plan your time carefully and manage your stress.

NOTES FOR NURSING SUCCESS: The NCLEX is a computer adaptive test that does not allow backtracking and is timed. See the bonus chapter for more information!

Additionally, a lot of students are unaware of the many strategies available to help with the test-taking experience before, during, and after.

Effective Techniques for Test Preparation and Taking

Before the Test:

- Go to all of your classes and take lecture notes and read all of your assigned reading.
- Develop a study plan and schedule the time to review for an exam over several days.
- Schedule study sessions with classmates in advance of the night before the exam.
- 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.
- Be sure you have materials you need for the exam ready at least the night before the exam, such as multiple writing utensils, scantrons, blue books, notebook paper, etc.
- Get a good night's rest the night before the exam.

- To ensure that you are on time to your exam, set two alarm clocks or arrange to have a friend call you to make sure you are awake.
- Eat a good breakfast and avoid caffeine prior to the exam.
- Prioritize self-care and test-anxiety strategies reviewed in previous chapters.

During the Test:

- Take a moment to take some deep cleansing breaths (or any other quick relaxation techniques) if you feel stressed by a question or the exam as a whole.
- Keep your eye on the clock. Sit where you are most comfortable and have less distractions.
- Wear earplugs, if noise distracts you. 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!
- Always read the directions first. Mark your exam with the necessary identification. Read them thoroughly. Scan the exam for question types, point values, etc.
- Develop a plan for how you will use your time to complete all questions on the exam.
- Read each item carefully and fully before marking an answer. You might find clues to the answer and will be less likely to make a preventable mistake.
- Skip difficult questions and come back to them if you are pressed for time. Caution: if using a scantron to record answers be very careful that you do not incorrectly record your answers on the wrong line and get off track.
- If time is available at the end of the exam, review questions you marked as “difficult” in order to check for errors. Try not to leave any answers blank. You might be awarded partial credit or even make a correct guess.
- If you have an essay question to write, take the time to briefly outline an answer to ensure that you are answering all aspects of the question and that you provide a well-organized answer for your faculty member to read.

After the Test:

- Conduct an error analysis for items missed on the test. Look up the correct answers. Determine the nature of the errors you made.
- Talk with your professor about items you missed on the exam. Discuss adjustments in your test preparation methods if necessary. This is especially useful for quizzes that contain information that may be incorporated into more inclusive exams such as mid-terms and finals.
- Analyze the test questions to see if patterns arise, such as, “Were most of the questions from the lecture, the book, or both?” “What types of questions were asked?” “What levels of thinking were being tested based on Bloom’s Taxonomy?” etc.
- Review the methods that you used to study for the exam and determine what adjustments you need to make in preparing for the next exam.
- Determine your overall grade in the course based on the new information that this grade has provided you. Talk with your professor and academic advisor if you have concerns about your overall grade.
- If allowed, archive your exam for future reference. Students should review the answers that were correct because they may see those questions on future exams and it is important to reinforce learning . Students should also review the answers that were incorrect in order to learn what the correct answer was and why.

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7.9: Using Test Results

So far, we have focused on how to study for and take tests effectively. This section discusses how to *use* test results to their greatest benefit. Some of your most important learning begins when your graded test paper is returned to you. Your first reaction, of course, is to see what grade you received and how you did compared with your classmates. This is a natural reaction.

Make sure you listen to the instructor as the papers are returned. What is the instructor saying about the test? Is there a particular point everyone had trouble with? Does the instructor generally think everyone did well? The instructor's comments at this point may give you important information about what you should study more, about the value of review sessions, and even about possible questions for the next exam.

Although you may be tempted to throw away the exam, don't. It is a very helpful tool for the next phase of preparing for learning. This is a three-step process, beginning with evaluating your results.

Evaluating Your Test Results

When you receive your test back, sit quietly and take a close look at it. What questions did you get wrong? What kind of mistakes were they? (See Table 7.3 "Exam Errors and How to Correct Them".) Do you see a pattern? What questions did you get right? What were your strengths? What can you learn from the instructor's comments?

Now think of the way in which you prepared for the exam and the extent to which you applied the exam strategies described earlier in this chapter. Were you prepared for the exam? Did you study the right material? What surprised you? Did you read the entire test before starting? Did your time allocation work well, or were you short of time on certain parts of the exam?

Table 7.3 Exam Errors and How to Correct Them

Exam Error Fixes

Type of Error	Examples	Corrective Steps
Study and Preparation Errors	I did not study the material for that question (enough).	Practice predicting possible questions better.
	I ran out of time.	Join a study group.
	I did not prepare enough.	Read the entire test before starting. Allocate your time.
Focus Errors or Carelessness	I did not read the directions carefully.	Allocate exam time carefully.
	I confused terms or concepts that I actually know well.	Give yourself time to read carefully and think before answering a question.
	I misread or misunderstood the question.	
Content Errors	I studied the material but couldn't make it work with the question	Seek additional help from the instructor.
	I didn't understand what the instructor wanted.	Go to all classes, labs, and review sessions.
	I confused terms or concepts.	Join a study group.
		Check and practice your active reading and listening skills.
		Schedule regular study time for this course.
Mechanical Errors	The instructor misread my writing.	Slow down! Don't rush through the exam. Take the time to do things right the first time.
	I didn't erase a wrong answer completely (on a computer-graded answer sheet).	

Type of Error	Examples	Corrective Steps
	I forgot to go back to a question I had skipped over.	
	I miscopied some calculations or facts from my worksheet.	

Based on your analysis of your test, identify the kind of corrective steps you should take to improve your learning and test performance. Implement those steps as you begin your preparation for your next class. If you don't learn from your mistakes, you are doomed to repeat them; if you don't learn from your successes, it will be harder to repeat them.

Correcting Your Mistakes

The second step in making your test work for you is to correct your wrong answers. The last time you wrote the information (when you took the test), you created a link to wrong information in your memory, so that must be corrected.

- For multiple-choice questions, write out the question stem with the correct answer to form a single correct sentence or phrase.
- For true-or-false questions, write the full statement if it is true; if it is false, reword it in such a way that it is true (such as by inserting the word "not"). Then write the new statement.
- For math and science questions involving calculations, redo the entire solution with the calculations written out fully.
- You need not rewrite an entire essay question if you did not do well, but you should create a new outline for what would be a correct answer. Make sure you incorporate any ideas triggered by your instructor's comments.
- When you have rewritten all your answers, read them all out loud before incorporating your new answers in your notes.

Integrating Your Test into Your Study Guide

Your corrected quizzes and midterm exams are an important study tool for final exams. Make sure you file them with your notes for the study unit. Take the time to annotate your notes based on the exam. Pay particular attention to any gaps in your notes on topics that appeared in the quiz or exam. Research those points in your text or online and complete your notes. Review your exams throughout the term (not just before the final) to be sure you cement the course material into your memory.

When you prepare for the final exam, start by reviewing your quizzes and other tests to predict the kinds of questions the instructor may ask on the final. This will help focus your final studying when you have a large amount of coursework to cover.

If You Don't Get Your Test Back

If your instructor chooses not to return tests to students, make an appointment to see the instructor soon after the test to review it and your performance. Take notes on what you had trouble with and the expected answers. Add these notes into your study guide. Make sure you don't lose out on the opportunity to learn from your results.

Key Takeaways

- Working with exams does not end when your instructor hands back your graded test.
- Quizzes and midterms are reliable predictors of the kind of material that will be on the final exam.
- When evaluating your test performance, don't look only at the content you missed. Identify the types of mistakes you commonly make and formulate plans to prevent these mistakes in future assessments.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Take time to examine your notes for each course you are now taking. Are your exams and quizzes part of that package? If not, include them now. Review them this week.
2. Compare your exams across two or three courses. What kinds of mistakes do you make on a regular basis? Is there a trend you need to correct?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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7.10: Summary

Chapter Takeaways

Memory

- The two types of memory are short-term memory, which allows you to apply knowledge to a specific task, and long-term memory, which allows you to store and recall information.
- The brain commits information to long-term memory by creating an intricate system of links to that information. Strength, number, and variety of links all lead to better recall.
- To create strong links, start by making a conscious decision to want to commit something specific to memory. Link the information to real life and other data from the course. Group like information into “buckets” that create links among the terms you want to remember.
- Use the information. The more you use the information, the more you will activate the links in your brain.
- Eliminate distractions. Every time you are diverted from your task, you need to reboot your short-term memory, weakening the links.

Studying and taking tests will always be a large part of college, so learning now to do these well can only help you be more successful. Experts provide us with many tools, techniques, and ideas to use when we determine how best to study, use our memories effectively, and prepare to take exams. You can help yourself by taking these guidelines seriously and tracking your progress. If one strategy works better for you in some classes and another is more suited to a different course, keep that in mind when you begin to study. Use all the resources available to you, and you’ll be well on your way to success in college.

Career Connection

Studies have shown that parents contribute to test anxiety in children by drawing students’ attention to the test day and increasing pressure to perform well. Do you think that worrying about an upcoming test is as harmful as anxiety while taking the test? What do you think can be done to minimize worry?

This article(opens in new window) discusses how to help with test anxiety.

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Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter, and consider one option you learned in this chapter that might change your answer to one of them.

How confident are you in your skills at preparing for and taking tests? Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.”

1. I believe I set aside enough time to prepare for tests.
2. If I don’t set aside enough time, or if life gets in the way, I can usually cram and get similar results.
3. I prefer to pull all-nighters. The adrenaline and urgency help me remember what I need come test time.
4. I study my notes, highlight book passages, and use flash cards, but I still don’t feel like I’m as successful as I should be on tests.

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Where do you go from here?

Studying and test taking skills often need to evolve to meet the needs of college responsibilities. What would you like to learn more about? Choose a topic from the list below and create an annotated bibliography that would direct further research.

- the importance of memory in learning new material

- strategies to increase memory
- strategies to increase the effectiveness of studying
- test anxiety

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Thinking

8.1: Prelude to Thinking
8.2: Types of Thinking
8.3: What Thinking Means
8.4: Creative Thinking
8.5: Analytical Thinking
8.6: Critical Thinking
8.7: Critical Thinking, Clinical Judgment and the Nursing Profession
8.8: Searching for “Aha”
8.9: Problem Solving and Decision Making
8.10: Metacognition
8.11: Summary

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8.1: Prelude to Thinking

Learning Objectives

1. Differentiate between various types of thinking (e.g., creative, analytical, critical) and their applications in problem-solving and decision-making.
2. Apply creative and analytical thinking techniques to develop innovative solutions and approaches to complex problems.
3. Evaluate and implement critical thinking skills to enhance clinical judgment and decision-making in the nursing profession.
4. Analyze the role of metacognition in improving thinking processes and learning outcomes.
5. Develop strategies for effective problem-solving and decision-making by integrating different thinking styles and metacognitive awareness.



Figure 8.1: Games like basketball require many types and levels of thinking. Players and coaches must analyze their opponents' offense and defense, solve problems related to opposing players' skills and their own team's weaknesses, and constantly create through split-second decision making. (Credit: San Francisco Foghorn / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

Student Survey

How do you feel about the ways you think? Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning "least like me" and 4 meaning "most like me." These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As you are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed.

1. I understand how to approach problem-solving.
2. I have creative potential.
3. I often think about how I'm learning
4. I know how to find and evaluate valid information.

You can also take the Chapter 8 Survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

"I never considered myself a problem solver. I was more creative. I wrote music and fiction, and saw myself in a musical theater career. Two years of college and two majors later, I had moved into a related pathway: entertainment management. I was thrilled to find something that suited my passions and gave me a great shot at a number of jobs. But I hadn't counted on the business and math courses I needed to take. Solving these types of problems wasn't in my skill set. I didn't have the

> background, and kept missing half the ideas. I started going to the academic success center and office hours, and managed to keep my grades in the passing range. But I wasn't excelling and couldn't stay ahead. It was a struggle.
>
> "During a study session, a success counselor noticed that I was approaching a problem all wrong. She helped me for the next hour -- not working on the problem itself, but on how I was thinking about it and others like it. She asked me about the information I knew, how I put it together, and so on. She taught me a progression of steps to analyze the components, get the data I needed, ignore the unimportant information, and run the numbers. Then she had me watch a TED talk(opens in new window) with some more information.
>
> "I realized that it wasn't my prior knowledge that was holding me back. It was the way I was thinking about the work. I started asking my professors more about how to approach the courses -- how to think about them. I didn't start getting A's right away, but I did get better results, and even felt more creative as I started to try new things."

About This Chapter

In this chapter, you'll be introduced to different ways of thinking about the way you think. By the time you complete this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe *thinking* as a process and the reasons it is important.
- Discuss the importance of *creative thinking* and ways of generating original ideas.
- Define *analytical thinking*, its component parts, and outcomes.
- Articulate the process and importance of *critical thinking*.
- Describe the best approaches to *problem-solving*.
- Define *metacognition* and describe ways to become thoughtful about your thinking.
- Define *information literacy* for college students.

Whether we admit it or not or even consider it or not, we cannot stop thinking. We think during intense work situations, while we're playing games, when we eat, as we watch a movie, even during meditation that purports to empty the mind of all thought. Skilled and practiced yogis may be able to get into a state that resembles non-thinking, but most of us keep thinking all the time. Perhaps as you read these lines, you doubt their accuracy suggesting that you don't really think when you're just relaxing with friends. But you do. You may think about the other people in the group and what you do or do not know about them. You may wonder what you'll eat for your next meal. Your mind may flit to question whether you locked the door on the way out. Or you may debate internally whether you'll finish on time the assignment due for one of your classes. Now, you may not act on any of those random thoughts during this relaxing time, but you *are* nonetheless thinking. As you begin this exploration of thinking, consider all the ways we turn to technology to assist with our thinking and how thinking impacts and defines various careers.

When you consider the word *thinking*, does your mind drift toward:

a. School
b. Work
c. Relationships
d. Free time

Reflect on your answer, and write one or two sentences on why you associate this idea with thinking.

In this chapter, we'll look more closely at several distinct types of thinking including creative, analytical, and critical thinking, all of which come into play for problem-solving. We'll also explore the multitude of resources available relative to understanding and enhancing your thinking skills, all of which constitutes metacognition, the practice of thinking about your thinking.

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8.2: Types of Thinking

So what are the various types of thinking skills, and what kind things are we doing when we apply them? In the 1950s, Benjamin Bloom developed a classification of thinking skills that is still helpful today; it is known as Bloom's taxonomy. He lists six types of thinking skills, ranked in order of complexity: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Table 8.1 outlines each skill and what is involved in that type of thinking, as updated by Lorin Anderson and David Krothwohl.

Table 8.1

Thinking Still	What It Involves
1. Remembering and Recalling	Retrieving or repeating information or ideas from memory. This is the first and most basic thinking skill you develop (starting as a toddler with learning numbers, letters, and colors).
2. Understanding	Interpreting, constructing meaning, inferring, or explaining material from written, spoken, or graphic sources. Reading is the most common understanding skill; these skills are developed starting with early education.
3. Applying	Using learned material or implementing material in new situations. This skill is commonly used starting in middle school (in some cases earlier).
4. Analyzing	Breaking material or concepts into key elements and determining how the parts relate to one another or to an overall structure or purpose. Mental actions included in this skill are examining, contrasting or differentiating, separating, categorizing, experimenting, and deducing. You most likely started developing this skill in high school (particularly in science courses) and will continue to practice it in college.
5. Evaluating	Assessing, making judgments, and drawing conclusions from ideas, information, or data. Critiquing the value and usefulness of material. This skill encompasses most of what is commonly referred to as critical thinking; this skill will be called on frequently during your college years and beyond. Critical thinking is the first focus of this chapter.
6. Creating	Putting parts together or reorganizing them in a new way, form, or product. This process is the most difficult mental function. This skill will make you stand out in college and is in very high demand in the workforce. Creative thinking is the second focus of this chapter.

All of these thinking skills are important for college work (and life in the "real world," too). You've likely had a great deal of experience with the lower-level thinking skills (yellow section). The midlevel skills are skills you will get a lot of practice with in college, and you may be well on your way to mastering them already. The higher-level thinking skills (red section) are the most demanding, and you will need to invest focused effort to develop them.

? Exercise: Thought Inventory

Think about Table 8.1 "Types of Thinking Skills". Are you using all six thinking skills? Reflect on your schoolwork in the past three weeks and identify specific examples where you used each of the thinking skills. Use the comment column to write notes about the skills that are second nature to you and those you would like to develop further.

Thought Inventory

Skill Set	How You Used It in the Past Three Weeks	Comments

Skill Set	How You Used It in the Past Three Weeks	Comments
Remembering and Recalling		
Understanding		
Applying		
Analyzing		
Evaluating		
Creating		

Look at the lists of things you actually did in each case. Notice that there are certain verbs that apply to each skill set. When you see those verbs as a prompt in an assignment or an exam, you will know what kind of thinking the instructor expects from you. Table 8.2 “Thinking Verbs” lists some of the most common verbs associated with each thinking skill.

Table 8.2 Thinking Verbs

Table 8.2 Thinking Verbs	Verbs
1. Remembering and Recalling	Bookmark, count, describe, draw, enumerate, find, google, identify, label, list, match, name, quote, recall, recite, search, select, sequence, tell, write
2. Understanding	Blog, conclude, describe, discuss, explain, generalize, identify, illustrate, interpret, paraphrase, predict, report, restate, review, summarize, tell, tweet
3. Applying	Apply, articulate, change, chart, choose, collect, compute, control, demonstrate, determine, do, download, dramatize, imitate, implement, interview, install (as in software), participate, prepare, produce, provide, report, role-play, run (software), select, share, show, solve, transfer, use
4. Analyzing	Analyze, break down, characterize, classify, compare, contrast, debate, deduce, diagram, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, infer, link, outline, relate, research, reverse-engineer, separate, subdivide, tag
5. Evaluating	Appraise, argue, assess, beta test, choose, collaborate, compare, contrast, conclude, critique, criticize, decide, defend, “friend/de-friend,” evaluate, judge, justify, network, post, predict, prioritize, prove, rank, rate, review, select, support
6. Creating	Adapt, animate, blog, combine, compose, construct, create, design, develop, devise, film, formulate, integrate, invent, make, model, modify, organize, perform, plan, podcast, produce, program, propose, rearrange, remix, revise, rewrite, structure

Throughout this book, we give tips that will help you develop your thinking skills. You have read about the learning cycle and the importance of *applying* your knowledge. You will learn tips for *remembering* information from your notes and classes. Preparing for class requires you to *analyze* what you know and what you need to learn. The sections on listening and reading will help you develop your *understanding* skills. Look for those tips and practice them.

In this chapter, we will focus on critical thinking (evaluating) and creative thinking. They deserve specific focus because they are likely to be the skills you have least practice with. These are the skills most helpful for success in college and in “real life.” Creative thinking will help you come up with possible solutions for problems and new ideas. Critical thinking will help you decide which of those ideas have most merit and deserve to be implemented.

Key Takeaways

- We use different types of thinking skills to address different requirements, and these skills are classified in Bloom's taxonomy.
- You have been using many thinking skills since childhood.
- Two very important thinking skills you will need to develop for success in college and in life are critical (or evaluative) thinking and creative thinking.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. List three verbs that are associated with application skills.

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What is another name for "evaluation" thinking skills?

   _____

3. What thinking skills are associated with each of the following?
   1. Compose and design: _____
   2. Tweet and describe: _____
   3. Break down and discriminate: _____
   4. Rank and beta test: _____
   5. Enumerate and google: _____

References

Anderson, L. W., and David R. Krathwohl, eds., *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2001).

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8.3: What Thinking Means

Thinking is one of those hard-to-pinpoint aspects of life we typically don't analyze much—like breathing or walking or sleeping. We constantly think, and becoming more attuned to how we think and what we do when we encounter new ideas is an excellent habit to pursue.

> "If you're going to do anything as much as you think, you might just as well learn about it and hone this skill."

You may have read quotes or inspirational slogans that claim *you are what you think.* What does that mean? Can you *think* yourself into a good mood? Can you *think* you have a million dollars in your pocket? Does that mean you are the next music sensation if you often sing at parties? Not necessarily, but consider Jose, for instance. He isn't a rock and roll star, but Jose spends a lot of his leisure time thinking about music, analyzing performances, memorizing his favorite musicians' characteristics, buying fan clothing, and even designing a creative means to explain his excitement for music to his friends through a homemade video. Jose certainly could allow his fascination to seep into other aspects of his life. Do you have a hobby or interest you spend a lot of time thinking about?

Many people go to great lengths to attend a concert by a favorite music star. They think creatively about how to save enough money for tickets; they think analytically about scheduling their other obligations to have time off work to attend or how to make up work in their college classes. This much planning involves a great deal of thinking, and not all about music. In the example about Jose, thinking directs the actions of the person doing the thinking. So, in fact, what we think *does* influence who we are and how we act. We have many resources available to be more effective thinkers, and learning about these resources gives us options.

GET CONNECTED

Apps and search engines literally bring thinking to our fingertips. Consider how often you visit Google. The use of this familiar site has become so commonplace as to render the proper name of the company into a verb—*to google* a topic. Basic calculators or word-processing software programs are other simple examples of technology we often use without recognizing them as thinking aids.

While apps, software programs, thinking games, and thought exercises may help you stretch your brain, don't let their simplicity fool you into thinking that cultivating an inquisitive, thoughtful mind is easy or automatic. Thinking is as complex as it is necessary for our success in life. Some tools you may find useful are applications that provide challenges using mind puzzles are Peak(opens in new window) and Elevate(opens in new window). These training apps offer brain training that varies from quick matching memory games to more sophisticated thought-processing speed scenarios. You can even use a straightforward tool like a flashcard app, such as Chegg Prep, to create your own thinking games -- using word associations or pictures to help you connect topics and build your skills.

A familiar element of the thinking apps is a progression tracker to help thinkers improve their focus and memory as well as to learn and practice math and verbal skills over time. Researchers are still investigating the correlation between thought-invoking game playing and the decrease in mental agility, memory, and cognitive vitality. Early studies have produced numerous findings, including a long-term investigation of the onset of Alzheimer's disease conducted with nuns; you can look up the *Nun Study* to learn more, or go to this article(opens in new window).

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8.4: Creative Thinking

Questions to consider:

- How can you go about generating original ideas?
- What is the best way to approach working with unconventional ideas?

Has anyone ever told you that you have a flair for the creative? If so, celebrate! That's a good personality trait to nurture. Creativity is needed in all occupations and during all stages of life. Learning to be more in tune with your own version of creativity can help you think more clearly, resolve problems, and appreciate setbacks. You're creative if you repurpose old furniture into a new function. You're also creative if you invent a new cookie recipe for a friend who has a nut allergy. And you're using creativity if you can explain complex biological concepts to your classmates in your lab class. Creativity pops up everywhere. When creative thinking comes into play, you'll be looking for both original and unconventional ideas, and learning to recognize those ideas improves your thinking skills all around.

Would you learn more about the French Revolution by eating foods popular in that era? What if you were to stop using your phone for all non-emergency communication to understand how news flowed in the early 20th century? These examples present creative ways to approach learning the experiences of a specific time in history. When actors want to learn about a character they'll be playing, they often engage in method acting to immerse themselves in the role. They may maintain a different accent or wear only clothes their character would wear even when they are not at rehearsals, all so they can feel what it was like for their character. Think of ways you may be able to apply method acting to your learning experiences.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. Which type of thinking do you think is most important for your academic studies?
    a. Creative thinking
    b. Analytical thinking
    c. Critical thinking
2. In which area do you have the most difficulty being creative?
    a. Writing
    b. In-class discussions/activities
    c. Personal life
    d. Problem-solving
    e. Finding resources/help
3. In which course areas or activities do you make the most use of problem-solving skills?
    a. Math or quantitative classes
    b. Computer or technical classes
    c. Social science classes
    d. Real-life situations

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say(opens in new window) surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

Which type of thinking do you think is most important for your academic studies?

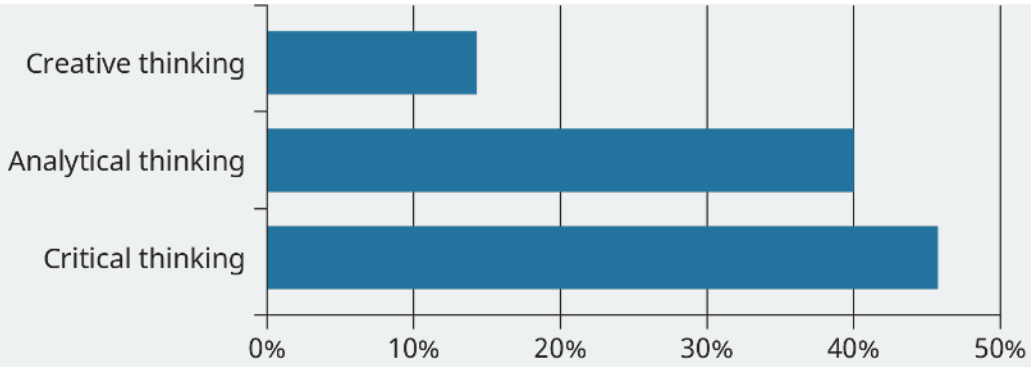


Figure 8.2

In which area do you have the most difficulty being creative?

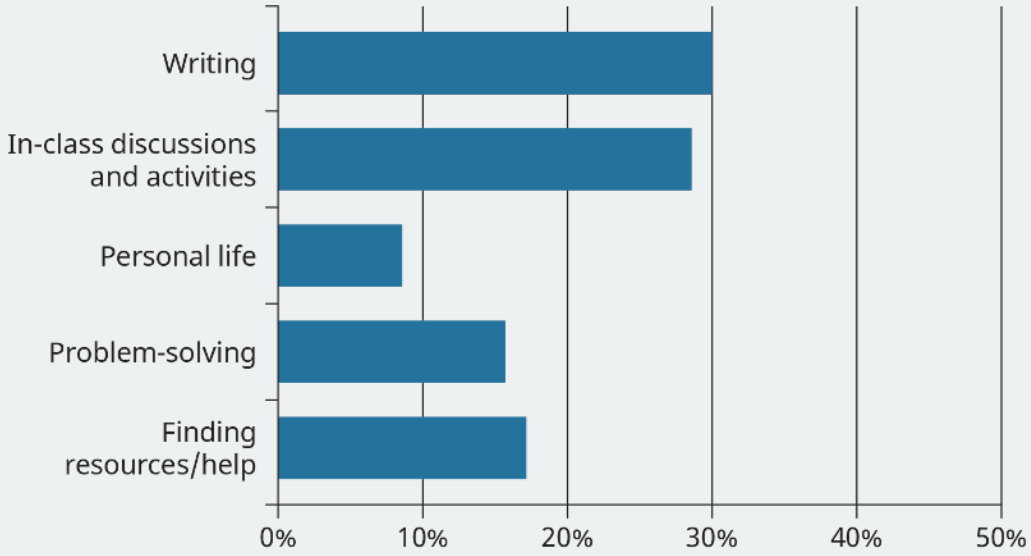


Figure 8.3

In which course areas or activities do you make the most use of problem-solving skills?

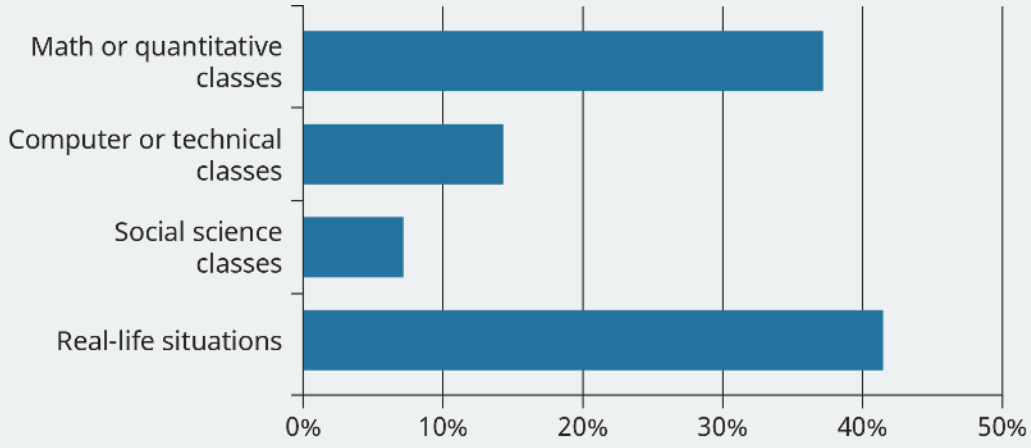


Figure 8.4

ANALYSIS QUESTION

In what ways could thinking creatively help you be a better student? Write a one-paragraph reflection on that aspect and how you could realistically go about being more creative.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Some people say creativity is the realm of children. Can you think of how a child's curiosity and willingness to explore may help you understand a college discipline that is unfamiliar to you now? Write a one-paragraph reflection on how you could use curiosity toward one of your most difficult courses in college.

Creativity doesn't always present itself in the guise of a chart-topping musical hit or other artistic expression. We need creative solutions throughout the workplace—whether board room, emergency room, or classroom. It was no fluke that the 2001 revised Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, originally developed in 1948, placed a new word at the apex—*create*. That is the highest level of thinking skills. As noted in previous chapters, we do all need to use and develop the lower thinking skills that include remembering, applying, and analyzing, but true intelligence and successful thinking move beyond these levels to invention.

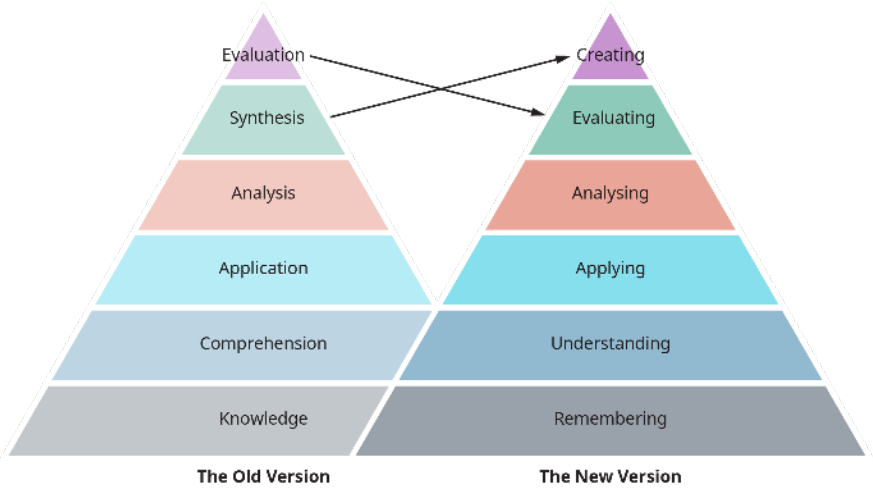


Figure 8.5: Bloom's Taxonomy is an important learning theory used by psychologists, cognitive scientists, and educators to demonstrate levels of thinking. Many assessments and lessons you've seen during your schooling have likely been arranged with Bloom's in mind. Researchers recently revised it to place creativity -- invention -- as the highest level.

Regurgitating the minute details of *Goldilocks* or *Beowulf* demonstrates far less comprehension than fashioning an original ending that turns the tables or developing a board game from the story. Author Gregory Maguire used the base plot of L. Frank Baum's 1900 book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and the 1939 movie *The Wizard of Oz* to create the smash-hit 2003 Broadway musical *Wicked* that tells the story from the perspective of the Wicked Witch of the West, making her a sympathetic character. This creative approach calls for far more critical and creative thinking than memorizing facts.

> **"Creating new out of old or new out of nothing is how we ended up with manned space flight, cell phones, the Constitution, and rap music."**

Continuing to support creativity in whatever form it takes will be how we cure cancer, establish peace, and manipulate the time-space continuum. Don't shortchange your own creativity.

Generating Original Ideas

Nineteenth-century American writer and humorist Mark Twain may have been partially correct when he said:

> *There is no such thing as a new idea. It is impossible. We simply take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of mental kaleidoscope. We give them a turn and they make new and curious combinations. We keep on turning and making new combinations indefinitely; but they are the same old pieces of colored glass that have been in use through all the ages.*
>
> *(Mark Twain's Own Autobiography by Mark Twain)*



Figure 8.6: You may feel like you cannot come up with new ideas, but even the process of combining and recombining familiar concepts and approaches is a creative act. A kaleidoscope creates a nearly infinite number of new images by repositioning the same pieces of glass.

It is certainly a pretty metaphor of idea generation, but even if old ideas are reworked to create new solutions to existing problems or we embellish a current thought to include new ways of living or working, that renewal is the epitome of the creative process.

It's common to think of creativity as something used mostly by traditional artists—people who paint, draw, or sculpt. Indeed, artists are creative, but think of other fields in which people think just a little differently to approach situations in their discipline. The famous heart surgeon Dr. Denton Cooley didn't have an exact model when he first implanted an artificial heart. Chemist Stephanie Kwoleck discovered life-saving Kevlar when she continued work on a substance that would usually be thrown away. Early US astronauts owed their ability to orbit and return to Earth based on creative uses of mathematics by people like Karen Johnson. Inventor and actress Hedy Lamarr used diagrams of fish and birds to help aviation pioneer Howard Hughes produce faster airplanes. Indeed, biomimicry, an approach to innovation that seeks sustainable solutions to human challenges by emulating nature's time-tested patterns and strategies, is now a huge field of study. This list could go on and on.



Figure 8.7: Denton Cooley (Credit: Texas Children's Hospital / Public Domain), Stephanie Kwolek (Credit: Chemical Heritage Foundation / Attribution 3.0), Karen Johnson (Credit: NASA / Public Domain), and Hedy Lamarr (Credit: MGM / Public Domain). These individuals employed extensive creativity in the fields of science and math, leading to significant discoveries and accomplishments.

ACTIVITY

Work with two or three classmates to determine a product or service you could develop. Think of a situation in your life where a new way of doing something or a not-yet-invented process or device would make your life easier, more convenient, or more purposeful. And this is not limited to the creation of something big. Just looking at something you see all the time with a different lens/perspective is also creative, and we can all do that. What adaptation would you need to make? Let your imagination go wild—driverless cars, wireless communication . . . oh wait, already here. Keep thinking! Each member of your

> group should write a paragraph that describes the product/service, what you would need to create it, and how it will be received by others. Read each other's paragraphs and discuss the merits of the ideas.

You may actually be very good at coming up with original creative ideas. Some people naturally seem to think more creatively than others, but we all have the capacity to create and devise. Do you enjoy rearranging furniture or organizing your closet? If you already think "I could make that so much better!" as you walk through shops or events, you're on the right track. Do you tinker with wood, paper, yarn, or dirt? Are you a doodler? One way to enhance your creativity is to track your ideas. You can keep a running list on your phone, jot down ideas on index cards you can later sort into categories, or keep ideas flowing in a paper journal. Some creative people design storyboards to visualize goals or projects using pictures from magazines or online for creative inspiration. Play around with ways to keep up with ideas you may be able to incorporate in some various aspects of your life.

Since the 1980s, Roger von Oech, the president of Creative Think, a California consulting firm, has been encouraging employees in corporations, educational institutions, and government agencies to think more creatively. His pithy stories, examples, scenarios, and challenges present either a barrier to creative thinking that needs to be overcome or an example of how to harness seemingly unproductive ideas. Sometimes creative ideas do not initially seem viable or productive compared to a known process or product, but talking out ideas with others and considering new approaches without fear of ridicule or censure can help individuals and groups think beyond the status quo. Von Oech's discussion starters recommend that thinkers *Avoid Arrogance, Fight for It, Get Rid of Excuses,* and *Listen to That Hunch.* You may be interested in looking these up on the Creative Think website(opens in new window). If you do, you may find some of von Oech's ideas a little out of the ordinary, but great ideas sometimes are, and thinking about them in a different way may be the spark you need to come up with your own version of an idea that will prove effective for you. Stay open to different approaches even if you aren't immediately comfortable with the ideas.

Another creative thinking group you may be interested in investigating is koozai.com, a digital marketing consulting firm based in the United Kingdom with clients worldwide. You may not be in need of help with digital marketing, but the koozai.com website is worth a look to see how creativity can highlight excellent customer service, detail award-winning services, and inject a sense of fun and vitality into a service that may not seem very exciting on the surface, namely helping companies optimize their web presence for increased exposure and profits. The team is a creative mix of engineers, designers, and analysts who use data-based evidence to find the right fit for their clients in a relaxed and productive environment. The actual nuts-and-bolts work involved in web marketing involves a great deal of tedious coding and specialized web design often performed by software engineers working alone, but you don't get a sense of bored, isolated office workers when you peruse the koozai.com site.

Working with Unconventional Ideas

Working with unconventional ideas can produce anxiety because the ideas are unfamiliar and the results of implementing these ideas could be unpredictable. People may not immediately accept your nontraditional ideas. Some may never accept them. If your original creation were to require individuals to give up their current cell phones, you can imagine the resistance. Even if the new idea is an improvement in communication, some people would hesitate.

To work in this possibly uncomfortable realm, you have to remain open-minded, focus on your organizational skills, and learn to communicate your ideas well. If a coworker at a café where you work suggests serving breakfast in addition to the already-served lunch and dinner, keeping an open mind means thinking through the benefits of this new plan (e.g., potential new customers, increased profits) instead of merely focusing on the possible drawbacks (e.g., possible scheduling problems, added start-up costs, loss of lunch business). Implementing this plan would mean a new structure for buying, workers' schedules and pay, and advertising, so you would have to organize all of these component areas. And finally, you would need to communicate your ideas on how to make this new plan work not only to the staff who will work the new shift, but also to the public who frequent your café and the others you want to encourage to try your new hours.

"Because we've always done it that way" is not a valid reason to not try a new approach. It may very well be that the old process is a very good way to do things, but it also may just be that the old, comfortable routine is not as effective and efficient as a new process could be.

Can you think of any routine task you do now that you've never questioned, such as doing laundry, studying for exams, spending downtime, or preparing food? Consider how you came to learn this routine. Are you following a pattern your parents set for you growing up? Do you ask friends how they perform these tasks and follow their example? How well do these routines work for you? Think of at least one different way you could approach one of these tasks. Would it be a good idea to change the way you do it?

How would that benefit you? If not, why is the best approach to keep doing this thing the way you have always done it? Reflect on your thinking behind this routine. How could creative thinking help you identify and assess all of your options?

Another element of working with unconventional ideas is to pay attention to how you organize your thoughts. Organizing includes establishing a clear goal to accomplish, outlining the steps toward that goal, and monitoring progress with specific deadlines. You may be able to add flexibility to this plan since creativity deals in the unknown and that may take longer than you initially expected, but an organized map of your thinking and where you hope to take it can move creative projects forward.

For example, what if you were asked to build a shed for a project or as part of your job? You would need a plan of some sort. It wouldn't be prudent to run to the hardware store and just buy various supplies you see on the spur of the moment. Rather, you would organize your thoughts around this project and determine some specific goals about the size of the shed, its ultimate location and use, the type of materials that would best serve your purposes, and how long the project will take so you can budget time and money toward the accomplishment of the goal. Do you need a building permit in your area for this sort of home improvement project? Will you or others need to sacrifice something (yard space, time, money, a special view) for you to build this shed? Do you have time to complete all the steps? Do you have the skills to put the shed together, or can you learn how to do it? How much are you willing to spend on this? Without an organized plan, you may end up with a good idea, some random supplies, and an incomplete building project that wastes both time and money and does not meet your initial expectations.



Figure 8.8: Thinking through a plan isn't just for school. Household activities and projects require forethought and strategic thinking. (Credit: TWP, Inc. / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

In addition to the need to remain open-minded and organized, creative thinking calls for a dissemination plan. Unconventional ideas typically don't get off the ground without the creator of the ideas communicating those thoughts to others. Do you set yourself up to be in the company of other creative thinkers? It's not a bad idea. Creativity is somewhat contagious. You may not think you have a creative way to approach a situation, but if you were to bounce ideas off like-minded friends and also friends who would offer a completely different way of looking at something, you may discover that indeed you do have some good ideas ready to come to fruition. This creative brainstorming doesn't just happen though. You need to set aside specific times to work with others to flesh out ideas and think through obstacles. And then you'll need some more time alone for the ideas to gel. Sometimes the creative answers to problems come to you at odd moments once you have laid the groundwork—be ready to capture the ideas in some form of note when your lightbulb goes off.

Creative thinking isn't just helpful in solving problems. You may want to enhance an otherwise good plan to make it fantastic and memorable, which is when you can bring in creative thinking. If you want to surprise your best friend with a special birthday celebration but are low on funds, you could think of creative ways to make this event one to remember. You could take in a free museum night or window shop at the mall or make a photo collage from pictures on your phone that bring back great memories.

Table 8.2 Creative processes should include a plan that considers the goals of the project and provides opportunities for brainstorming and feedback. The steps in this table may not work for everyone, but you can use them to think about what is needed in a process of your own. See the student resources for a blank version you can adapt.

Creative Process Applied to a Sample Campus Activity	
Creative Process Step	**Description and Notes**

Creative Process Applied to a Sample Campus Activity	
Problem to Solve or Item/Work to Create	**Create a new logo for our Commuter Student Association**
Requirements and Needs	• Will be used on Insta/Twitter, merch, print • Must incorporate school colors but be readable in grayscale • Must be understandable at large and small sizes (computer/phone)
Parameters and Limitations	• Cannot look like other logos on campus • Cannot use photos-illustration only • Timeline: 7 weeks (in time for next year's college catalog) • Budget: $450
Inspiration and Ideas	• Look at Commuter Association logos from other colleges. • Look at city and state transit logos. • Go to library to look at our school's old yearbooks.
Resources/Knowledge	• Graphic design • Copyright info (consult student govt) • Market research
Dissemination and Brainstorming	• Create a survey for all our commuters • Launch a contest for ideas and submissions? • Share drafts with advisor for approval. • Talk to graphic design club?
Implementation Plan	• Samples needed in 3 weeks. From there: • 1 week for survey feedback • 1 week for improvement • 1 week for additional feedback on final candidates • 1 week for finalization and approval
Reflection and Revision	• Ask all new club members in Fall for feedback. • Consider improving logo during Spring semester next year.

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8.5: Analytical Thinking

Questions to consider:

- How can you best establish component parts in thinking?
- How can you use analysis to improve efficiency?

Thinking helps in many situations, as we've discussed throughout this chapter. When we work out a problem or situation systematically, breaking the whole into its component parts for separate analysis, to come to a solution or a variety of possible solutions, we call that *analytical thinking*. Characteristics of analytical thinking include setting up the parts, using information literacy, and verifying the validity of any sources you reference. While the phrase *analytical thinking* may sound daunting, we actually do this sort of thinking in our everyday lives when we brainstorm, budget, detect patterns, plan, compare, work puzzles, and make decisions based on multiple sources of information. Think of all the thinking that goes into the logistics of a dinner-and-a-movie date—where to eat, what to watch, who to invite, what to wear, popcorn or candy—when choices and decisions are rapid-fire, but we do it relatively successfully all the time.

Employers specifically look for candidates with analytical skills because they need to know employees can use clear and logical thinking to resolve conflicts that cause work to slow down or may even put the company in jeopardy of not complying with state or national requirements. If everything always went smoothly on the shop floor or in the office, we wouldn't need front-line managers, but everything doesn't always go according to plan or company policy. Your ability to think analytically could be the difference between getting a good job and being passed over by others who prove they are stronger thinkers. A mechanic who takes each car apart piece by piece to see what might be wrong instead of investigating the entire car, gathering customer information, assessing the symptoms, and focusing on a narrow set of possible problems is not an effective member of the team. Some career fields even have set, formulaic analyses that professionals in those fields need to know how to conduct and understand, such as a cost analysis, a statistical analysis, or a return on investment (ROI) analysis.

ACTIVITY

Generate a list of at least two courses you are taking now that you think would routinely practice analytical thinking. Now, think of the profession you are interested in joining. How could the deliberate use of analytical thinking processes be beneficial for that career field? What are you currently learning about in your courses that apply directly to your chosen career path? Think of at least two ways analytical thinking would be used in the career field you are pursuing.

Establishing Component Parts

Component parts refer to the separate elements of a situation or problem. It might include the people involved, the locations of the people, the weather, market fluctuations, or any number of other characteristics of the situation you're examining. If you don't identify all parts of a problem, you run the risk of ignoring a critical element when you offer the solution. For example, if you have a scheduling problem at home and seem to never see your loved ones, the first step in thinking through this problem analytically would be to decide what is contributing to this unfavorable result. To begin, you may examine the family members' individual work, school, and personal schedules, and then create a group calendar to determine if pockets of time exist that are not taken by outside commitments. Perhaps rather than reading your homework assignments at the college library, you could plan to one day a week read with other members of your family who are doing quiet work. You may also need to determine how time is spent to better understand the family's use of time, perhaps using categories such as work/school, recreation, exercise, sleep, and meals. Once you sort the categories for all the family members, you may see blocks of time spent that would lend themselves to combining with other categories—if you and your significant other both exercise three times a week for an hour each time but at separate locations, one possible solution may be to work out together. You could alternate locations if both people have favorite places to run, or you could compromise and decide on one location for both of you—one week at the park, one week at the campus rec center. This may not ultimately be the solution, but after establishing the component parts and thinking analytically, you have provided at least one viable solution.

What if you look at the situation and decide you have too many component parts? Consider, for instance, how Amazon delivers packages every day. That's a lot of items going to and from seemingly countless locations within a relatively short time—sometimes within just one day. An organization such as Amazon must use a great deal of thinking and organizing to deliver goods and services.



Figure 8.9: Warehouse designers must think through complex problems and allow for a range of package sizes and shapes -- even ones they haven't yet seen -- to work within their systems. (Credit: Scott Lewis / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

One way to maintain clear thinking with so many parts is hyper organization. Proper labeling (for Amazon to ship it uses the foundation of our mailing system, unique ZIP codes that each address must contain to be delivered) as well as a strong sense of categorization (fulfillment warehouses, customer return warehouses, grocery item warehouses, etc.) are necessary for Amazon to do business. If you were faced with a major research paper your freshman composition professor expects to be polished by the end of the semester, where do you start? What are the component parts of a high-quality research paper? What tasks do you need to finish and how quickly to accomplish the overall goals? A partial list might include generating ideas, selecting a topic, researching, reviewing the available literature, outlining, drafting, and reviewing. What if you encounter setbacks in any of the steps? Do you have a contingency plan? In the construction industry, engineers called this *float*, and they deliberately build in extra time and money in case problems arise on the project. This allows them to avoid getting off schedule, for instance if a severe storm makes access to the worksite impossible.



Figure 8.10: Construction planners and engineers allow for a range of contingencies and conditions they cannot control, such as weather, supply problems, safety adjustments, and so on. (Credit: Metropolitan Transportation Authority of New York / Flickr / Attribution Generic 2.0 (CC-BY 2.0))

Forging a Revolution

While most problems require a variety of thinking types, analytical thinking is arguably required in solving all. There was a time when manufacturing was completed by a few people who moved around a workspace to complete their projects. As companies grew, this became more and more inefficient, leading to the need for automation. Henry Ford, the early-20th-century American auto inventor, used analytical thinking to revolutionize the way companies increase production by inventing the assembly line. He perceived the problem in his own factory. When the demand for cars increased but his workers continued their work at the same

pace, he analyzed their process to create something more efficient in the assembly line. This invention allowed one person to perform the same role over and over before sending the car chassis to another person who also performed the same role over and over as the evolving car moved down a sort of conveyor-belt system. The workers on Ford's assembly lines still had to think and make sure that the task for which they were responsible was properly constructed, free of defects, and ready to move to the next station; they just did this thinking about their one area of expertise. Instead of various skilled workers wasting time and energy moving themselves and their tools around the factory from one incomplete car to the next, possibly getting in the way of each other's work, the cars came to the workers. Ford vastly improved production rates and decreased manufacturing time by thinking about this then-new way of doing things.

In the 1960s, companies did not have a fast, reliable, and cost-effective way to deliver urgent documents or packages to each other. The standard mail system was slow but inexpensive, and the only alternative was a private courier, which, while faster, was prohibitively expensive. That's when Frederick W. Smith came up with the idea of a national, overnight delivery service as a part of an assignment in his undergraduate economics class at Yale University. As the story goes, Smith received only an average grade because evidently his professor wasn't all that impressed with the concept, but after analyzing the problems with the current system, thinking through his original ideas more fully, and refining his business plan, Smith launched FedEx, the largest, now global, overnight delivery service in the world.[1] This isn't a parable about ignoring your professors, but a testimony to thinking through ideas others may not initially support or even understand; thinking can create change and always has. As with Ford's assembly line and Smith's overnight delivery service, any service we now use and any problem we may still face provides thinkers with opportunities to generate solutions and viable options for improvement. Your thinking may result in a new personal service, a cure for cancer, or a revolutionary way to deliver water to developing countries.

Footnotes

- 1 "Online Extra: Fred Smith on the BIrth of FedEx." Bloomberg Business Week. 2004. Retrieved 1/28/20. Bloomberg.com [www.bloomberg.com]

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8.6: Critical Thinking

Questions to consider:

- How can determining the situation help you think critically?
- How do you present informed, unbiased thinking?
- What is the difference between factual arguments and opinions?

Critical thinking has become a buzz phrase in education and corporate environments in recent years. The definitions vary slightly, but most agree that thinking critically includes some form of judgement that thinkers generate after careful analysis of the perspectives, opinions, or experimental results present for a particular problem or situation. Before you wonder if you're even capable of critical thinking, consider that you think critically every day. When you grab an unwashed T-shirt off the top of the pile on the floor of your bedroom to wear into class but then suddenly remember that you may see the person of your dreams on that route, you may change into something a bit less disheveled. That's thinking critically—you used data (the memory that your potential soul mate walks the same route you use on that day on campus) to change a sartorial decision (dirty shirt for clean shirt), and you will validate your thinking if and when you do have a successful encounter with said soul mate.

Likewise, when you decide to make your lunch rather than just grabbing a bag of chips, you're thinking critically. You have to plan ahead, buy the food, possibly prepare it, arrange to and carry the lunch with you, and you may have various reasons for doing that —making healthier eating choices, saving money for an upcoming trip, or wanting more quiet time to unwind instead of waiting in a crowded lunch line. You are constantly weighing options, consulting data, gathering opinions, making choices, and then evaluating those decisions, which is a general definition of critical thinking.

Consider the following situations and how each one demands your thinking attention. Which do you find most demanding of critical thinking? Why?

1. Participating in competitive athletic events
2. Watching competitive athletic events
3. Reading a novel for pleasure
4. Reading a textbook passage in science

Critical thinking forces you to determine the actual situation under question and to determine your thoughts and actions around that situation.

Determining the Problem

One component to keep in mind to guide your critical thinking is to determine the situation. What problem are you solving? When problems become complex and multifaceted, it is easy to be distracted by the simple parts that may not need as much thinking to resolve but also may not contribute as much to the ultimate problem resolution. What aspect of the situation truly needs your attention and your critical thinking?

Imagine you're planning a fantasy vacation as a group assignment in a class you're taking where each person is allowed only $200. The group doles out specific preliminary tasks to each member to decide where to go, what sort of trip to take, and how to keep costs low, all in the name of a fun fantasy vacation. In this scenario, whose plan demonstrates the most effective critical thinking?

a. DeRhonda creates an elaborate invitation for a dinner party she'll coordinate at an exclusive mountain cabin.
b. Patrick researches cruises, cabin rentals, and staycation options, considering costs for various trip lengths.
c. Rodrigio puts down a deposit for a private dining room for 25 at an expensive local restaurant for a date six weeks from the end of the semester.

Write out what each person's thinking reflects about their expectations for this trip and why their actions may or may not help the group at this stage of the planning.

Critical thinking differs according to the subject you're thinking about, and as such it can be difficult to pin down any sort of formula to make sure you are doing a good job of thinking critically in all situations. While you may need to adapt this list of critical thinking components, you can get started if you do the following:

- Question everything
- Conduct legitimate research
- Limit your assumptions

- Recognize your own biases
- Gather and weigh all options

Additionally, you must recognize that changes will occur and may alter your conclusions now and in the future. You may eventually have to revisit an issue you effectively resolved previously and adapt to changing conditions. Knowing when to do that is another example of critical thinking. Informed flexibility, or knowing that parts of the plan may need to change and how those changes can work into the overall goal, is also a recognized element of thinking critically.

For example, early in the 20th century, many people considered cigarette smoking a relaxing social pastime that didn't have many negative consequences. Some people may still consider smoking a way to relax; however, years of medical research have proven with mounting evidence that smoking causes cancer and exacerbates numerous other medical conditions. Researchers asked questions about the impact of smoking on people's overall health, conducted regulated experiments, tracked smokers' reactions, and concluded that smoking did impact health. Over time, attitudes, evidence, and opinions change, and as a critical thinker, you must continue to research, synthesize newly discovered evidence, and adapt to that new information.



Figure 8.11: Information, attitudes, laws, and acceptance of smoking changed dramatically over time. More recently, vaping and related practices have rekindled debates and launched new research into safety. (Credit: Satish Krishnamurthy / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Defending against Bias

Once you have all your information gathered and you have checked your sources for currency and validity, you need to direct your attention to how you're going to present your now well-informed analysis. Be careful on this step to recognize your own possible biases. Facts are verifiable; opinions are beliefs without supporting evidence. Stating an opinion is just that. You could say "Blue is the best color," and that's your opinion. If you were to conduct research and find evidence to support this claim, you could say, "Researchers at Oxford University recognize that the use of blue paint in mental hospitals reduces heart rates by 25% and contributes to fewer angry outbursts from patients." This would be an informed analysis with credible evidence to support the claim.

Not everyone will accept your analysis, which can be frustrating. Most people resist change and have firm beliefs on both important issues and less significant preferences. With all the competing information surfacing online, on the news, and in general conversation, you can understand how confusing it can be to make any decisions. Look at all the reliable, valid sources that claim different approaches to be the *best* diet for healthy living: ketogenic, low-carb, vegan, vegetarian, high fat, raw foods, paleo, Mediterranean, etc. All you can do in this sort of situation is conduct your own serious research, check your sources, and write clearly and concisely to provide your analysis of the information for consideration. You cannot force others to accept your stance, but you can show your evidence in support of your thinking, being as persuasive as possible without lapsing into your own personal biases. Then the rest is up to the person reading or viewing your analysis.

Factual Arguments vs. Opinions

Thinking and constructing analyses based on your thinking will bring you in contact with a great deal of information. Some of that information will be factual, and some will not be. You need to be able to distinguish between facts and opinions so you know how

to support your arguments. Begin with basic definitions:

- **Fact:** a statement that is true and backed up with evidence; facts can be verified through observation or research
- **Opinion:** a statement someone holds to be true without supporting evidence; opinions express beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, or judgements

Of course, the tricky part is that most people do not label statements as fact and opinion, so you need to be aware and recognize the difference as you go about honing your critical thinking skills.

You probably have heard the old saying "Everyone is entitled to their own opinions," which may be true, but conversely, not everyone is entitled to their own facts. Facts are true for everyone, not just those who want to believe in them. For example, *mice are animals* is a fact; *mice make the best pets* is an opinion.

ACTIVITY

Determine if the following statements are facts or opinions based on just the information provided here, referring to the basic definitions above. Some people consider scientific findings to be opinions even when they are convincingly backed by reputable evidence and experimentation. However, remember the definition of *fact*—verifiable by research or observation. Think about what other research you may have to conduct to make an informed decision.

- Oregon is a state in the United States. (How would this be proven?)
- Beef is made from cattle. (See current legislation concerning vegetarian "burgers.")
- Increased street lighting decreases criminal behavior. (What information would you need to validate this claim?)
- In 1952, Elizabeth became Queen of England. (What documents could validate this?)
- Oatmeal tastes plain. (What factors might play into this claim?)
- Acne is an embarrassing skin condition. (Who might verify this claim?)
- Kindergarten decreases student dropout rates. (Think of different interest groups that may take sides on this issue.)
- Carbohydrates promote weight gain. (Can you determine if this is a valid statement?)
- Cell phones cause brain tumors. (What research considers this claim?)
- Immigration is good for the US economy. (What research would help you make an informed decision on this topic?)

Many people become very attached to their opinions, even stating them as facts despite the lack of verifiable evidence. Think about political campaigns, sporting rivalries, musical preferences, and religious or philosophical beliefs. When you are reading, writing, and thinking critically, you must be on the lookout for sophisticated opinions others may present as factual information. While it's possible to be polite when questioning another person's opinions when engaging in intellectual debate, thinking critically requires that you do conduct this questioning.

For instance, someone may say or write that a particular political party should move its offices to different cities every year—that's an opinion regardless of whether you side with one party or the other. If, on the other hand, the same person said that one political party is headquartered in a specific city, that is a fact you can verify. You could find sources that can validate or discredit the statement. Even if the city the person lists as the party headquarters is incorrect, the statement itself is still a fact—just an erroneous one. If you use biased and opinionated information or even incorrect facts as your evidence to support your factual arguments, then you have not validated your sources or checked your facts well enough. At this point, you would need to keep researching.

Tips for Critical Thinking

- Consider all points of view; seriously consider more than two (look for grey areas).
- Keep an open mind.
- Answer three questions about your supporting data:
  1. Is it enough support?
  2. Is it the right support?
  3. Is it credible?
- Look for evidence that contradicts your point of view. Pretend to disagree with the position you are supporting. What parts of your argument are weak? Do you have the supporting facts to overcome that evidence?
- Create a set of criteria you will use to evaluate the strength of information you want to use to support your argument. Ask questions like these:

    - What is the source of this information?
    - Is the author well respected in the field?
    - When was this information developed? Is that important? Why?
    - Does the author or publisher have an agenda for publishing the information? How does that agenda affect the credibility of the information?
- Create a table on which you list your main points, then for each one, list the evidence you have to support it. This method will help you visually identify where you have weak evidence and what points actually lack evidence.
- Be willing to admit that you lack information to support a point of view or make a decision. Ask questions or do some focused research to get what you still need.
- Make sure that your assumptions and points of view are supported by facts, not opinions.
- Learn what types of fallacies you use habitually, and then be on the lookout for them. Writers will often rely on certain types of arguments as a matter of habit. Review some of your old papers to identify which fallacies you need to avoid.
- Question your characterizations of others. Are those authorities truly competent in the area you are considering? Are you attacking the opponents of your point of view rather than attacking their arguments?
- Be careful of broad generalizations. Claims that use absolute words like “all,” “none,” “always,” “never,” “no one,” and “everyone” require much more proof than claims that use words like “most,” “some,” “often,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” and so on.

References

McLeod, S., and Karl Fisch, “Did You Know? 4.0,” video, Youtube.com(opens in new window) [www.youtube.com] (accessed July 2, 2024).

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8.7: Critical Thinking, Clinical Judgment and the Nursing Profession



Figure 8.12 Image by Moondance from Pixabay

Critical thinking involves the skillful analysis of information to make informed judgments. To engage in critical thinking, it's crucial to recognize and address personal biases and assumptions when encountering information, and to consistently apply standards for evaluating sources.

Critical Thinking in Nursing

Critical thinking is indispensable in nursing as it empowers caregivers to make decisions that optimize patient care. During education, educators and clinical instructors introduced critical-thinking examples in nursing, emphasizing tools for assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The cultivation of these skills continues into practice. Critical thinking is pivotal in delivering quality patient care and evolves throughout a nursing career, eventually becoming instinctive. Critical thinking in nursing involves identifying problems, determining optimal solutions, and executing effective resolutions through clinical decision-making. Reflection follows action to assess outcomes and consider alternative approaches where necessary.

Nurses play a crucial role as primary patient advocates, often the first to detect changes in status. Critical thinking enables unbiased interpretation of these changes based on evidence rather than conjecture. Anticipating patient needs through critical-thinking skills significantly influences care quality and outcomes.

Key elements of critical thinking in nursing include:

- Clinical judgment: Prioritizing patient needs, interpreting data, and anticipating complications.
- Patient safety: Recognizing deviations and taking preventive actions.
- Communication and collaboration: Fostering interdisciplinary teamwork.
- Problem-solving skills: Analyzing issues and implementing effective solutions.

Developing critical-thinking skills involves continuous learning, reflection on practice, openness to diverse perspectives, and structured problem-solving approaches like SWOT analysis. These skills mature with experience, enabling nurses to navigate complex healthcare scenarios effectively.

In conclusion, critical thinking is indispensable for safe, patient-centered care in nursing. Its ongoing development equips nurses to navigate challenges and uphold standards of excellence in an evolving healthcare landscape.

Clinical Judgement

Clinical judgment is the application of critical thinking to the clinical setting, which includes assessing, analyzing, and synthesizing complex patient data to develop and implement effective patient care plans. It involves interpreting patient information, drawing conclusions, and making decisions about patient care. Clinical judgment centers on interpreting and synthesizing patient data to make informed decisions about nursing interventions. It aims to make accurate and timely clinical decisions that positively impact patient outcomes. Nurses use clinical judgment to prioritize patient needs, anticipate complications, and adapt care plans based on patient responses. It integrates critical thinking skills into real-time clinical situations.

Clinical Decision Making

Clinical decision making refers to the process of choosing the best course of action among various alternatives to achieve a desired patient outcome. It involves selecting appropriate interventions based on a synthesis of clinical judgment, evidence-based practice, patient preferences, and available resources. Clinical decision making is focused on choosing the best action to meet specific patient needs and goals. It aims to provide safe, effective, and patient-centered care. Nurses engage in clinical decision making to determine treatment plans, prioritize care activities, and manage patient responses. It relies on critical thinking and clinical judgment to weigh options and select the most appropriate intervention.

In nursing practice, critical thinking, clinical judgment, and clinical decision-making are interrelated and essential:

- **Critical thinking** underpins both clinical judgment and decision-making by guiding the analysis and evaluation of information.
- **Clinical judgment** utilizes critical thinking to interpret patient data and make informed decisions about care priorities and interventions.
- **Clinical decision-making** integrates critical thinking and clinical judgment to choose effective interventions and strategies for achieving positive patient outcomes.

While critical thinking focuses on the process of reasoning and evaluating information, clinical judgment applies this thinking to clinical situations to interpret and prioritize patient needs. Clinical decision-making then uses critical thinking and clinical judgment to select the best course of action for optimal patient care. Together, these elements form the foundation of professional nursing practice, ensuring safe, effective, and patient-centered care delivery.

ACTIVITY

Differentiating Between Critical Thinking and Clinical Judgment in Caring for a Patient with Pneumonia

Instructions:

Review the patient scenario provided below. For each action taken by the nurse, determine whether it demonstrates critical thinking or clinical judgment. Write "CT" for critical thinking and "CJ" for clinical judgment next to each action. Explain why you classified each action as either critical thinking or clinical judgment.

Patient Scenario:

Mrs. Johnson, a 68-year-old woman, is admitted to the hospital with pneumonia. She presents with a fever of 101.8°F, productive cough, shortness of breath, and chest pain. Her medical history includes hypertension and type 2 diabetes.

Actions:

1.Reviewing Mrs. Johnson’s Medical History and Lab Results:
- Action: The nurse reviews Mrs. Johnson’s past medical history and her recent lab results to understand her overall health status.
- Classification: ___
- Rationale: ___

2. Administering Prescribed Antibiotics:
- Action: The nurse administers the prescribed antibiotics as ordered by the physician.
- Classification: ___
- Rationale: ___

3. Monitoring Vital Signs:
- Action: The nurse frequently monitors Mrs. Johnson's vital signs, including temperature, blood pressure, respiratory rate, and oxygen saturation.
- Classification: ___
- Rationale: ___

4. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Interventions:
- Action: After administering antibiotics, the nurse assesses Mrs. Johnson's response, including a reduction in fever and improvement in breathing.
- Classification: ___
- Rationale: ___

5. Prioritizing Care:
- Action: The nurse prioritizes interventions, ensuring that Mrs. Johnson receives oxygen therapy before other less urgent tasks.
- Classification: ___
- Rationale: ___

6. Educating the Patient and Family:
- Action: The nurse educates Mrs. Johnson and her family about pneumonia, its treatment, and how to manage symptoms at home.
- Classification: ___
- Rationale: ___

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8.8: Searching for “Aha”

America still has the right stuff to thrive. We still have the most creative, diverse, innovative culture and open society—in a world where the ability to imagine and generate new ideas with speed and to implement them through global collaboration is the most important competitive advantage.

Thomas Friedman

Let’s face it: many jobs are subject to outsourcing. The more menial or mechanical the job, the greater the likelihood that there will be someone overseas ready to do the job for a lot less pay. But generating new ideas, fostering innovation, and developing processes or plans to implement them are something that cannot be easily farmed out, and these are strengths of the American collegiate education. Businesses want problem solvers, not just doers. Developing your creative thinking skills will position you for lifelong success in whatever career you choose.

Creative thinking is the ability to look at things from a new perspective, to come up with fresh solutions to problems. It is a deliberate process that allows you to think in ways that improve the likelihood of generating new ideas or thoughts.

Let’s start by killing a couple of myths:

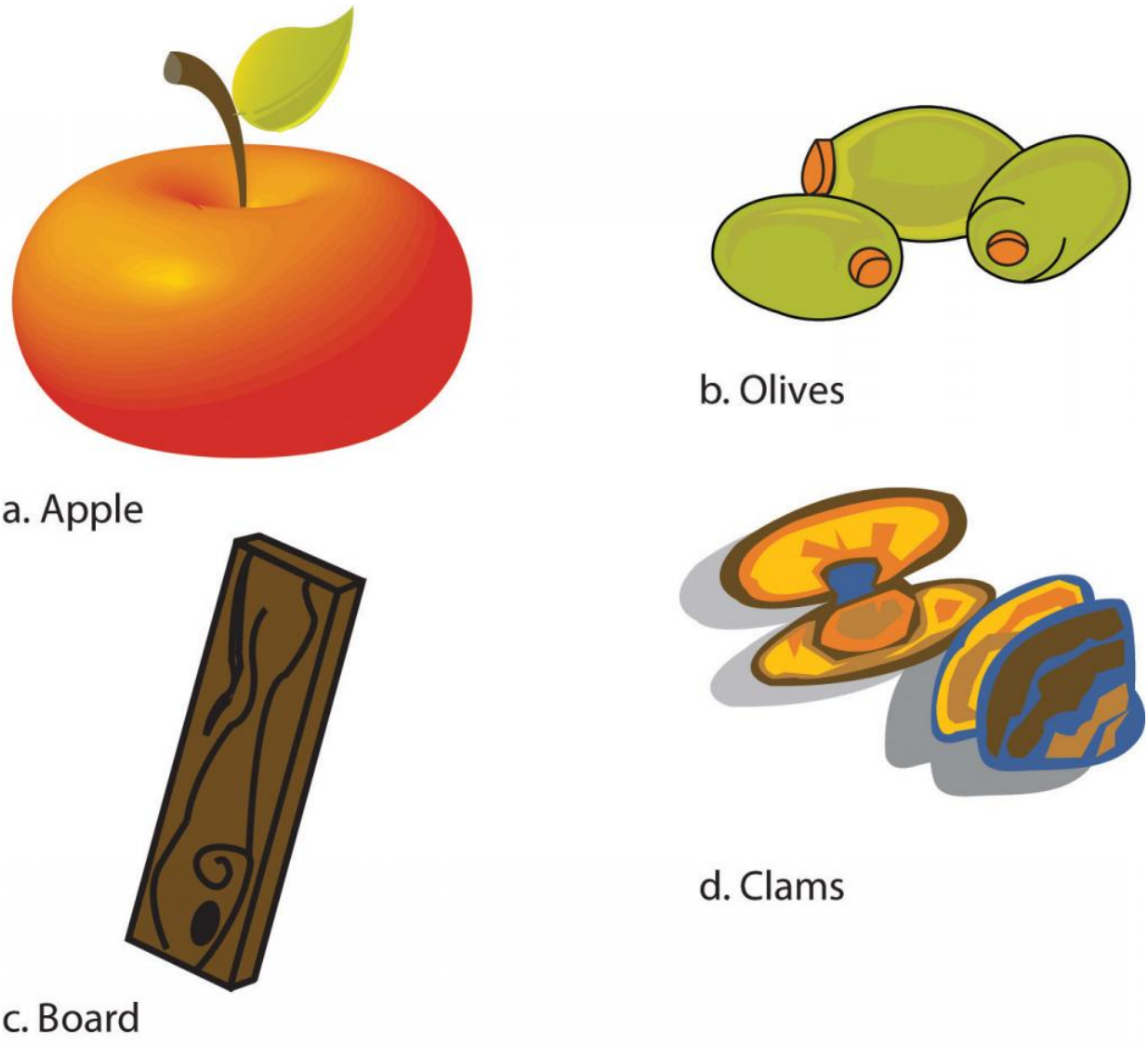
- **Creativity is an inherited skill.** Creativity is not something people are born with but is a skill that is developed over time with consistent practice. It can be argued that people you think were “born” creative because their parents were creative, too, are creative simply because they have been practicing creative thinking since childhood, stimulated by their parents’ questions and discussions.
- **Creativity is free-form thinking.** While you may want to free yourself from all preconceived notions, there is a recognizable structure to creative thinking. Rules and requirements do not limit creative thinking—they provide the scaffolding on which truly creative solutions can be built. Free-form thinking often lacks direction or an objective; creative thinking is aimed at producing a defined outcome or solution.

Creative thinking involves coming up with new or original ideas; it is the process of seeing the same things others see but seeing them differently. You use skills such as examining associations and relationships, flexibility, elaboration, modification, imagery, and metaphorical thinking. In the process, you will stimulate your curiosity, come up with new approaches to things, and have fun!

Tips for Creative Thinking

- **Feed your curiosity.** Read. Read books, newspapers, magazines, blogs—anything at any time. When surfing the Web, follow links just to see where they will take you. Go to the theatre or movies. Attend lectures. Creative people make a habit of gathering information, because they never know when they might put it to good use. Creativity is often as much about rearranging known ideas as it is about creating a completely new concept. The more “known ideas” you have been exposed to, the more options you’ll have for combining them into new concepts.
- **Develop your flexibility** by looking for a second right answer. Throughout school we have been conditioned to come up with the right answer; the reality is that there is often more than one “right” answer. Examine all the possibilities. Look at the items in Figure 8.13 Which is different from all the others?

Figure 8.13



If you chose C, you're right; you can't eat a board. Maybe you chose D; that's right, too—clams are the only animal on the chart. B is right, as it's the only item you can make oil from, and A can also be right; it's the only red item.

Each option can be right depending on your point of view. Life is full of multiple answers, and if we go along with only the first most obvious answer, we are in danger of losing the context for our ideas. The value of an idea can only be determined by comparing it with another. Multiple ideas will also help you generate new approaches by combining elements from a variety of "right" answers. In fact, the greatest danger to creative thinking is to have only one idea. Always ask yourself, "What's the *other* right answer?"

- **Combine old ideas in new ways.** When King C. Gillette registered his patent for the safety razor, he built on the idea of disposable bottle caps, but his venture didn't become profitable until he toyed with a watch spring and came up with the idea of how to manufacture inexpensive (therefore disposable) blades. Bottle caps and watch springs are far from men's grooming materials, but Gillette's genius was in combining those existing but unlikely ideas. Train yourself to think "out of the box." Ask yourself questions like, "What is the most ridiculous solution I can come up with for this problem?" or "If I were transported by a time machine back to the 1930s, how would I solve this problem?" You may enjoy watching competitive design, cooking, or fashion shows (*Top Chef*, *Chopped*, *Project Runway*, etc.); they are great examples of combining old ideas to make new, functional ones.
- **Think metaphorically.** Metaphors are useful to describe complex ideas; they are also useful in making problems more familiar and in stimulating possible solutions. For example, if you were a partner in a company about to take on outside investors, you might use the pie metaphor to clarify your options (a smaller slice of a bigger pie versus a larger slice of a smaller pie). If an

organization you are a part of is lacking direction, you may search for a “steady hand at the tiller,” communicating quickly that you want a consistent, nonreactionary, calm leader. Based on that ship-steering metaphor, it will be easier to see which of your potential leaders you might want to support. Your ability to work comfortably with metaphors takes practice. When faced with a problem, take time to think about metaphors to describe it, and the desired solution. Observe how metaphors are used throughout communication and think about why those metaphors are effective. Have you ever noticed that the financial business uses water-based metaphors (cash *flow*, *frozen* assets, *liquidity*) and that meteorologists use war terms (*fronts*, wind *force*, storm *surge*)? What kinds of metaphors are used in your area of study?

- **Ask.** A creative thinker always questions the way things are: Why are we doing things this way? What were the objectives of this process and the assumptions made when we developed the process? Are they still valid? What if we changed certain aspects? What if our circumstances changed? Would we need to change the process? How? Get in the habit of asking questions—lots of questions.

Key Takeaways

- Creative thinking is a requirement for success.
- Creative thinking is a deliberate process that can be learned and practiced.
- Creative thinking involves, but is not limited to, curiosity, flexibility, looking for the second right answer, combining things in new ways, thinking metaphorically, and questioning the way things are.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. **Feed your curiosity.** List five things you will do in the next month that you have never done before (go to the ballet, visit a local museum, try Moroccan food, or watch a foreign movie). Expand your comfort “envelope.” Put them on your calendar.
    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____
    4. _____
    5. _____
2. **How many ways can you use it?** Think of as many uses for the following common items as possible. Can you name more than ten?

Checkpoint

Peanut Butter (PBJ counts as one, regardless of the flavor of jelly)	**Paper Clips**	Honors Level: **Pen Caps**

3. **A metaphor for life.** In the movie *Forrest Gump*, Forrest states, “Life was like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re gonna get.” Write your own metaphor for life and share it with your classmates.

    _____

4. **He has eyes in the back of his head.** What if we really had eyes in the backs of our heads? How would life be different? What would be affected? Would we walk backward? Would we get dizzy if we spun in circles? Would it be easy to put mascara on the back eyes? Generate your own questions and answers; let the creative juices flow!

_____

_____

_____

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8.9: Problem Solving and Decision Making

Much of your college and professional life will be spent solving problems; some will be complex, such as deciding on a career, and require time and effort to come up with a solution. Others will be small, such as deciding what to eat for lunch, and will allow you to make a quick decision based entirely on your own experience. But, in either case, when coming up with the solution and deciding what to do, follow the same basic steps.

- **Define the problem.** Use your analytical skills. What is the real issue? Why is it a problem? What are the root causes? What kinds of outcomes or actions do you expect to generate to solve the problem? What are some of the key characteristics that will make a good choice: Timing? Resources? Availability of tools and materials? For more complex problems, it helps to actually write out the problem and the answers to these questions. Can you clarify your understanding of the problem by using metaphors to illustrate the issue?
- **Narrow the problem.** Many problems are made up of a series of smaller problems, each requiring its own solution. Can you break the problem into different facets? What aspects of the current issue are "noise" that should not be considered in the problem solution? (Use critical thinking to separate facts from opinion in this step.)
- **Generate possible solutions.** List all your options. Use your creative thinking skills in this phase. Did you come up with the second "right" answer, and the third or the fourth? Can any of these answers be combined into a stronger solution? What past or existing solutions can be adapted or combined to solve this problem?

  Why do you think it is important to provide multiple solutions when you're going through the steps to solve problems? Typically, you'll end up only using one solution at a time, so why expend the extra energy to create alternatives? If you planned a wonderful trip to Europe and had all the sites you want to see planned out and reservations made, you would think that your problem-solving and organizational skills had quite a workout. But what if when you arrived, the country you're visiting is enmeshed in a public transportation strike experts predict will last several weeks if not longer? A back-up plan would have helped you contemplate alternatives you could substitute for the original plans. You certainly cannot predict every possible contingency—sick children, weather delays, economic downfalls—but you can be prepared for unexpected issues to come up and adapt more easily if you plan for multiple solutions.

Group Think: Effective Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a process of generating ideas for solutions in a group. This method is very effective because ideas from one person will trigger additional ideas from another. The following guidelines make for an effective brainstorming session:

- Decide who should moderate the session. That person may participate, but his main role is to keep the discussion flowing.
- Define the problem to be discussed and the time you will allow to consider it.
- Write all ideas down on a board or flip chart for all participants to see.
- Encourage everyone to speak.
- Do not allow criticism of ideas. *All* ideas are good during a brainstorm. Suspend disbelief until after the session. Remember a wildly impossible idea may trigger a creative and feasible solution to a problem.

- **Choose the best solution.** Use your critical thinking skills to select the most likely choices. List the pros and cons for each of your selections. How do these lists compare with the requirements you identified when you defined the problem? If you still can't decide between options, you may want to seek further input from your brainstorming team.

Decisions, Decisions

You will be called on to make many decisions in your life. Some will be personal, like what to major in, or whether or not to get married. Other times you will be making decisions on behalf of others at work or for a volunteer organization. Occasionally you will be asked for your opinion or experience for decisions others are making. To be effective in all of these circumstances, it is helpful to understand some principles about decision making.

First, define who is responsible for solving the problem or making the decision. In an organization, this may be someone above or below you on the organization chart but is usually the person who will be responsible for implementing the solution. Deciding on an academic major should be your decision, because *you* will have to follow the course of study. Deciding on the boundaries of a sales territory would most likely be the sales manager who supervises the territories, because he or she will be responsible for producing the results with the combined territories. Once you define who is responsible for making the decision, everyone else will fall into one of two roles: giving input, or in rare cases, approving the decision.

Understanding the role of input is very important for good decisions. Input is sought or given due to experience or expertise, but it is up to the decision maker to weigh the input and decide whether and how to use it. Input should be fact based, or if offering an opinion, it should be clearly stated as such. Finally, once input is given, the person giving the input must support the other's decision, whether or not the input is actually used.

Consider a team working on a project for a science course. The team assigns you the responsibility of analyzing and presenting a large set of complex data. Others on the team will set up the experiment to demonstrate the hypothesis, prepare the class presentation, and write the paper summarizing the results. As you face the data, you go to the team to seek input about the level of detail on the data you should consider for your analysis. The person doing the experiment setup thinks you should be very detailed, because then it will be easy to compare experiment results with the data. However, the person preparing the class presentation wants only high-level data to be considered because that will make for a clearer presentation. If there is not a clear understanding of the decision-making process, each of you may think the decision is yours to make because it influences the output of your work; there will be conflict and frustration on the team. If the decision maker is clearly defined upfront, however, and the input is thoughtfully given and considered, a good decision can be made (perhaps a creative compromise?) and the team can get behind the decision and work together to complete the project.

Finally, there is the approval role in decisions. This is very common in business decisions but often occurs in college work as well (the professor needs to approve the theme of the team project, for example). Approval decisions are usually based on availability of resources, legality, history, or policy.

Key Takeaways

- Effective problem solving involves critical and creative thinking.
- The four steps to effective problem solving are the following:
  1. Define the problem
  2. Narrow the problem
  3. Generate solutions
  4. Choose the solution
- Brainstorming is a good method for generating creative solutions.
- Understanding the difference between the roles of deciding and providing input makes for better decisions.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. Gather a group of three or four friends and conduct three short brainstorming sessions (ten minutes each) to generate ideas for alternate uses for peanut butter, paper clips, and pen caps. Compare the results of the group with your own ideas. Be sure to follow the brainstorming guidelines. Did you generate more ideas in the group? Did the quality of the ideas improve? Were the group ideas more innovative? Which was more fun? Write your conclusions here.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Using the steps outlined earlier for problem solving, write a plan for the following problem: You are in your second year of studies in computer animation at Jefferson Community College. You and your wife both work, and you would like to start a family in the next year or two. You want to become a video game designer and can benefit from more advanced work in programming. Should you go on to complete a four-year degree?
   1. Define the problem: What is the core issue? What are the related issues? Are there any requirements to a successful solution? Can you come up with a metaphor to describe the issue?

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

2. Narrow the problem: Can you break down the problem into smaller manageable pieces? What would they be?

3. Generate solutions: What are at least two “right” answers to each of the problem pieces?

4. Choose the right approach: What do you already know about each solution? What do you still need to know? How can you get the information you need? Make a list of pros and cons for each solution.

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8.10: Metacognition

Questions to consider:

- How can you become more aware of your own thinking?
- What is the benefit of thinkers using their thoughts deliberately?

For many of us, it was in kindergarten or first grade when our teacher asked our class to “put on our thinking caps.” That may partially have been a clever way for a harried teacher to get young scholars to calm down and focus, but the idea is an apt depiction of how we think. Depending on the situation, we may have to don several very different caps to do our best thinking. Knowing which cap to wear in which situation so we are most prepared, effective, and efficient becomes the work of a lifetime. When you can handle more than one complex thought at a time or when you need to direct all your focus on one crucial task is highly individual. Some people study well with music on in the background while others need absolute silence and see any noise as a distraction. Many chefs delight in creating dinners for hundreds of people in a chaotic kitchen but don’t care for making a meal for two at home.

When an individual thinks about how he or she thinks, this practice is called *metacognition*. Developmental psychiatrist John Flavell coined the term metacognition and divided the theory into three processes of planning, tracking, and assessing your own understanding.[2]

> **“Becoming aware of your thought processes and using this awareness deliberately is a sign of mature thinking.”**

For example, you may be reading a difficult passage in a textbook on chemistry and recognize that you are not fully understanding the meaning of the section you just read or its connection to the rest of the chapter. Students use metacognition when they practice self-awareness and self-assessment. You are the best judge of how well you know a topic or a skill. In college especially, thinking about your thinking is crucial so you know what you don't know and how to fix this problem, i.e., what you need to study, how you need to organize your calendar, and so on.

If you stop and recognize this challenge with the aim of improving your comprehension, you are practicing metacognition. You may decide to highlight difficult terms to look up, write a summary of each paragraph in as few sentences as you can, or join a peer study group to work on your comprehension. If you know you retain material better if you hear it, you may read out loud or watch video tutorials covering the material. These are all examples of thinking about how you think and adapting your behavior based on this metacognition. Likewise, if you periodically assess your progress toward a goal, such as when you check your grades in a course every few weeks during a long semester so you know how well you are doing, this too is metacognition.

Beyond just being a good idea, thinking about your own thinking process allows you to reap great benefits from becoming more aware of and deliberate with your thoughts. If you know how you react in a specific thinking or learning situation, you have a better chance to improve how well you think or to change your thoughts altogether by tuning into your reaction and your thinking. You can plan how to move forward because you recognize that the way you think about a task or idea makes a difference in what you do with that thought. The famous Greek philosopher Socrates allegedly said, “The unexamined life isn’t worth living.” Examine your thoughts and be aware of them.

Becoming Aware of Your Thinking

Just as elite athletes watch game footage and work with coaches to improve specific aspects of their athletic performance, students can improve their mindset and performance reliant upon their thinking by starting to be aware of what they think. If a baseball pitcher recognizes that the curveball that once was so successful in producing strikeouts has not worked as well recently, the pitcher may break down every step of the physical movement required for the once-successful pitch. He and his coaches may notice a slight difference they can remedy during practice to improve the pitch.



Figure 8.14: Baseball pitchers and coaches analyze every component of their motion using video and other technology. (Credit: West Point, The US Military Academy / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Likewise, if Shamika, for instance, wants to be more generally optimistic and not dwell on negative thoughts, she may ask her friends to mention every time she adds a negative post on social media. Shamika may go even further by stopping herself when she says something that is not in line with her new, optimistic mindset. She could jot down the instance in a journal and capture her feelings at the time so that later she could analyze or think through why she was negative at that time. If you procrastinate on assignments, you may ask a friend to be your accountability buddy to help keep you on track. Thinking about how to focus on the positive, in Shamika's case, or avoid procrastination doesn't magically change the situation. It does, however, allow the owner of the thought to contemplate alternatives instead of becoming frustrated or mindlessly continuing to sabotage sincere goals. Think now of a personal example of a habit you may want to change, such as smoking, or an attribute such as patience or perseverance you may want to improve in yourself. Can you determine what steps you may need to undertake to change this habit or to develop a stronger awareness of the need to change?

Using Thought Deliberately

If you need to plan, track, and assess your understanding to engage in metacognition, what strategies do you need to employ? Students can use metacognition strategies before, during, and after reading, lectures, assignments, and group work.

Planning

Students can plan and get ready to learn by asking questions such as:

- What am I supposed to learn in this situation?
- What do I already know that might help me learn this information?
- How should I start to get the most out of this situation?
- What should I be looking for and anticipating as I read or study or listen?

As part of this planning stage, students may want to jot down the answers to some of the questions they considered while preparing to study. If the task is a writing assignment, prewriting is particularly helpful just to get your ideas down on paper. You may want to start an outline of ideas you think you may encounter in the upcoming session; it probably won't be complete until you learn more, but it can be a place to start.

Tracking

Students can keep up with their learning or track their progress by asking themselves:

- How am I doing so far?
- What information is important in each section?
- Should I slow down my pace to understand the difficult parts more fully?
- What information should I review now or mark for later review?

In this part of metacognition, students may want to step away from a reading selection and write a summary paragraph on what the passage was about without looking at the text. Another way to track your learning progress is to review lecture or lab notes within a

few hours of the initial note-taking session. This allows you to have a fresh memory of the information and fill in gaps you may need to research more fully.

Assessing

Students can assess their learning by asking themselves:

- How well do I understand this material?
- What else can I do to understand the information better?
- Is there any element of the task I don't get yet?
- What do I need to do now to understand the information more fully?
- How can I adjust how I study (or read or listen or perform) to get better results moving forward?

Looking back at how you did on assignments, tests, and reading selections isn't just a means to getting a better grade the next time, even if that does sometimes happen as a result of this sort of reflection. If you rework the math problems you missed on a quiz and figure out what went wrong the first time, you will understand that mathematical concept better than if you ignore the opportunity to learn from your errors. Learning is not a linear process; you will bring knowledge from other parts of your life and from your reading to understand something new in your academic or personal learning for the rest of your life. Using these planning, tracking, and assessing strategies will help you progress as a learner in all subjects.

Have you ever been in a situation where a series of events transpired that on reflection you wish you had handled differently? For instance, what if you were tired after a long day at work or school and snapped at your roommates over an insignificant problem and that heated exchange ruined your weekend plans? You'd been anticipating a fun outing with a large group, but now several people don't want to go because of the increased tension. Afterwards, you come up with several other ways you wish you had acted—you might have explained how tired you were, ignored the irritation, or even asked if you could continue your discussion of the problem at another time when you were less tired. You could call that wish metacognition after the fact. How much more effective could you be in general if instead of *reacting* to events and then contemplating better alternatives later, you were able to do the thinking *proactively* before the situation arises? Just the act of pausing to think through the potential consequences is a good first step to accomplishing the goal of using metacognition to reduce negative results. Can you think of a situation in which you reacted to events around you with less than ideal results? How about a time when you thought through a situation beforehand and reaped the benefits of this proactive approach?



In nursing school, a clear example of metacognition could be seen during a simulation exercise where a student nurse reflects on their decision-making process and adjusts their approach based on self-awareness and critical evaluation of their actions.

For instance, during a simulated patient care scenario, a nursing student may initially administer a medication based on their training and initial assessment. However, upon reflecting on the patient's response and reviewing their notes, the student realizes they may have overlooked a crucial symptom or misinterpreted a vital sign.

Through metacognition, the student acknowledges their initial oversight, identifies the gap in their reasoning process, and actively considers alternative actions or additional assessments that could have been taken. This reflective process not only enhances their understanding of clinical practice but also improves their ability to make more informed and effective decisions in future patient care situations.

Let's look at two seemingly ordinary examples of this concept. Think about your reaction and the eventual long- and short-term results of you walking into your math class on Tuesday afternoon to recall only then that you have a major closed-book exam that class session. You look around to see nervous classmates reading notecards or working practice problems. You choose to stay and take the exam wholly unprepared. You end up with a low D on the exam and now must contemplate the consequences of that result.



Figure 8.15: Self-awareness and self-assessment are critical in preparing for tests. (Credit: Magharebia / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Scoring such a low exam grade may not be the end of the world, certainly, but you may not maintain the GPA you had hoped to post, you may need to repeat the course, or you may get further behind in this subject because you didn't master the skills on this test. This is quite a bit of awareness about your thinking. Now you need to decide what actions to take as a result of your self-awareness thinking. Contemplating this negative consequence may lead you to make an appointment with your instructor to discuss your situation, which is always a good idea. Could you take an alternate exam to replace this atypical low score? Even if the answer is no, you have still made a connection and shown your instructor that you are seriously thinking about your coursework.

Now consider the opposite scenario. What if you had entered your exam schedule onto your calendar beforehand and devised a viable plan to be prepared? You likely would have prepared in advance of exam days, studied the required materials, worked through similar problems, and come to the exam session more prepared than you did in the first example. Because you know you need a set amount of time to prepare for exams, you would have blocked that time on your calendar, possibly changing your work schedule for the week, declining social invitations, and otherwise altering your daily routine to accommodate this significant event. Consider how much better your results would be with this amount of preparation and how this would improve your overall performance in the course. You can take advantage of thinking about consequences before they happen so you can employ specific strategies to improve your learning.

Footnotes

- 2 Flavell, J. H. (1976). Metacognitive aspects of problem solving. In L. B. Resnick (Ed.), The nature of intelligence (pp. 231–236). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum

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8.11: Summary

Chapter Takeaways

This chapter explores the multifaceted nature of thinking, particularly in the context of nursing. For an entry-level nursing student, understanding different types of thinking and their application in clinical practice is crucial. The chapter covers the following key areas:

Thinking

- Thinking is a broad term encompassing various cognitive processes. It involves mental activities such as reasoning, remembering, and making decisions. For nursing students, developing strong thinking skills is essential for effective patient care.

Analytical Thinking

- Analytical thinking involves breaking down complex information into smaller parts to understand it better. In nursing, this means assessing patient symptoms, interpreting lab results, and identifying patterns to make informed clinical decisions.

Creative Thinking

- Creative thinking is the ability to look at problems from different perspectives and come up with innovative solutions. For nurses, this can mean devising unique care plans or finding new ways to communicate with patients and their families.

Critical Thinking

- Critical thinking is the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue to form a judgment. In nursing, critical thinking is vital for assessing patient conditions, determining the best interventions, and evaluating outcomes. It involves questioning assumptions, identifying biases, and making evidence-based decisions.

Nursing and Clinical Judgment

- Clinical judgment refers to the application of critical thinking in the nursing process. It involves assessing patient needs, diagnosing health issues, planning and implementing interventions, and evaluating outcomes. Effective clinical judgment ensures high-quality patient care and safety.

Metacognition

- Metacognition is the awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes. It involves self-regulation and self-reflection on one's learning and thinking. For nursing students, metacognitive skills help in recognizing knowledge gaps, adjusting learning strategies, and improving clinical performance.

Problem Solving

- Problem solving in nursing involves identifying a problem, generating potential solutions, and implementing the most effective one. This process requires a combination of analytical, creative, and critical thinking skills. Nurses must be adept at quick decision-making and adapting to changing situations in the healthcare environment.

Application in Nursing Education

- Nursing education emphasizes the development of these thinking skills through various teaching methods, including case studies, simulations, and clinical practice. Entry-level nursing students are encouraged to engage in reflective practice, participate in group discussions, and seek feedback to enhance their cognitive abilities.

By mastering these types of thinking, nursing students will be better prepared to handle the complexities of patient care, make sound clinical judgments, and contribute to improving healthcare outcomes. The integration of analytical, creative, and critical thinking, along with strong problem-solving and metacognitive skills, forms the foundation of competent and compassionate nursing practice.

- Your ability to think critically and creatively is a key to your success in college and in life. You should develop and practice these skills.
- Bloom’s taxonomy provides a framework to describe the many kinds of thinking we need to do. Up to this point, you probably have practiced most of the lower-level thinking skills but have not had much experience with the higher-level skills (critical thinking and creative thinking).

- Critical thinking involves evaluating the strength of ideas or concepts by asking questions about them. Critical thinking will also allow you to identify and weed out logical fallacies that weaken the value of an idea.
- Three questions to ask about the support for an argument or position:
  1. Is it enough support?
  2. Is it the right support?
  3. Is it credible?
- Weaknesses in arguments are most commonly logical fallacies. Recognizing them will help evaluate the strength of an argument effectively.
- Creative thinking is the process of generating new ideas, concepts, or solutions. This often involves adapting existing ideas or combining them in new ways to create a new solution.
- Problem solving is effectively achieved by applying both critical thinking and creative thinking to generate viable solutions and decisions.

Chapter Review

1. List the six levels of thinking described in Bloom's taxonomy.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Which thinking skill is most important for short answer quizzes? Why?

_____

_____

3. List five verbs that describe the application level of thought.

_____

_____

4. What thinking skills are you using if you are blogging? How do you use each one?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. What is critical thinking?

_____

_____

6. Why is it important to pose some questions about the source of the material you read? What kinds of questions should you ask?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. What is a logical fallacy? Give an example of two types.

_____

_____

_____

8. List six words that signal a broad generalization and a recommended alternative that would resolve that problem of each.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. What are some ways in which you can feed your curiosity?

_____

_____

10. Why is brainstorming more effective at generating new ideas than individual work?

_____

_____

11. List the four steps of problem solving.
    1. _____
    2. _____
    3. _____
    4. _____
12. How do you use critical thinking and creative thinking in solving problems?

_____

_____

Make an Action List

Action List

Two things I will do to practice	Action	By when I expect to take the action	The expected results of that action
My critical thinking	1.		
	2.		
My creative thinking	1.		
	2.		
My problem solving	1.		
	2.		

Career Connection

All professions need thinkers to take good ideas and make them better and to tackle problems that seem unresolvable and make sense of them. No job or career area is exempt from this crucial human resource. Your critical thinking in college will help you

succeed in the work you do after your academic journey. Make a list of your top three ideal careers. What types of thinking are required of each? How will your time in college better prepare you for this type of work?

Where do you go from here?

Thinking isn't something we can turn on and off when we enter or leave a classroom—we think about everything. We may have different strategies and processes for thinking in different environments, but all thinking starts with our own ideas coming into contact with new information and experiences. What would you like to learn more about? Choose topics from the list below, or create your own ideas relative to thinking and research them.

- learning to be a creative thinker
- technological advances in the study of the brain
- thinking and brain trauma
- thinking in leadership roles
- theories of nontraditional learning methods

Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter, and consider one option you learned in this chapter that might change your answer to one of them.

How do you feel about the ways you think? Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning "least like me" and 4 meaning "most like me."

a. I understand how to approach problem-solving.
b. I have creative potential.
c. I often think about how I'm learning

I know how to find and evaluate valid information.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Using the Library

9.1: Prelude to Using the Library
9.2: Information Literacy
9.3: Using the Library Resources
9.4: Using Databases
9.5: Academic Integrity- Why Does It Matter So Much?
9.6: How to Cite Your Sources- Avoiding Plagiarism
9.7: Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Academic Integrity
9.8: What are Research Studies?
9.9: Summary

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9.1: Prelude to Using the Library

Learning Objectives

1. Understand and utilize library resources effectively for research and academic purposes.
2. Apply information literacy skills to evaluate and use various types of sources and databases.
3. Implement academic integrity principles by properly citing sources and avoiding plagiarism.
4. Evaluate the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in research and its impact on academic integrity.
5. Differentiate between various types of research studies and understand their purposes in academic research.

Let's Talk about the Library

Students are often intimidated by the library. Librarians know that library anxiety is real and that it can be hard to talk to your librarian. We know it's hard to decide what your topic is, decide where to start to search, and where to go for the best resources. Don't worry - we are the experts and we *want* to help. That's what reference/research librarians went to school to do. Think of your librarian as a kind of research magician, we can teach you the skills you need to be successful in your research quest. And research *is* a quest. Finding good sources that support your work takes work. Depending on your library, you can walk in to the library, send us an email, call us on the phone, make an appointment, or use chat. If you don't know where to go in the library - we are often found behind the desk that says "Research," "Reference," or "Information." You can also ask at the first desk you see in the library, they will know to send you to one of us!

Remember that when you are brave enough to ask questions, you have already taken your first step toward good research! Your librarians can help you find other services on campus and can often find answers around campus when you aren't sure where to start.

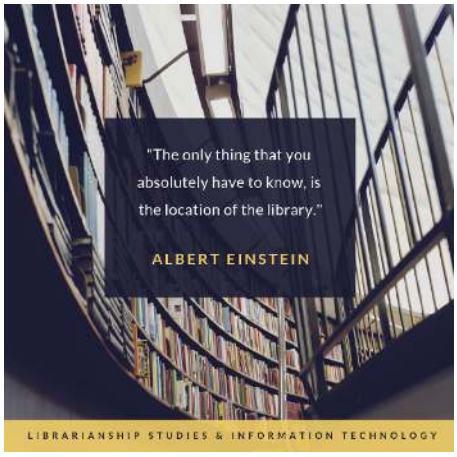


Figure 9.1

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9.2: Information Literacy

Information literacy is a fancy term for knowing how to find, evaluate, and use the resources you find. It is essential that you learn information literacy skills, not just for your academic research but because you need to be able to find, evaluate and use the information you find in your every day life as well. As nurses, you will not always be writing papers, you will have to stay current in your profession by reading professional literature. You will need to find information about hospital procedures, address issues around promoting good health, and understand current trends in nursing. Misinformation is common and thinking critically is essential. Being information literate means that you have acquired those skills.

Learning is more effective when new information is meaningful and linked to some personal experience or prior knowledge. Learning is about both context and content. It is necessary to learn how to assess, evaluate, and connect in order to make information become knowledge. Information literacy skills are the hallmark of the ability to do research. What is important is for you to learn how to find information that “matters” and then figure out why it might matter. You also need to be able to tune out the information that doesn't matter so you don't get bogged down when when working on your projects.

Information literacy is a link between the life experiences of you as a student, the academic world of scholarship, and the post college real world of application of learning. An information-literate person has the ability to ask questions and knows the difference between ignorance and understanding. (When do I need information?) Information literacy builds a lifelong ability to determine where information is kept (Where is the best place to find this?) and in what forms knowledge is stored (Which knowledge products will likely have what I need?).

Information literacy relies on the use of a critical mind to discern credible from not credible, valid from not valid. It is actually the core of the first-year experience. It lasts, while the specifics of particular courses fade over time. After all, the nature of research, the core of higher education, is a learning process: “How do I learn about something?”

What Is the Difference between Information and Knowledge?

Life is a series of problems needing solutions. You make hundreds of decisions every day, from small decisions like when to brush your teeth to big decisions like career and relationship decisions. You may not even be aware that you are making many of these decisions. Not every decision takes a great deal of thought but together, they create a world in which you need to find information, turn it into knowledge and then apply it to your life. Information, like data, only matters when you can turn it into knowledge by exploring and applying it to your decision making process.

You need to find information that matters and then explore why it matters. Curiosity, then, is a response to an environment of exploration, resulting in wanting to know “why” or “how.” How do you make sense of the world? How does information translate to knowledge? Connecting ideas, thinking critically, acting responsibly, and communicating effectively are all essential to lifelong learning and active engagement in today’s world. You need to become proficient, ethical users and producers of information in a globally connected world. It is important to be able to reason, manage resources, work productively with others, acquire and evaluate information effectively, organize information, interpret and communicate the information, and work with an ever-evolving variety of technologies. In other words, you need to become information-savvy consumers and creators. You need to be able to adapt to, understand, evaluate, and make use of technology so you can be citizens that shape our society, rather than letting technology shape you!

Questions to consider:

- How do you know that your sources are reliable?
- What are thinking skills?
- How do you evaluate your resources?
- Where do you go to find print and online resources?

When conducting any type of research, you need to have a firm grasp on *information literacy*, or knowing how to find and access the sources you may need. Practicing good information literacy skills involves more than simply using a search engine such as Google, although that could be a starting point. You also engage in creative thinking (i.e., generating topics to research), analytical thinking (i.e., reading and examining the parts of sources), and critical thinking (i.e., evaluating sources for accuracy, authority, etc.). Then you have to synthesize the results when you use multiple sources for a research project. Information literacy utilizes all of the necessary thinking skills. If you saw the name of a person on the cover of a magazine, for instance, you might assume the person did something important in order to have their name and/or picture on the magazine. If you were to google the person’s name, you would need to use context clues to determine if the information you found is actually about your person and not about

someone else with the same or a similar name. Then you have to decide if the information is accurate and if it is current. If it is not accurate or current, you would need to continue your research using other sources.

Check Your Sources

The American Library Association defines information literacy as a set of skills that allow you to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” We need information almost all the time, and with practice, you’ll become more and more efficient at knowing where to look for answers on certain topics. As information is increasingly available in multiple formats, not only in print and online versions but also through audio and visual means, users of this information must employ critical thinking skills to sift through it all.

In today’s information environment, what would be the best way to find valid information about climate change? Would it be Wikipedia, NASA, a printed encyclopedia from 1985, or a report from a political campaign?

If you chose any answer except the NASA website, can you see how the other answers could be biased toward a particular theory? The encyclopedia may not intentionally attempt to mislead readers; however, the write-up is not current and science changes as we learn more about the world around us. Wikipedia, as an open-source encyclopedia where anyone may upload information, might not be reliable enough to lend full credence to the articles. A government organization that does not sell items or opinions related to the topic and provides its ethics policy for review is a much better source. In fact, government resources are often called "grey literature." Grey literature is often authoritative and accurate but may not go through the peer-review process as an academic journal might. This level of critical thinking is the only way to ensure you have all the information you need to make good decisions about what to include in your paper.

You likely know how to find some sources when you conduct research. And remember—we think and research all the time, not just in school or on the job. If you’re out with friends and someone asks where to find the best Italian food, someone will go an app on their phone to present choices. This quick phone search may suffice to provide an address, hours, and possibly even menu choices, but you’ll have to dig more deeply if you want to evaluate if you will like the restaurant. Mostly like you will look for reviews, or personal testimonies. You might even read the ratings on Google.

Why is it important to make sure your sources are credible? The words we write (or speak) and the sources we use to back up our ideas need to be true, honest, and verifiable or we would not have any basis for distinguishing facts from opinions. Sometimes an opinion may be, at the least damaging level, only uninformed thoughts but, at the worst level, it could be an intentionally misleading and distorted version of the truth. Learning to tell the difference and only using verifiable facts is a hallmark of a strong thinker.

You probably see information presented as fact on social media daily, but as a critical thinker, you must practice verifying facts, especially if something you see or read something in a post that conveniently fits your perception. This is called confirmation bias and it means we tend to believe things that support our current belief systems, often without making sure they are credible. You may be familiar with the Facebook and Instagram hoaxes requiring users to copy and paste a statement that they will not grant permission for these social media sites to make their private content public. At best, this type of hoax reinforces our belief that we can control social media and at worst, this type of hoax may create a false sense of security that what we post will remain private. Maybe you’ve seen posts and memes that associate famous people with memorable quotations that were either inaccurate or belonged to another person. We may even allow ourselves to believe inaccurate claims as truth when we experience different emotions including anger, fear, or loneliness; we want to believe a claim is true because it aligns with how we are feeling, regardless of any verifiable source. Be diligent in your critical thinking to avoid misinformation!

Determining how credible a source is typically includes looking into the author’s credentials, experience, and status in the discipline; the actual content of the source material; any evidence the source presents as support; and whether any biases exist that may make the source questionable. Once you know who controls the content of the source you’ve chosen, you need to determine what biases or special interests the site or article may exhibit. You may not find all the information above but if you don't find enough to support the claim, you should find another source.

Activity - Reflecting on bias

Reflecting on Bias

Reflect on what bias the following sites may have. Without consulting the Internet, write one to two sentences on what ideas the following organizations may present. After you consider these on your own, conduct a search and see if you were accurate in your assumptions about the entities.

a. National Dairy Council
b. Yoga Society
c. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)
d. The American Medical Association

Whatever you write should be correct and truthful. Reliable sources present current and honest information backed up with evidence you can check. Any source that essentially says you should believe this "because I said so" isn't a valid source for critically thinking, information-literate individuals, like you are becoming!

Books and Articles

Evaluating books, articles, and websites for validity presents different challenges. For books and scholarly articles, in print or online, you can typically establish if the source is current and from a reputable publisher or organization with information on the copyright page or journal publication information. If you are unsure, you can ask your librarian to help you evaluate the book you are looking at.

Scholarly articles, like the one below, may be found on Google Scholar, on the open web, or in your library's databases. No matter where you find them, if they are truly scholarly, they will provide information about the author(s), the journal and will follow a format that supports their claims with research data. If you are using a magazine article, you will have to do the research into the author and publisher bias' on your own.

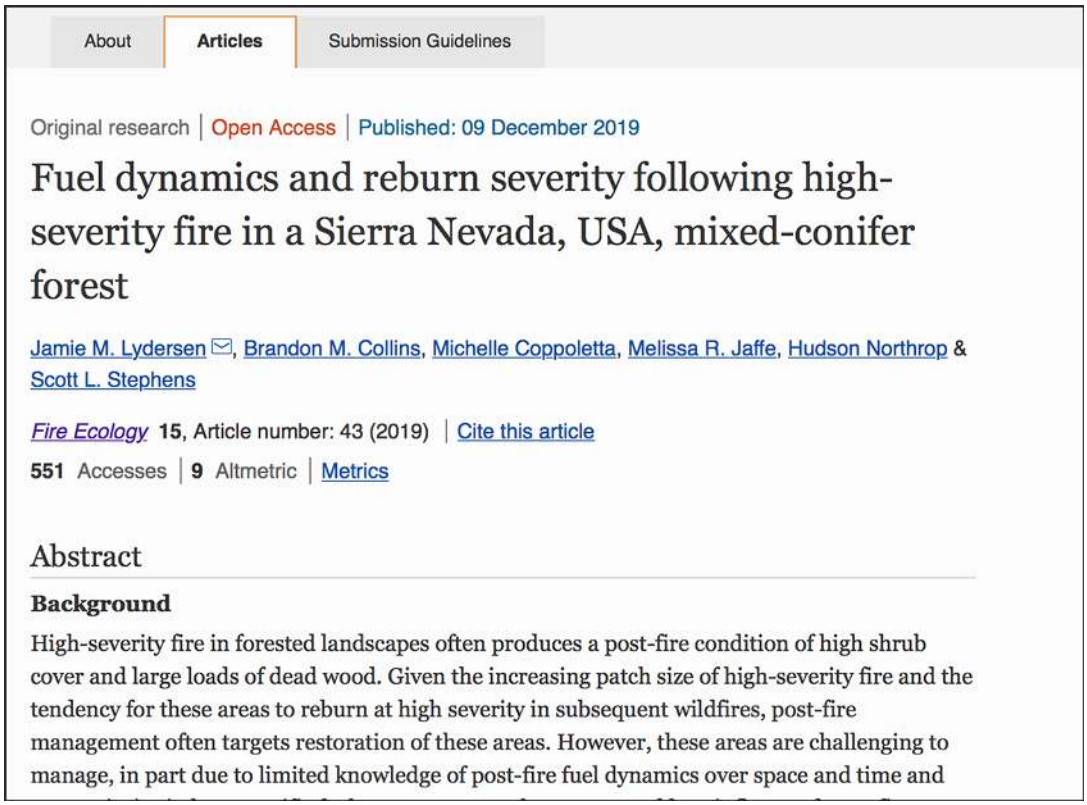


Figure 9.2: The most reliable sources of online information may be journals or related research-oriented websites, which include the author names, their credentials, and other data. However, unless they are "peer-reviewed," meaning independent experts have read and verified the quality of the information, even credible-looking sites may be more opinion- than fact-oriented. (Credit: Springer Open. Sprongeropen.com [fireecology.springeropen.com])

Websites

For a website, you should determine who owns the site. Is it a professional organization such as the American Medical Association? You can usually find this info in the *About* section of the site or in a copyright designation near the end of the landing page. Domain names can help you determine the purpose of the site, but you shouldn't rely solely on this website marker. Be sure to use a system like CRAP (Currency, Reliability, Authority, and Purpose of the source) or Lateral Reading. Lateral Reading is when you evaluate a source by asking the following questions:

- Who funds or sponsors the site where the original piece was published? What do other authoritative sources have to say about that site?
- When you do a search on the topic of the original piece, are the initial results from fact-checking organizations?
- Have questions been raised about other articles the author has written?
- Does what you're finding elsewhere contradict the original piece?
- Are credible news outlets reporting on (or perhaps more important, *not* reporting on) what you're reading?

Table 9.1 Domain types

Domain	User
.edu	Used by **edu**cational institutions (i.e., colleges, universities, school districts); usually reliable sources of information, but individual members of these institutions may be able to create web pages on the site under the official domain that do not reflect the values of the school
.com/.biz	Used by **com**mercial or business groups; may be valid, but also may be used to sell products, services, or ideas
.gov	Used by **gov**ernment agencies; typically valid
.org	Used by **org**anizations, such as nonprofit groups or religious entities; may present information slanted toward a specific denomination or cause. You'll need to conduct additional research to verify validity.
.net	Originally created for networks or groups of people working on the same problem, .net is still a viable option for noncommercial sites such as personal blogs or family websites. You'll need to conduct additional research to verify validity.
Many other domains exist	Research the validity of domain names outside these most common ones.

Critical Thinking

When you look into books, articles, and documentaries about how to think, you will find plenty of choices. Some books or articles about thinking may seem to apply only to a narrow group of readers, such as entrepreneurs or artists. For example, the audiences for these two books about thinking seem highly selective: Carl Sagan's *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* may be mostly directed to the science community, and James Lohan's *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Taught Wrong* is likely of interest primarily to historians. And some chapters may focus specifically on those groups; however, most texts on thinking are also applicable to other disciplines. You may have to work a bit harder to find a common ground or generate your own examples that explain the concepts from the book, but you can still reap benefits from understanding different perspectives. Don't immediately disregard a book or article just because it doesn't seem to fit your perspective on the surface; dig a bit more deeply to see what you can learn. Remember, being open-minded and considering as many alternate approaches as possible are two hallmarks of critical thinking.

Steps to Evaluate a website

One of the most consistent uses for critical thinking in your college work is in considering the value of research material and deciding how to use it. The Internet gives you access to an almost unlimited amount of data, and you must choose what to use carefully. Following are some guidelines.

1. Look at the URL, the Web address. It can give you important information about the reliability and intentions of the site. Start with the page publisher. Have you heard of this source before? If so, would you consider it a reliable source for the kind of material you are about to read? Now consider the domain type in the URL, which follows the period after the publisher: ".com" and ".biz" are used by commercial enterprises, ".org" is normally used by nonprofit organizations, and ".edu" is reserved for educational institutions. None of these is necessarily bad or good, but they may give you a sense behind the motivation for publishing this material. Are you dealing with a company or the Web site of an individual—and how might that affect the quality of the information on that site?
2. What can you learn from poking around with navigation tabs or buttons, and what do they tell you about the objective of the Web site? Look for a tab labeled "About Us" or "Biography."
3. Consider what others are saying about the site. Does the author offer references, reviews, or quotations about the material? What do they say? Check the blogosphere to see what other people think of the author or Web site.
4. Trust your own impressions about the material. Is the information consistent with what you already know?
5. Ask yourself why the Web site was written. (To inform? To provide data or facts? To sell something? To promote a cause? To parody?)

Finding Print and Online Resources

When you need to research a topic, you probably start with a search engine. That can be helpful, but can easily lead you complicate your search with incorrect or inaccurate websites and waste your time. Use advanced searches, filters, and other means to target your results more specifically. However, don't limit yourself to just Internet sources; print journals, books, and articles are still significant sources of information.

Your college may have access to extensive stores of subscription-based site content, photos, videos, and other media through its library, providing more than enough information to start researching and analyzing any topic. Depending on the specific database and school, you may be able to access some of these resources remotely; others may require you to visit the library in person. Remember, when you are gathering and arranging pieces of information, keep track of the source and the URL so that you can both cite it correctly and return to learn more if needed. If you are using databases to search; use the permalink, email or save your article.

Some other more general places to explore educational, inspirational, and thought-provoking material follow:

- Exploring the TED website is worth a few minutes of time. There you'll find short videos (limited to 18 minutes) of speaking demonstrations by diverse experts in fields covering all disciplines. If you are in an exploratory phase of your thinking and researching, you can scan the TED Talk topics related to your interest area.
- You may be familiar with the Khan Academy, created in 2008 by Salman Khan, as an online learning resource for students and teachers containing tutorials, videos, and practice sets in a variety of subjects from science and mathematics to grammar lessons.
- Online courses provided by Coursera, Udemy, and Udacity, provide learners and thinkers the chance to take courses, attend webinars and discussions, and learn about a large number of subjects, often free of charge. Much of the content is provided by major universities, and the courses are often facilitated by faculty.
- For-profit companies and nonprofit groups such as the Foundation for Critical Thinking (FCT) can also help you hone your thinking. The FCT presents materials, seminars, and conferences to help people think with "clarity, relevance, logic, accuracy, depth, significance, precision, breadth, and fairness."

Creating a System for Managing Resources

You could have all the money (or time or cars or great ideas) in the world, but that won't do you any good if you haven't also created a way to organize and keep all your resources. In the same way you might feel overwhelmed with all the choices when a waiter gives you a book-sized menu with hundreds of options, you can get lost or lose your sources if you don't have an effective and efficient way to access all the great articles, websites, books, podcasts, webinars, and other idea resources you find for your project, college course, or life event.

Systems to manage your ideas and thoughts don't need to be elaborate. The best idea-management system is the one that gets used, so you need to be comfortable with what all is involved in managing these thoughts. Keep in mind, once you get into the swing of researching for and keeping good ideas, you're going to end up with resources in many different formats. Gone are the days when one shelf of an oak bookcase near your desk could contain all your thinking resources on a topic. You may still find books, so you don't need to discard the bookcase just yet, but very likely, you'll also have online resources including search results, document files, websites, blogs, audio files, videos, and more. You can use filing folders, binders, online folders, boxes, or computer systems to organize your ideas. The system you use depends on how you choose to organize your material, there is no correct or incorrect system.

Like physical clutter, a messy online environment can slow your productivity and clear thinking. One key to effective information and idea management is a simple, consistent labeling system. Some companies call this a *naming protocol or naming convention*, a standard way all online files, folders, and drives are labeled for easier retrieval and long-term storage. If you don't think through a file name with this forward-looking approach and then you don't access that file for several months, you aren't likely to remember which file is which, and you may end up wasting valuable time opening random files in an attempt to find the one you need. This isn't a very efficient way to operate, and in some work environments would not be acceptable. For example, if you were taking an upper-level literature course studying poetry, and remember you filed an excellent summary of one of the poems a few years earlier in your freshman composition class, you won't be too happy when you have 78 documents called *Notes*. Great idea—lousy document/idea management system. Use folders with descriptive names and use dates when applicable. If you are keeping folders for your courses, name the folder using the name of your course. That way you can always find what you need quickly.

If your searches will take place on multiple devices--a laptop and a smartphone, you could use a notetaking app. For example, you could even use a series of Google Docs or Sheets, as long as you consider the file naming and organizational conventions mentioned above. For example, if you needed to put together a research paper requiring 20 data sources, you could use a spreadsheet to keep track of the source article name, author, topics, potential data points you plan to use, the source, and the URL. Even if you didn't incorporate everything into the final paper, such a method would save you a lot of time trying to track down small pieces of information. (The sheet would also be a great reference when you write your bibliography.)

Finding print and online sources demands a great deal of time and effort. Understanding how different approaches to thinking are appropriate for various situations as you research will help you be more creative and critical as you identify and verify your sources.

Activity- Matching Thinking Types

Matching Thinking Types

Quite literally, all careers need thinkers. Many jobs today expect employees to come up with original ways of doing routine tasks. Nurses may consider a more effective way to convey necessary information about patient care to other members of the medical team. Teachers must reconcile individual student learning needs with the reality of large classrooms. Attorneys think about all the consequences of presenting a client's case in a certain manner. And chefs balance the cost of using the finest ingredients with customer preferences and profit margins.

Any career you can imagine has some amount of thinking involved. The most successful workers in any industry are the ones who think beyond the ordinary limits or expectations established in that profession and create new and improved ways to do ordinary jobs.

Consider the types of thinking required for the jobs in the table below.

Table 9.2 Industry and Thinking Types

Industry	Job Title	Job Descriptions	Thinking type Required
Transportation	Air traffic controller	Regulates air traffic for outgoing and incoming aircraft; responds to emergencies; schedules planes to specific gates to minimize delays	

Healthcare	Pediatric oncology nurse	Cares for critically ill children; assists doctors in diagnoses, treatment, and examinations; communicates with patients and care providers	
Internet technology	Computer analyst	Maintains computer hardware and software systems; troubleshoots user problems; suggests modifications for improved productivity	
Education	College professor	Teaches, evaluates, and guides post-secondary students through various academic subjects working toward various degrees and certificates	

Footnotes

- 3 “Information Literacy.” American Library Association. Accessed February 1, 2020. literacy.ala.org/information-literacy/

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9.3: Using the Library Resources

How We Gather Information

Brenda Dervin, a researcher in information-seeking behavior, asserts that an individual's quest for knowledge can be compared to a journey. An individual finds themselves in a situation where they become aware that there is a gap in their knowledge, then the individual takes steps to bridge that gap, then they continue their journey. Dervin calls this process **gap-bridging**. Gap-bridging can be broken down even further, as the individual attempts to define the gap they face. Before attempting to bridge the gap, the individual must first face it, define the gap, then consider the strategies they will use to bridge it (Savolainen 2006, 1120).

You are already following this process every day, without even realizing it. For example, let's say you went to get a flu shot and you were asked "would you like the flu nasal spray? It's a live vaccine." You realize you don't know what is meant by "live" vaccine. In order to fill this gap in your knowledge, you search Medline Plus to learn what a live vaccine is. Congratulations, you just bridged a gap!

The process is the same when you are seeking information for your coursework. It is important that you understand that gap-bridging, or the process of seeking information, is an **iterative process**. An iterative process is one that you repeat multiple times, getting closer to achieving the correct result with each repeat. You may try your search, discover that the results are not what you're looking for, then go back and adjust your search terms and try again. Changing your keywords and other search terms will help you to narrow your search. Using this iterative process may feel like a large task, as you realize there may be many gaps to bridge, but don't hesitate to reach out to your librarian. They can guide you to the most relevant resources.

Step-by-Step Process for Information Research

You will bridge many gaps as you gather information for your assignment, including making certain you understand the expectations of the assignment. When working on a research assignment, use the following steps to make a plan and stay organized as you complete the assignment.

1. Understand your assignment

Make certain that you understand each element of the assignment, and what is being expected of you. Carefully read the assignment, the syllabus, and the grading rubric, if your professor has provided you with one. If there is anything you don't understand, ask your instructor! They may be able to answer your question quickly, or they may suggest that you stop by their office hours. Many students are too intimidated to visit their professor during office hours, and if you are intimidated, you are are missing a terrific opportunity to learn more and ask questions. Professors have office hours specifically to help you to succeed in your courses. There are no small questions when it comes to understanding your assignment, so please don't be afraid to reach out.

2. Make a plan

Make a list of the tasks you need to complete and set deadlines for yourself to accomplish each one. Be sure to build in extra time in case there are delays. You may need to ask your professor a question, and it may take a couple of days to get a response. You may want a resource from the library that could take a few days to become available. Someone may have checked out the item, or the library may not have it and will need time to borrow it for you from another library. Building in extra time allows for delays without putting you at risk of missing the assignment deadline.

3. Explore a topic that interests you

If you are able, find a topic that interests you. Perhaps it's a topic that meets your assignment guidelines but also intersects with your interests. Do some preliminary searches to explore the major themes of the topic. Remember creative thinking from earlier in the chapter? This is where it comes in handy.

4. Craft your thesis

Now that you've explored your topic, what argument would you like to make? Your **thesis** is the statement/argument you'd like to make in your paper and is the argument you will support throughout your paper. You may need to refine your argument based on the sources you gather. Remember that your thesis has to be supported by research, you can't ignore good resources simply simply because they don't support your argument.

5. Refine your search/gather sources

Now you need to refine your search to gather sources that address your thesis statement. Keep in mind what types of information your professor will allow you to use. Some assignments lend themselves to using non-academic sources, such as newspapers and blogs, while others require that you only use peer-reviewed research. Depending on your topic, you may need to use non-academic sources for support. For example, statistics are often found on government websites but may be hard to find or non-existent in other sources. Newspapers can provide primary documentation, peer-reviewed sources can provide original research.

Peer review is a process scholars use to ensure that research within the field is reliable and reputable. Before a peer-reviewed journal will publish a paper, other experts in that discipline read it to ensure the research methods are sound and the claims match what the research shows.

6. Complete the assignment

Once you have your sources, it’s time to complete the assignment. If you need assistance with your writing, seek out help from your school's writing or tutoring center, or from your library resource center. There are more resources available than you may realize. Don't be afraid to take advantage of these services, they are designed to support you in your coursework. Make sure you cite all the research you use in your paper.

7. A note about citations

Proper citation in a research paper is crucial for acknowledging intellectual contributions, establishing credibility, and avoiding plagiarism. Some key points to remember:

When to Cite:

- Always cite: information that's not common knowledge, including facts, figures, ideas, and theories.
- Cite even when paraphrasing or summarizing another's work.
- Use citations for direct quotes and whenever you reference another source.

Citation Styles:

- Popular styles include APA, MLA, and Chicago.
- Choose the style: preferred by your instructor or field of study.
- Each style has specific formatting rules for in-text citations and reference lists.

In-text Citation Elements:

- Typically include author's name, year of publication, and page number (for quotes).
- May also include title, volume, and issue number depending on the source and style.

Reference List:

- Provides complete bibliographic information for all cited sources.
- Each entry follows specific formatting rules for the chosen style.

Additional Tips:

- You may choose to use a citation management tool like Zotero or Mendeley to organize and format citations.
- Double-check all citations for accuracy and consistency.
- Consult a style guide or your institution's writing center for further guidance.

Consequences of Improper Citation:

- Remember that you are now part of the academic community and plagiarism accusations can damage academic integrity and reputation.
- Improper citations can undermine the credibility of your research.

By following proper citation guidelines, you demonstrate academic integrity, give credit where it's due, and strengthen the foundation of your research paper.

Remember: Always refer to the specific style guide for detailed formatting instructions. Nursing papers are written using a specific style from the American Psychological Association (APA style). There are many style guides available to help you as you write your papers. Commonly used guides are PERRLA(opens in new window), Grammarly(opens in new window), and

Lumivero(opens in new window) to name a few. When writing a paper, refer to the guidelines for your college or university to ensure you utilize the programs responsibly and are violating any integrity policies.

Activity – LOCATING A DATABASE

Locating a Database

Libraries offers hundreds of databases, each containing thousands of articles covering a range of subjects and eras. Many of these are housed in "Library Guides" aka Libguides. LibGuides systems are commonly used by librarians to create research or subject guides. **LibGuides** function as mini-websites on a topic or subject. They contain resources, tips, and other information that will help you. If you can't find a LibGuide to support your class, ask your librarian. Sometimes there is a generic LibGuide that will help you.

Using your resources: (examples are linked below for your convenience)

- To find a database relevant to your work, visit your library's A-Z databases page, then select the subject you'd like to research for a list of relevant databases. These subjects may be very broad, like English or History. Or you can use a database that your professor has suggested.
- Databases may be accessed from home or elsewhere, even a coffee shop. You will have to log into your college or university account. Databases are considered to be "behind the paywall." This means that your college or university pays for them and part of the agreement is that only registered users can access them.
- You can read most database articles on line.
- Print, save, or e-mail articles from databases.

Libraries often list relevant databases by subject. Locate 'Nursing' in the subject guide page. What are some of the top recommended databases for nursing?

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9.4: Using Databases

Using the appropriate database will help you streamline your search and provide better results. The most commonly used database is the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL). CINAHL is an index of English-language and selected other-language journal articles about nursing, allied health, biomedicine and healthcare. When searching for references and resources that are evidence based and up to date, CINAHL is the most commonly used resource in Nursing and Allied Health research. If your college or university doesn't subscribe to CINAHL, you might want to look for Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition or Nursing and Allied Health: OneFile. Both CINAHL and Health Source: Nursing/Academic are EBSCO databases. Nursing and Allied Health: OneFile is a Gale database. The interfaces will look different but the concepts are exactly the same.

No matter what database you are using to perform your research, getting to the most accurate information without getting side tracked can be quite a challenge. Entering the most concise search terms will help you reach the desired content in an efficient manner. Before we search a database, though, there is an important limiter we can use to help narrow our searches.

Boolean Operators

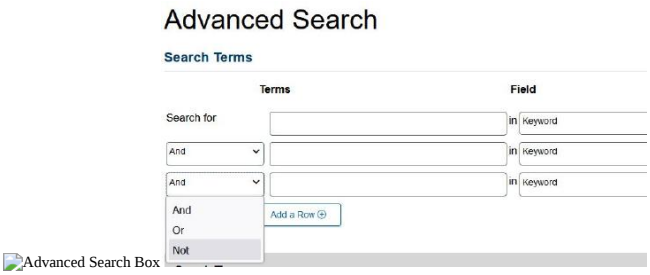
Boolean operators are words that indicate the relationship between search terms. These terms are AND, OR, and NOT. You may have noticed these terms in most databases, often in a drop-down menu next to the search box.

The dropdown in any EBSCO database looks like:



Figure 9.2 Ebsco Database

If you are using a Gale database, the dropdowns will look like this:



Advanced Search Box

Figure 9.3 Gale database

All databases will have Boolean limiters but you may have to look for them.

AND can be used to narrow the number of results. AND forces the database to only retrieve results that list **both** terms. You can replace cat AND dog with examples that apply to nursing like magnetic resonance imaging AND therapeutics. You will only get results that have both terms in the results.

cat AND dog

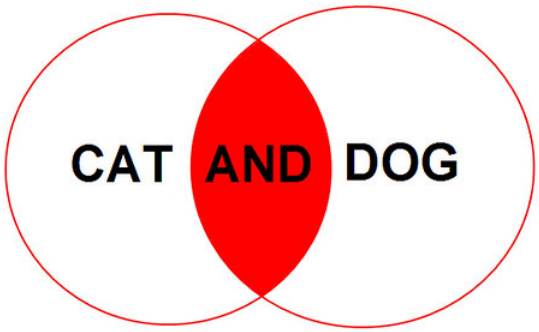


Figure 9.4 AND Boolean Operator

OR can be used to broaden the number of results that you retrieve. This is useful for synonyms, or words that mean the same thing. In this example, you could search for cat OR feline. You can also use OR when searching for similar terms. For example, you may need information about household pets, namely dogs or cats. Using OR will retrieve articles that mention **either** of the terms. A nursing example could be magnetic resonance imaging OR MRI. That way you would get results that had either search term. Databases are very specific and might not recognize that magnetic resonance imaging and MRI are the same thing.

cat OR dog

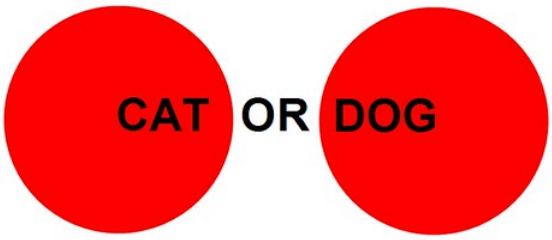


Figure 9.5 OR Boolean Operator

NOT is used to exclude a term. The order of your terms is important when using NOT. All results that mention the term ***after*** NOT will be excluded. NOT should be used sparingly, as it can eliminate relevant results. For example, if I want information about the therapeutic uses of magnets but keep retrieving articles about magnetic resonance imaging. Using NOT eliminates magnetic resonance imaging but I may be missing some information. There may have been articles about the therapeutic use of magnets, that just happen to mention magnetic resonance imaging, but those were excluded. You can see this if you can, mentally, replace cat with magnet and dog with magnetic resonance imaging. For this reason, NOT should be used carefully.

magnet NOT magnetic resonance imaging

cat NOT dog

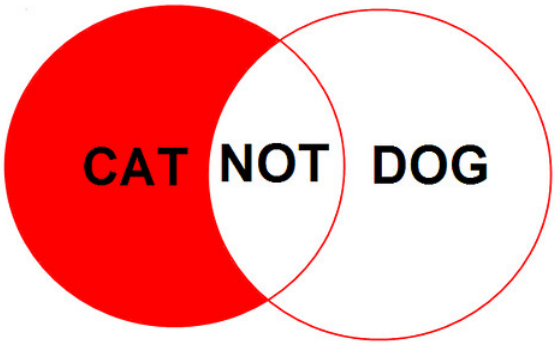


Figure 9.6 NOT Boolean Operator

Filters/Limiters

Filters, aka limiters, may be used to reduce your search results to a more relevant set. You have probably used filters when shopping online. For example, you would use the “Prime” filter in Amazon to search for Prime-eligible items or maybe you only wanted "4 star ratings" or a specific brand so you would click the box to add those filters to your Amazon search to narrow your results.

To locate limiters, enter your search terms and hit search. On the left side of the screen, scroll down to use the limiters. Common limiters are published dates and subject headings. When you use keywords in a database search, the database looks for all the sources that have your keyword in it. You can use Subject Headings to narrow your search. **Subject Headings** tell the database that you want only sources that have your subject heading as one of the main topics in the source. Of course, sources often have more than one subject heading and you can use as many subject headings as you like.

Do remember, though, that the point of using limiters is not to narrow your results to just a few articles but to narrow your search to enough *relevant* articles to support your research assignment.

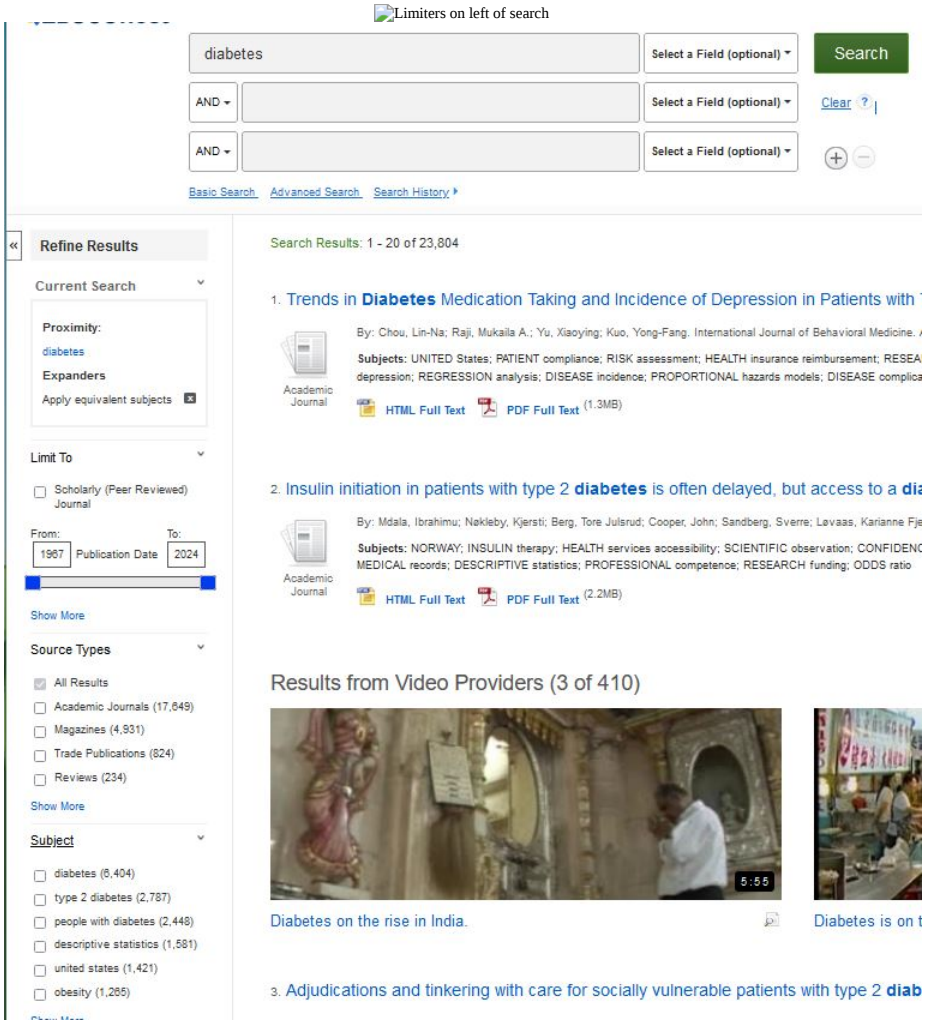


Figure 9.6 CINAHL Useful Limiters

Two of the most useful limits for health sciences students are the Publication Date and English Language filters. For most assignments, you will need information published in the last 5 years. Filtering for English language will limit your results to those written in English.

Figure 9.6 CINAHL Limiters

Activity – Practice a search

Practice a Search

What is a topic in healthcare you would like to know more about? Refer to the previous activity to locate the database CINAHL, and follow these steps to practice a search.

- What keywords should you use? Are there any synonyms you should add?
- Are there any words you can truncate? Where would you truncate?
- Should you try searching a specific field?
- What boolean operators should you use? Remember the OR operator can be used between synonyms, while you may want to use AND to combine different topics.
- What filters should you use? Do you only want recent information? Or only sources written in English?

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9.5: Academic Integrity- Why Does It Matter So Much?

Student code of conduct

Academic institutions understand and values the hard work and effort you put into earning your degree. It is that understanding that makes the faculty and administration committed to ensuring that your degree has value when you enter the career of your choice. It also ensures that your future employer knows that you are honest, ethical, and competent in your skills. These standards apply to scholars at all levels, and as a student, you are now part of the scholarly community and must abide by the policies that apply to all scholars.

This commitment by your college or university is non-negotiable and every institution will have an academic integrity policy on their website. If you are unsure of the academic integrety policy at your college or university, you can use Google to search for your institution's name and "academic integrity policy" to find it. Faculty, students, administrators, and classified staff share responsibility for ensuring academic honesty in your college community. It is important for you as a student to understand the policies. There are some sample statements below, please read them and reflect on the similarities between a community college and two universities.

Sample Student Codes of Conduct Statements

Bakersfield College: Any test, paper, or assignment submitted that bears BC students' name is presumed to be the own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from the instructor.

Valdosta State University: All students are expected to do their own work and to uphold a high standard of academic ethics. Any violations of this policy may result in the academic penalties outlined in the syllabus and may also be referred to Student Affairs for further disciplinary action. In addition “no student shall engage in plagiarism, which is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were the student’s own.” Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (AI-generated content) without proper citation is another form of plagiarism.

Boston University: For students, the Code establishes an environment of integrity and professionalism that helps to assure each individual receives appropriate recognition for their work. The ethical decisions that students face in an academic environment are similar to those they will encounter routinely in the professional world they will enter upon graduation or where they are currently employed. The Code allows faculty to conduct a fair and accurate evaluation of student performance and to maintain a supportive and just learning environment. Academic integrity is a critical component of such an environment, giving faculty the freedom to extend their role as educators to include serving as mentors and colleagues as well as instructors.

Specifically, policies on Academic Integrity prohibit students from engaging in the following behaviors:

- **Cheating on an examination or an assignment**, which could include:
  - copying the work of another; allowing someone to copy; engaging in written, oral, or any other means of communication with another; giving aid to or seeking aid from another when not permitted by the instructor;
  - using material during an examination or when completing an assignment that is not authorized by the person giving the examination or making the work assignment, including, but not limited to, electronic or digital devices such as calculators, cell phones, camera phones, scanner pens, palms, or flash drives, etc.;
  - taking or attempting to take an examination for another, or allowing another to take or attempt to take an examination for you;
  - using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of an examination or work assignment that is not provided for your use by your instructor;
  - any act designed to give an unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such an act.
- **Plagiarism**, meaning the unacknowledged incorporation of someone else’s work in anything that is offered for credit.
- **Collusion**, meaning working with another student on homework or other assignments that are offered for credit when the faculty member hasn’t given permission to do so.

Each class you attend will have a syllabus that outlines the expectations of your work as a student in that professor’s course. Every syllabus should have a statement regarding the expectations for academic integrity in that specific course. It is important for you to read this policy and to ask clarifying questions of your professor. Some faculty members will encourage working with others to

problem solve homework, whereas some faculty members have strict policies against discussing homework with other students. Each course will be different, and it is your responsibility to be certain you know and abide by the policies in each of your classes.

Unfortunately, as a student in higher education, you may face obstacles that provide challenges to your academic integrity. Many students find they are pressured by a friend who hasn't prepared appropriately for class to share their assignments. Others find themselves stressed due to procrastination, and still others are pressured to maintain the highest grades and so make the decision to cheat, plagiarize, or collude to overcome those obstacles. What you must understand is that the consequences of cheating, plagiarizing, and colluding far outweigh any temporary benefit you may receive.

Activity – Academic Integrity Case studies

Academic Integrity Case Studies

Discuss the following case studies with a classmate or your professor.

Case Study A

A student is in a class that is held in a computer lab. All the tests are computer-based. In preparation for the midterm examination, the professor gives several old versions of her tests for the students to use for practice/study material. One student responds to all of the practice tests in electronic format and saves them on his desktop.

The midterm exam date rolls around and the professor indicates that the test will be open book. When the exam is passed out the student realizes that it is identical to one of the practice tests that the professor distributed for study material. The student pulls up a folder on his desktop marked Study Test Responses and copies and pastes his answers from his practice test directly to his examination.

Has the student committed academic dishonesty?

What would your response be if you knew that the student was a part of a study group and that they answered the practice test questions as a group?

What if the student and another student who was a part of the group both used the "group responses" in their examination?

Case Study B

A student submits a paper on the "History of Nursing." The student cites all her sources in a references page and does an in-text citation for any direct quotes. One section of the student's paper is below:

According to Wikipedia, "Nursing comes in various forms in every culture, although the definition of the term and the practice of nursing has changed greatly over time." One of the oldest definitions of the word from the English language is a woman who is hired to suckle and generally care for a young child. Later, this developed into the concept of looking after someone, not just meaning a woman looking after a child. Nursing has developed into this later definition, although the concept of nourishing in the broadest sense refers to present-day nursing and the promotion of quality of life.

When the professor goes to check the student's sources she stumbles upon this Wikipedia article:

> ***Nursing comes in various forms in every culture, although the definition of the term and the practice of nursing has changed greatly over time. The oldest sense of the word in the English language is a woman employed to suckle and/or generally care for a younger child. The former being known as a wet nurse and the latter being known as a dry nurse.[1] In the 15th century, this developed into the idea of looking after or advising another, not necessarily meaning a woman looking after a child.[1] Nursing has continued to develop in this latter sense, although the idea of nourishing in the broadest sense refers in modern nursing to promoting quality of life.***
>
> Has the student plagiarized?
>
> Why or why not?

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9.6: How to Cite Your Sources- Avoiding Plagiarism

Citations and References

After reading about academic integrity, you may feel nervous about unintentionally committing plagiarism. However, you can avoid plagiarism by giving credit where credit is due, by using citations and references. If you use an idea from a source, you must cite it.

What is a citation or reference? The terms are often used interchangeably; however, a **citation** is often included in the text of your writing (often referred to as an in-text citation). A **reference** tells your reader what sources you used in your writing. In APA, you would collect your references on a page called References. Other citation styles may call this a "works cited" page or a "bibliography." This generally includes pieces of information such as the title, author, and year of publication. References and citations are highly formatted, listing each piece of information in a specific order. The formatting used for citations and references varies depending on what field you are studying. For example, Nursing, History, and English all use different methods or style books.

APA

The American Psychological Association (APA) shares its guidelines for citations in its APA Publication Manual. APA is the citation format nursing students are required to use. For more information, visit the APA Style Blog.

APA, like other styles, has a specific anatomy to the way that citations and references should look. The current style guide, as of 2024, is the 7th edition. All citation styles are updated regularly and so the style may change. In-text citations will always include the author's name, the date of the publication and a page number, when available. If there is no author, you may use the title of the article or book instead. Be aware that the author/creator may not be a specific person. For example, a government website often doesn't have an author's name so you would use the governmental department.

References use a specific format as well. In APA style, the author's first and middle names are never used. Only initials are used. If there is more than one author, use an ampersand (that's the "and" symbol) between authors. If there are 3 names use commas between the first two names and then use an ampersand. Unlike other citation styles, you use *all* the authors in the reference, at least until you get to 20 authors. While references get alphabetized, it is important not the change the order of the authors inside the reference itself. It's important to note also, that the only words capitalized in a title are the first word in the title, the first word after a colon, and proper nouns.

A sample reference for a book looks like the following.

> Author last name, first initial. second initial. (year). *Title of book.* Publisher.
>
> DiGregorio, S. (2023). *Taking care: The story of nursing and it's power to change our world.* Harper.

A sample reference for a journal article looks like this:

> Author last name, first initial, second initial (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, *volume number*(issue number), pages. DOI [doi.org]
>
> Bijjaly, S. T., & Saunders, L. (2021). Soft skills teaching by top-ranked U.S. Nursing faculty. *Journal of Nursing Education*, *60*(8), 437-443. http://
>
> dx.doi.org.bakersfieldcollege.idm.oclc.org/10.3928/01484834-20210722-04

A sample webpage looks like this:

> Author last name, first initial, second initial (or group name). (year, month, day). *Title of page.* Website name. URL
>
> Jillings, B. (2023, October 3). *Nursing smart goals: How to set these goals.* AMN Healthcare. AMNhealthcare.com [www.amnhealthcare.com]
>
> how-to-set-smart-goals-for-nursing/

Do you see how all of the references above are similar? Besides giving credit to the authors of the sources you use in your papers, references also give your reader enough information to find your sources if they are interested.

APA Help

- For information on using APA, you can visit the following pages. If you don't have easy access to the most current APA Style Manual, you may find it useful to bookmark the information below for easy reference:
  - APA Style: A Guide for BC Students
  - Purdue Owl: APA Formatting and Style Guide (7th Edition)

Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) offers access to a **FREE Online Writing Lab(opens in new window) and is a commonly used resource for writing assistance 24/7**

Activity: A Closer look at APA 'sentence case'

A Closer Look at APA 'Sentence Case'

The most common error encountered with APA format is related to sentence case for book and article titles. Confused as to what this means? You may be accustomed to capitalizing every word in the title of a paper, but in sentence case, only the first word is capitalized. There are a couple of exceptions, however, where you would still capitalize the first letter of the word:

- proper nouns
- first word of a subtitle
- first word following punctuation, such as a colon or em dash.

Read this post from the APA blog to learn more, dating back to 1929!

Don't forget – sentence case is one of the distinguishing factors between MLA, Chicago, and APA formats.

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9.7: Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Academic Integrity



Figure 9.7 Artificial Intelligence

The ethical use of Artificial Intelligence or AI in nursing education involves ensuring transparency, accountability, and equity in the implementation of AI technologies. It is essential to prioritize patient safety, privacy, and data security while promoting the development of AI tools that enhance learning outcomes for nursing students. Collaborating with stakeholders to establish clear guidelines and ethical frameworks can help navigate the complexities of integrating AI in nursing education responsibly.

There are many situations within the nursing profession where AI has proven to benefit the patient, promote safety and result in better patient outcomes. An early example of AI within the medical profession is a warning alert for a blood pressure or heart rate that is out of the expected range. Machine learning or AI can be found all throughout the practice of nursing, from scheduling programs, to patient care, electronic documentation and even within surgery as an a example.

The American Nurses Association published a position on use of AI in nursing:

Statement of ANA Position

> Nursing values and ethics, described in the Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements, place caring and compassion as central elements in the nurse-patient relationship. ANA believes the appropriate use of AI in nursing practice supports and enhances the core values and ethical obligations of the profession. AI that appears to impede or diminish these core values and obligations must be avoided or incorporated only in such way that these values and obligations are protected. Nurses must ensure that advanced technologies do not compromise the nature of human interactions and relationships central to the nursing profession. It is crucial that nurses anticipate and evaluate the impact of AI on health care through a proactive approach that emphasizes agency, caring, and influence over how technology is developed and applied (Archibald & Barnard, 2018). Nurses must be informed about AI so they can provide appropriate education to patients and families to dispel myths and alleviate fears and thereby support the use of AI for optimal health outcomes

AI and the Student Research Assignment

In the evolving landscape of nursing education, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has become increasingly prevalent, offering novel approaches to completing assignments and conducting research. Understanding the appropriate use of AI tools is crucial to maintain academic integrity and ethical standards in academic pursuits. When utilizing AI, students must be aware of the benefits, pitfalls, and ethical considerations of incorporating AI in nursing school assignments and research endeavors. AI technologies offer numerous advantages in nursing research, including enhanced data analysis, rapid literature reviews, and automated citation management. AI tools can streamline research processes, facilitate evidence-based practice, and contribute to

more efficient and accurate research outcomes. By leveraging AI for data processing and analysis, nursing students can gain valuable insights and enhance the quality of their research projects. Despite its benefits, the use of AI in nursing research presents challenges that must be addressed. Common pitfalls include the potential for bias in AI algorithms, limitations in contextual understanding, and risks related to data privacy and security. You must exercise caution when utilizing AI tools to ensure the accuracy, relevance, and ethical integrity of the research findings. You will need to check the references used in your AI search and ensure that the research and data presented in an AI search is accurate and in context. While it is tempting to use AI as a substitute for good research, you need to remember that AI is just another tool in your toolbox for research. You will need to use the thinking skills we learned about earlier in this chapter.

Maintaining academic integrity when using AI for assignments is essential for upholding ethical standards in nursing education. It is crucial for students to understand the responsible and ethical use of AI tools, which includes proper citation practices, critical thinking, and independent analysis. Using AI as a supporting tool rather than a replacement for critical thought and originality fosters academic rigor and intellectual growth. Intellectual growth, as the ultimate goal of research, should not be overshadowed by the process of achieving that growth.

Academic integrity encompasses a set of ethical principles and values that guide honest, responsible, and ethical behavior in academic settings. It involves upholding honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and respect for intellectual property while engaging in educational activities such as studying, research, writing papers, and taking exams. Academic integrity is essential in maintaining the credibility and reliability of academic work, promoting a culture of learning, and fostering intellectual growth and development. AI can be used effectively while maintaining academic integrity. Students must be aware to cite sources, give credit to the original author, demonstrate integrity in writing exams, adhering to ethical research practices ensuring originality in submitted work. Colleges and universities are beginning to allow the use of AI but it's use falls under academic integrity. Just because AI is not a person doesn't mean that you don't have to cite your source!

Activity: AI and Health Careers Education

AI and Health Careers Education

Critical thinking in nursing is the ability to observe, process, and analyze information to draw an evidence-supported conclusion. Critical thinking in nursing involves observation, critical analysis, inference, communication, problem-solving, decision-making, and prioritization. This process enables nurses to support favorable patient outcomes. How do you think the use of AI for the learning process will affect critical thinking in nursing?

Read this post(opens in new window) from the Xavier University on the importance of Critical Thinking in Nursing.

A recent post on LinkedIn comments on the relationship between AI and Critical thinking:

Studies also suggest that excessive dependence on AI can result in **cognitive complacency(opens in new window)**, reducing our inclination to question information and think independently. A recent article, The Effectives of Over-reliance on AI Dialogue Systems on Students' Cognitive Abilities: A Systematic Review, suggests that the over-reliance of students on AI reduces cognitive abilities including critical thinking, analytical thinking and decision-making.

**Portions of this page were formulated using AI and googles "co-pilot" feature as a template and starting point for content

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9.8: What are Research Studies?

Question to consider:

- What are the steps to a good research study?

What Are the Steps to a Good Research Study?

Research is a part of life. In fact, you conduct research daily. You look things up whenever you want a hotel or a good restaurant in a new city, or a recipe for cookies you'd like to make for a party. Sometimes you use Google for answers, and other times you ask people to help you answer your question. At times you might need to visit specific websites to find good information on the kind of used car you should buy or tickets to a sporting event or concert you hope to attend. All of this is part of research at its most basic level—asking a question and then answering it. Research can be defined as an activity that produces new knowledge. However, it is not timeless. Questions change, and so do answers. New questions bring new light to bear on any topic or issue. For example, consider the way we have controlled the use of pesticides. Over time, we moved from acceptance to shock and now horror at some of the side effects. It is new information on pesticides that has influenced our change in thinking. And the reason we know this information is that someone did the research and published it.

We often accept ideas as fact. For instance, how do we come to believe such things as "Three out of four dentists recommend . . . " or "McDonald's french fries are preferred three to one over . . ."? Or that heroin is addictive, or that putting infants in car seats prevents fatal injuries, or that drinking while pregnant can be harmful? It is important to know that these statements are the result of questions that led to serious research. Understanding the methods used to do research will help us understand how we come to know what we know. In cases such as these, someone was interested in knowing the answer to a particular question, planned a research study, and then published the findings. When people do this kind of research, their purpose is not only to find an answer but also to communicate what they found to the rest of us. They are communicating new knowledge.

Research is exploration and the search for possible answers to questions. Most students think research is about finding answers, but it is more about the questions we ask that lead us to the answers. Good research starts with good questions. Researchers ask themselves a question, create a possible answer in the form of a hypothesis, and then begin a process of gathering information with a methodology. If we understand how important questions are to doing research, we are then better able to determine the credibility and validity of the information sources we use. When evaluating sources, we can ask: Why should I believe this author? What do they know that makes them someone I should pay attention to? And when deciding on credibility, we can ask: What did the author do to convince me their answer is the correct one? Did the evidence really match the question the author was asking? Thus, information literacy is the ability to evaluate sources on the basis of what questions were asked, determine if those are the best questions to ask, assess whether the answers offered really answer the questions, and decide if the author is prepared to answer those questions well. And when we make critical thinking and information literacy part of our every day lives, we won't find ourselves taking information at face value. Like muscles, the more yo use your critical thinking skills, the stronger they become.

So let's start the process of doing research. The activity below will help you begin the process. After this, you will be introduced to the simple steps you need to take to do the research and then communicate your findings appropriately.

ACTIVITY

Pick a topic you might like to research or have already been assigned to research for a class. Then take a close look at the list of knowledge products below, and rank them in order of which ones you would most likely use for a research paper. After ranking them, explain why you put them in that order.

- **Books:** histories, pictures, topic overviews
- **Journals:** research studies, expert opinions, analyses, lists of other information sources
- **Magazines:** basic and recent information, pictures, reviews
- **Newspapers:** very recent information, place-specific information, reviews
- **Films, videos, television, music:** pictures, speeches, sound
- **Internet sources:** current or historical information from a variety of sources or individuals, data or commentary compiled by individuals or specific organizations or companies, graphics, sound, music, animation, video, pictures
- **Conversations, interviews:** opinions, direct experiences, personal viewpoints, attitudes, histories
- **Government publications:** reports, studies, statistics, laws, regulations
- **Documents:** reports, laws, statistics, facts

- **Diaries:** personal stories, histories, opinions, reflections

These can also categorized by types of knowledge products. For your research, you have to choose wisely among these, too. There are *scholarly* knowledge products, which are mostly written for scholars in a particular field. The author is identified, and credentials are available. Sources are documented, and technical language is often used. Secondly, some knowledge products might be considered *professional*. These are written for professionals in a field, the author is most often identified, sources are not always documented, and the language may or may not be technical. Finally, there are *popular* knowledge products, which communicate a broad range of information. The author is often not identified, sources are often not documented, and language is not technical. Because they are commercial products packaged for wide sales, they often use color and have numerous ads. Any of these source types may be important to your project. Review the sections on information literacy, thinking and bias if you are unsure about how to evaluate any of these.

When you are faced with a research assignment, it is important for you to be able to create successful search strategies. You need to find sources for specific purposes and audiences and be able to critically evaluate these sources. When doing research, you also have to incorporate the information you find for specific purposes, acknowledge the sources, and provide citations. To make this easier to understand, think of scholarly writing as a simple story told with a particular set of conventions (rules). What are these conventions? They are: a research question, a hypothesis, a methodology, a review of the literature, an interpretation of your work, and an analysis of the significance of what you've found.

Research Question

First of all, you need a topic. This is often the most difficult part of the whole process. So begin by thinking of something that is really interesting to you. Let's take music for an example. You need to ask some questions about music to start the process. Some examples of questions are:

- What does music mean?
- What is the function of music?
- What is the value of music?
- What is the significance of music?
- How is music made?
- What causes music to happen?

The easiest way to come up with questions regarding whatever topic you choose is to start with basic questioning words: *who*, *what*, *why*, *when*, *where*, *how*, *might*, *could*, *can*, *should*, *will*, *must*, *did*, and any other terms you can think of. You can ask better questions, and this will help you narrow down your hypothesis. For instance, *why* does music change over time? *Who* will play this music? *How* did this music come about? *Why should* we listen to this music?

ACTIVITY

Pick a topic and try to describe it:

1. Name your topic: *I am studying* _____
2. Suggest a question: *Because I want to find out who/how/why/whether/when/what* _____
3. State a rationale for the question: *In order to understand who/what/where/how/why/whether*_____

Going through this exercise every time you are tasked with writing a research paper will help you clarify what you want to accomplish and why.

Hypothesis

Scholars use information to answer one or more questions inspired by a topic of interest. Usually, a scholarly question identifies a problem and a solution. Such questions are usually written in the form of a hypothesis, which is a statement about the relationship between two things that identifies both a problem and an answer or solution. An example of a hypothesis would be: Different genres of music have an effect on the mood of the people listening to them. The questions asked to get to this hypothesis might be: Does music have an effect on mood? Do people listen to music to make them feel better? What kind of music is used as a way to energize the listener? Is there one type of music that is better than others for calming someone down?

Your hypothesis must reflect what is known about a research topic in such a way that your research project will add new knowledge and insight to what is already known. In order to arrive at a hypothesis that achieves this goal, you must learn as much

as possible about your topic so you can narrow down your hypotheses to what you don't know. Then your research project will produce new knowledge. *Your hypothesis is about what you don't know*. However, you might find that you can't prove your hypothesis. You might find evidence that contradicts it, and you will have to reflect on why your hypothesis might have been wrong.

ACTIVITY

Find two newspaper articles to analyze. Read through them and answer the following:

1. What questions are being answered in the articles?
2. What questions do you think need to be answered?
3. What was the hypothesis that the writer of these articles was working from?

It is important to be able to find the hypothesis that a writer has constructed to tell you a story. You have to make sure you understand what they are trying to "prove" and what questions they asked in order to do so.

Methodology

Education is about discovery. This means that you need to learn how to question, evaluate, and determine the worth, credibility, and relevance of what you, as a student, find. Thus, when doing research, you need that hypothesis to begin the rest of your research.

The next step is to come up with key words or concepts that describe your topic. Start by preparing an outline for yourself. List the key words (for instance, on the topic of music, some key words might be *music*, *instruments*, *genres*, *musicians*, and so on). Then create a list of narrower terms, which are more specific things that you want to know about your topic, such as *time frames*, *geography*, *population*, and *age groups*. Finally, you can list broader terms that are the larger subjects that include your key words. For music these could be *cultural expression*, *jazz*, *hip-hop*, *singers*, and so forth. Your methodology will be a compilation of the sources you decide to review. It is an orderly approach to problem solving and gathering useful data, using such sources and strategies as interviews, public documents, surveys, experiments, the Internet, and many more.

The kind of methodology you decide to use depends on the type of research you will be conducting. You could do *exploratory research*, which basically answers the question "Does something exist?" This "something" could be an event, a thing, or an idea, such as a concert or music designed for relaxation. Or perhaps you want to do *descriptive research*, which is the kind of study that defines something by describing its characteristics, behaviors, or actions. For instance, you could describe a genre of music, how it was created, and what instruments are usually used to compose this type of music. A third type of research you may want to do is called *prediction research*, which involves identifying relationships that make it possible for us to speculate about one thing by knowing about something else. Music has taken many turns over time, and you might want to suggest that the next phase of music might all be electronically produced. And finally, you could choose to do *explanatory research*. This type of research examines cause-and-effect relationships. For example, there is music created to tell a particular story in a specific manner. This might be true of rap music. To study this, you would use explanatory research to describe this phenomenon.

Review of the Literature

One other piece of the research puzzle is a review of the literature. The literature in a particular field is its *discourse*, which is actually a conversation over time about a topic. When you do your literature review, you are inserting yourself in the middle of such a conversation and getting information only from that particular time and perspective. For instance, if you want to study the effects of music on children, you will find a wide variety of sources that will give you information about the topic. You will discover that many people have been interested in the issue and have done studies trying to find out the answer. These studies have been done over many years, and the perspectives involved have changed accordingly. The discourse continues over time, and you can insert information into the conversation by conducting your own research.

Thus, a review of the literature finds, evaluates, and integrates past research. It is a critical synthesis of research literature that:

- shows how previous studies relate to one another.
- shows similarities and differences between studies.
- discriminates between relevant and irrelevant information.
- indicates weaknesses in previous work.

The purpose of the literature review is to synthesize many specific events and details into a comprehensive whole. Synthesis results from weaving together many smaller generalizations and interpretations into a coherent main theme. You will find that a literature

review is always required of an assigned research paper for a course. The purpose is to enable you to critically analyze a segment of an already published body of knowledge. A comprehensive literature review encompasses the following elements:

- Start the introduction by describing the problem or issue you are addressing, then focus on your research hypotheses or questions.
- Explicitly state the significance of the topic in the introduction.
- Present the review as an essay, not an annotated list.
- Emphasize the findings of previous research you have found.
- Point out the trends and themes in the literature.
- Point out the gaps in the literature.
- Express opinions about the quality and importance of the research you have found.
- Use the review to suggest that there is a need for more study.

Avoiding Plagiarism

You certainly have heard about plagiarism and how important it is not to let yourself participate in it. It is so easy to read through many other people's work and grab a sentence here and there to put into your own paper. As you're struggling to come up with ideas, you may also find yourself borrowing from others. Neither of these is a good idea.

Plagiarism often starts with the note-taking stage of the research process. Thus, when taking notes, be sure to distinguish between paraphrases and direct quotations. When you are copying an exact quotation, be extremely precise. Note all the information you will need for the citation. It is a good idea to make a system for yourself, perhaps color coding, when doing your research. Make direct quotations one color and your own paraphrasing of ideas another color. Both quotations and paraphrases need to be cited with sources, both within the paper and at the end.

Learning how to use the ideas of others to add weight to your own ideas involves effort and a commitment to academic honesty. It is not always clear exactly how or when to use sources, and sometimes you might need advice or guidance. Since your professors are most familiar with the expectations of their disciplines, they are the best people to ask. Your college likely offers support in the writing lab or online. If you need more guidance, the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) has a section on safe practices for researching and drafting, where you can find excellent advice on identifying plagiarism and preventing yourself from plagiarizing.

While the process of writing authentically and avoiding plagiarism must be focused from the start, you can avoid a world of trouble by double-checking your near-final work with a source identification site or plagiarism detector. Doing so can help you avoid any unintentional reuse of others' work and may simply identify a source you forgot to cite. Chegg Writing allows you to upload or paste in your paper for a detailed source evaluation. Note that this is only a check step; you must follow best practices to ensure that you don't plagiarize.

Validity and Credibility

Before you move on to interpreting your data and addressing the significance of what you found, you need to understand the concepts of validity and credibility. There are many ways you can check the validity of a piece of information. Can you find contradictory or confirmatory data? Can you find evidence that disputes what you are reading? If so, use this information. It is always useful to mention opposing ideas. Ultimately, doing so might strengthen your own ideas. Is the topic within the expertise of the person offering the information? Was the method chosen to convey this information the best method to use? The credibility of the author is another important aspect of checking your sources. In other words, evaluate the authors. Are they experts on the topic? Do they have credentials to write on this particular topic? Has this author written anything else on this topic?

Evidence is the way we show that we are using the experiences, values, research, and perspectives of others. To be information literate is to apply the concepts of subjective and objective evidence to our selection, use, and evaluation of information. When we read a website or view a television program, can we recognize that a particular set of values and perspectives is being used? Are we able to identify when evidence is being used? Can we determine that the evidence being used shows a relevant connection between values, perspectives, and conclusions? Are enough different values and perspectives being presented that the conclusions can be considered objective? It is important to learn how to determine the validity and credibility of sources.

The Internet presents its own challenges when it comes to discovering valid and credible information. When looking at a website, you should be able to answer the following questions: Who is responsible for the site (i.e., who is the author)? What can you find out about the responsible party? Where does the site's information come from (e.g., opinions, facts, documents, quotes, excerpts)? What are the key concepts, issues, and "facts" on the site? And finally, can the key elements of the site be verified by another site

or source? In other words, if you want to find some information online, you shouldn't just Google the topic and then depend on the first website that pops up.

For certain topics and types of information, you may need to dig deeper. Take into account the funding behind a website. Look up the author, and see if they have written anything else and if there are any obvious biases present in that writing. As an example, if you find a website about vaccinations and autism, and this website was put up by a parent group that opposes vaccinations, you have found information that has biases built in from the start. The point of view presented is most likely one-sided, and thus you need to look for more balanced sources to learn if there is in fact some relationship between childhood vaccinations and the onset of autism. This is just an example; you can find sources ranging from reasonably trustworthy to totally untrustworthy on any topic.

Interpretation

Interpretation is the task of drawing inferences from the facts that you collect in your research. It is a search for the broader meaning of your research findings. This is where you try to make sense of what you discovered. In this part of your research, you should discuss the most important knowledge you gained about your topic from your sources. Here is where you go back to your hypothesis and research questions to discuss your findings and whether or not your hypothesis is correct.

Significance

Remember that earlier it was stated, "Life is a series of problems needing solutions." Consequently, an increased amount of inquiry leads to progress as we continue to expand our knowledge base on a variety of topics. Whatever you find in your research study has significance, as it adds to our knowledge in a particular area. In this section of your writing, it is important to describe the process by which you located your information and then provide advice to other researchers on how to effectively and efficiently find information on this topic. This allows for the continuation of inquiry and the development of more data and knowledge. This is where you communicate to others the new knowledge you discover in your research. Remember, you are now a scholar!

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9.9: Summary

Summary: Utilizing Library Resources for Academic Success

Chapter Takeaways

Information Literacy Understanding how to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information is crucial for academic success. Information literacy involves recognizing when information is needed and having the ability to find, evaluate, and use that information effectively. This skill set is essential for conducting research and completing assignments accurately.

Library Resources College libraries offer a wealth of resources beyond just books. These include journals, electronic books, multimedia resources, and access to various databases. Librarians are valuable allies in navigating these resources and can provide guidance on finding the materials you need for your coursework and research.

Databases Databases are searchable collections of information, often containing peer-reviewed journal articles, which are essential for academic research. Learning how to use databases effectively will save you time and ensure you are accessing high-quality, reliable sources. Familiarize yourself with databases relevant to your field of study and utilize the library's online guides and tutorials.

Academic Integrity Maintaining academic integrity is fundamental in your academic journey. This means avoiding plagiarism, understanding the importance of original work, and giving proper credit to the sources you use. It’s essential to understand your institution’s policies on academic honesty and the consequences of violating them.

Citing Sources Proper citation is a cornerstone of academic integrity. Knowing how to cite sources correctly in various formats (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) helps you avoid plagiarism and lends credibility to your work. Most libraries offer guides and tools to help with citing sources accurately.

Artificial Intelligence The role of artificial intelligence (AI) in research is growing. AI can help in data analysis, finding patterns in research data, and even in generating new hypotheses. However, it's important to understand the ethical implications of using AI in research, ensuring transparency and fairness in its application.

Research Studies Conducting and understanding research studies is a critical skill. Whether you are reading studies or conducting your own, it is important to understand research methodologies, data analysis, and how to critically evaluate the findings. Libraries often provide resources and workshops on how to conduct effective research.

In summary, mastering the use of library resources and understanding the principles of information literacy, academic integrity, and the proper use of artificial intelligence are essential for college success. Utilizing these tools effectively will enhance your academic performance and prepare you for future scholarly endeavors.

Career Connection

Using the library as a nursing student is an essential part of developing strong information literacy skills, which are crucial for academic and professional success. Libraries offer access to a wide range of resources, including textbooks, journals, and databases that provide reliable and up-to-date information. Understanding how to navigate these resources, especially databases like CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature), Gale Health and Wellness, and Medline. is fundamental. These databases are specifically tailored for nursing and healthcare disciplines, offering peer-reviewed articles, clinical studies, and evidence-based practice guidelines. By mastering these tools, nursing students can efficiently find relevant research, supporting their coursework and clinical practice with the best available evidence.

Academic integrity is another vital aspect of using the library effectively. Nursing students must learn to properly cite sources and avoid plagiarism, ensuring their work maintains ethical standards. The library provides guidance on these practices, often through workshops or tutorials. Additionally, engaging with research studies in medicine helps students stay current with advancements in the field, fostering a deeper understanding of complex medical issues and improving patient care. By critically appraising and synthesizing research findings, nursing students can contribute to evidence-based practice and continuous improvement in healthcare outcomes. Utilizing the library not only enhances academic performance but also prepares students for the rigorous demands of the nursing profession.

Rethinking

After this chapter, how comfortable are you with:

- Understanding Information Literacy and why it matters?
- Determining how and when to use library resources?
- Learning to craft a research question using keywords and search strategies?
- Conduct appropriate research?
- Building citations and understand how not to plagiarize your sources?
- Using Artifical Intelligence ethically and appropriately?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Communicating

10.1: Prelude to Communicating
10.2: An Overview of Communication
10.3: Purpose of Communication
10.4: Communication and Technology
10.5: The Context of Communication
10.6: Barriers to Effective Communication
10.7: Summary

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10.1: Prelude to Communicating

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the fundamental principles of communication and how they apply to various contexts.
2. Identify the purpose of communication in different settings and scenarios.
3. Analyze the impact of technology on communication processes and outcomes.
4. Evaluate the role of context in shaping communication effectiveness.
5. Recognize and address barriers to effective communication to enhance interaction and understanding.



Figure 10.1: With so many individuals, subgroups, sections, soloists, sounds, variables, and technologies, an orchestra would be chaotic without someone directing: the conductor. Communication has a similar range of inputs and influences, and can become just as chaotic without direction. You need to be your own conductor and establish control in order to communicate effectively and productively. (Credit: Rob Swyston / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Student Survey

How do you communicate? Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning "least like me" and 4 meaning "most like me." These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As we are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed.

1. I think my mobile device is effective and appropriate for most communication.
2. I have a good sense of how to communicate in different environments/situations.
3. I listen more than I talk.
4. I have a lot of experience with research projects and essays.

You can also take the Chapter 10 Survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

"My preferred communication methods are face-to-face and email. But no matter the method, clear goals are essential. I have had in-person meetings go terribly wrong and others be wildly successful. The difference: preparation! Have an agenda, possibly sending questions ahead of the meeting so that others have time to think about them or find answers. If you go to a meeting prepared like it is a court case, the victories will come far more than the failures. Have evidence to support your needs and positions.

> "Be confident, but also be ready to learn. Communication is speaking *and* listening. Before you enter a conversation, consider the questions you need to ask to reach your goal. Asking what you need to know may open doors to understanding the issue better and finding the best avenue to finding solutions.
>
> "I like emailing because it has the advantage to retain the communication, while allowing time to ponder and proofread a clear and concise response. It is essential to watch the tone of the email (never aggressive, always assertive). Use complete sentences, college-level grammar, a subject heading, and the correct greeting (Dr., Professor, Ms., Mr., Full Name) and closing salutations. Save important emails for your records to remember what was said or decided."
>
> **— Barbara Gooch**, Volunteer State Community College

About This Chapter

> **"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."**
>
> — *William H. Whyte*[1]

Communication has always been a complex life skill for everyone. How we pass information to others and how we understand what is being conveyed to us can often be complicated. And today, with the ever-increasing number of communication tools at our fingertips, our need to understand how, when, and what we communicate is even more crucial. Well-honed communication skills can improve all aspects of your life. This is true regarding relationships with friends, significant others, family, acquaintances, people with whom you work, colleagues in your classes, and professors. In other words, everyone! Communication is probably the most important skill you can develop in your life. When sitting in a lecture style class, or even interacting with an asynchronous online class, the materials delivered by your professor is a form of one-way communication. Have you thought about other ways communication plays a role in your day to day life as a college student?

By the time you complete this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Articulate the variables to communication.
- Define the forms and purpose of communication.
- Understand how technology has changed communication.
- Discuss various contexts of communication.
- Describe barriers to effective communication.

Footnotes

- 1 "Is Anybody Listening?" William H. Whyte and the editors of Fortune Magazine. Simon And Schuster. 1952. (Note: Often misattributed.)

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10.2: An Overview of Communication

Questions to consider:

- Do I think about the ways in which I communicate?
- Do I consider the variables present in every communication method and situation?

> **"We take communication for granted because we do it so frequently, but it's actually a complex process."**
>
> — *Joseph Sommerville*[2]

To begin with, let's look at the following two definitions of communication:

- *A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.*[3]
- *Communication is giving, receiving or exchanging ideas, information, signals or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, to seek information, to give information or to express emotions.*[4]

These definitions offer an overview of the concept of communication. Within this chapter, however, you will be looking deeper into the "process" of communication and how infinitely complex it really is. To start with, let's take a look at both traditional and the newest forms of communication and see if you can determine rules for each.

ACTIVITY

In your opinion, what are the rules for different forms of communication? List the rules or guidelines related to each communication form listed in Table 10.1 below. An example of a rule for the telephone might be identifying yourself when you call, in case the person didn't recognize your number.

Table 10.1 Forms of communication and rules

activity

Form of Communication	Rules for This Form
Face-to-face	
Phone	
Printed letters	
Email	
Texting	
Instant messaging/group chat	
Social media	

Were you able to discern different rules for the various forms of communication? Do you find yourself following these rules when texting or sending an email or talking to someone face-to-face? These questions are something to consider as we move through this chapter.

Variables of Communication

Technology has created new rules for communication because of the different structures of communication, everything from emoji protocols, to truncated words and spelling, to etiquette and how we form communication networks. AAMOF it is important to understand communication. However, BTAIM, you might think it is a CWOT. FWIW this chapter will help you navigate the myriad ways of communicating. SLAP? *(Meaning of acronyms should be included at bottom of page)* (AAMOF = as a matter of fact, BTAIM = be that as it may, CWOT = complete waste of time, FWIW = for what it's worth, SLAP = sounds like a plan)



Figure 10.2

Although using the acronyms (symbols of communication) above allow us to do more in less space and time, we need to be careful about how we pass information to others as well as think more clearly about what is being communicated to us. Certainly, with the scope of the Internet we are seeing briefer messages, a wider reach, and greater immediacy.

You are aware that the transfer of information can be done vocally—voice, phone, face-to-face, over radio or television. It can come to us in a written format such as correspondence or printed or digital media. We obtain information visually in logos, pictures, maps, menus, and street signs. And, of course, we find ourselves learning things nonverbally by observing body language, tone of voice, gestures, and so forth.

Communication means that there is at least one sender and one recipient, and in between, there is the message. The kind of communication tool you choose to use also has an effect on the message being conveyed. Will you choose a pencil? Pen? Phone? Email? Text? Picture? Or perhaps a face-to-face opportunity? Whatever you choose as your method of communicating with one person or a group of people guides how effectively you send your message. Additionally, there are always emotions behind a message. You could just be sharing a picture of yourself on the beach or sending out a call for help on a class assignment, or perhaps feeling sad because a friend is sick. Each of these would affect how you might communicate.

Have you ever sent a message to someone too quickly? For example, you heard that a friend just broke up with her boyfriend and is terribly heartbroken. You immediately think you should send some kind of “hope you are ok” comment and decide to use Facebook to do so. Later you find out that she didn’t want people to know about it at all and you kind of jumped the gun on your condolences. How did you feel? Could you have gone about it in any other way? Perhaps waited until she told you about it herself? A private email or phone call? This is one of those situations where you have to step back for a moment and clarify for yourself that what you are about to send will be received the way you intended. Learning a little about the concept of emotional intelligence (EQ) will also be helpful to your decision about how to communicate in various situations. More on that concept will be discussed in the sections on listening and miscommunication.

Additionally, there are other significant variables that play an important role in communicating. These range from ethnicity to culture to age to gender and are meaningful to what one is trying to “say” to someone else. Unfortunately, sometimes the message is lost or misconstrued because neither the sender nor the receiver has taken into account these important aspects of successful communication. You will learn more about this later in the chapter.

Context of Communication

It is also essential to understand the context of your communication. In other words, to whom are you talking? Why are you talking to this person or people? What, exactly, do you hope to achieve out of the communication you initiate? An effective communicator understands the audience to whom they are trying to send a message. This means that you use the correct venue—face-to-face conversation, phone, email, text, written letter, picture, or whatever else makes the most sense in a particular situation. This way your message can reach your audience (professor, boss, colleague, friend, parent, teammate) in a productive way, and hopefully the message you intend to convey is received accordingly.

An example of context might be the following: you need to ask your professor about a grade you received on an assignment because you think the grade was too low for the work you did. Would it be appropriate for you to send a text asking why you received the grade? Might it be better to give your professor a call and hope she is available to talk with you? Or do you think it could be more useful and productive if you found out the professor's office hours and went in to discuss your concerns in person? These are decisions you have to make carefully so you can make the most of what you are trying to communicate.

Listening

Another aspect of communication is the art of listening. Remember, communication is a two-way street. It is not enough to just send out a message. One has to listen carefully to the response, and not only listen, but understand that the audience receiving your message might have a very different take on the topic. As noted earlier, this could be due to gender, age, culture, and so forth. All of these have an effect on how well the communication is transmitted and received. Later in this chapter we will discuss the difference between just "hearing" the response and actually "listening" to the response. Optimal communication occurs when both parties actively listen. And finally, it comes down to this: communication is any act that involves a sender and at least one receiver, where a message is conveyed and hopefully the message is received correctly.

> ***"We all feel better when we feel listened to. And we feel even better when we feel understood. In order to be understood, we must be listened to. Often it is more important to us to feel heard than to actually get what we said we wanted. On the other hand, feeling ignored and misunderstood is literally painful whether we are six or sixty."***[5] *— Steve Hein*

Many variables get in the way of messages being received correctly. One of these is emotion—both yours and that of the person with whom you are trying to communicate. Sometimes you have to use emotional information to help you make a decision about how you are communicating. What this means is that you need to be able to understand your own feelings and those of others. There are five components (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) to emotional intelligence. Understanding how these components work to help you get in touch with your and others' emotional sides is an important part of listening.

Ultimately, communication is about information. The message you are sending may be as simple as one word (or even one letter), or as complex as an application for an internship. How you act on that information, how you expect others to act on it, and how it becomes knowledge are all part of the complexity of communication.

Footnotes

- 2 Sommerville, Joseph. *The Five Keys to Interpersonal Success*. 2004.
- 3 In Merriam-Webster online dictionary: merrian-webster.com [www.merriam-webster.com]
- 4 Definitions of Communication. Communication Theory.Org. eqi.com [www.communicationtheory.org]
- 5 Hein, Steve. "Listening." Eqi.org. communicationtheory.org [eqi.org]

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10.3: Purpose of Communication

Questions to consider:

- Does everything I say or write have a purpose?
- Do I expect a response or a result from my communication?
- Do I change how I communicate depending on what response I want or need?

> **"The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug."**
>
> — *Mark Twain*[6]

Does Everything I Say or Write Have a Purpose?

There are many reasons that communication takes place. Some of our communication might be simply an attempt at being cordial and friendly. For instance, we might like to say hello to a friend down the hall, give a shout-out on Twitter to a family member living in another state, say "excuse me" to someone we've just bumped into, smile at a baby in a stroller going by, post a picture of our birthday party on Facebook, and stop to pet a new puppy in the park. Or maybe we just need some information, such as asking an instructor for guidelines for a project, telling a store owner what we are looking for, or going up to a stranger for directions to the nearest bus stop. As you can see, almost everything we do on a daily basis has something to do with communication. Additionally, we can communicate the same information to a wide range of people, and how this is received can vary greatly.

Another important purpose of communication is to forge relationships, whether these are of short or long duration or for particular purposes. What kind of relationships do you hope to develop when using various forms of communication? Are you looking for a partner for a project, or perhaps a date for the football game, or just want to nurture the relationships you have with friends already? The impact of flawed communication on relationships can be long-lasting, so it is important to be thoughtful when posting your thoughts and ideas.

Do I Expect a Response or a Result From My Communication?

There are times we are just sending out messages or information and not expecting a response, except perhaps a "like." For instance, your friend posts a picture of her new dog on Instagram and you click on "like." Other times we try to communicate an idea or ask a question and we do want a response, such as "What time is the exam on Friday?" This response is possibly from one person or many. There are instances when you need information, and you will either ask someone, do some web searching, or make a phone call to get the information that you need. Depending on what your need is, you must consider what form of communication will work best and get you the most satisfactory results. Your purpose for communicating is to get some kind of reply.

What Do I Bring to My Communication With Others?

You probably haven't thought of this, but whether you actively communicate or not, you are still communicating. Your facial expressions, body language, what you are wearing, your hairstyle, body art, where you choose to sit or stand in a room, the people you associate with, eye contact or lack thereof, and any other mannerisms that you have are a form of communication. We all pick up signals from each other in these nonverbal ways. So even though you might be shy, or reserved, or not interested in any interaction at all, you are still communicating some information to others.

Footnotes

- 6 The Art of Authorship: Literary Reminiscences, Methods of Work, and Advice to Young Beginners, Compiled and edited by George Bainton. 1890. Section: Mark Twain

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10.4: Communication and Technology

Questions to Consider:

- Is technology vital to your ability to communicate well?
- Are there rules to follow when using communication technology?
- How do you take control of your online communication?

> **"Now we know that once computers connected us to each other, once we became tethered to the network, we really didn't need to keep computers busy. They keep us busy."**
>
> — *Sherry Turkle*[Z]

Is Technology Vital to Your Ability to Communicate Well?

Over a billion people use chat rooms, mailing lists, instant messengers, social network services, newsgroups, games, wikis, blogs, and more in order to share social relationships and organize collective action. Everything is connected: people, information, events, and places, all the more so with the advent of online social media. You live in a world where the traditional forms of education, conversations, relationships, and social activity in general have been transformed by the ubiquitous presence of technology. Digital media affects every student's life and that of their families, friends, and the wider community. Most of you have grown up while this transformation has taken place. The new technologies have created dramatic changes in the relationship between people and information. Though you will come across people who don't want to believe that these new technologies are here to stay, we, as humans, will never be able to separate ourselves from our own inventions, and trying to do so is perhaps only a step backward in an evolutionary sense. Therefore it is important that we learn to adapt our behavior to include the new inventions. Technology, after all, is an extension of the human mind, and the new technologies are only tools we have created over years of fashioning new ways to do things.

We continue to move from simple to complex tools. Advancements of technology go hand in hand with changes in communication options. The telegraph was replaced with landlines, those went out of style as the cordless phone became available, and this phone eventually morphed to a cell phone. When the Internet became accessible by cell phone, cell phones became devices that revolutionized personal communication.

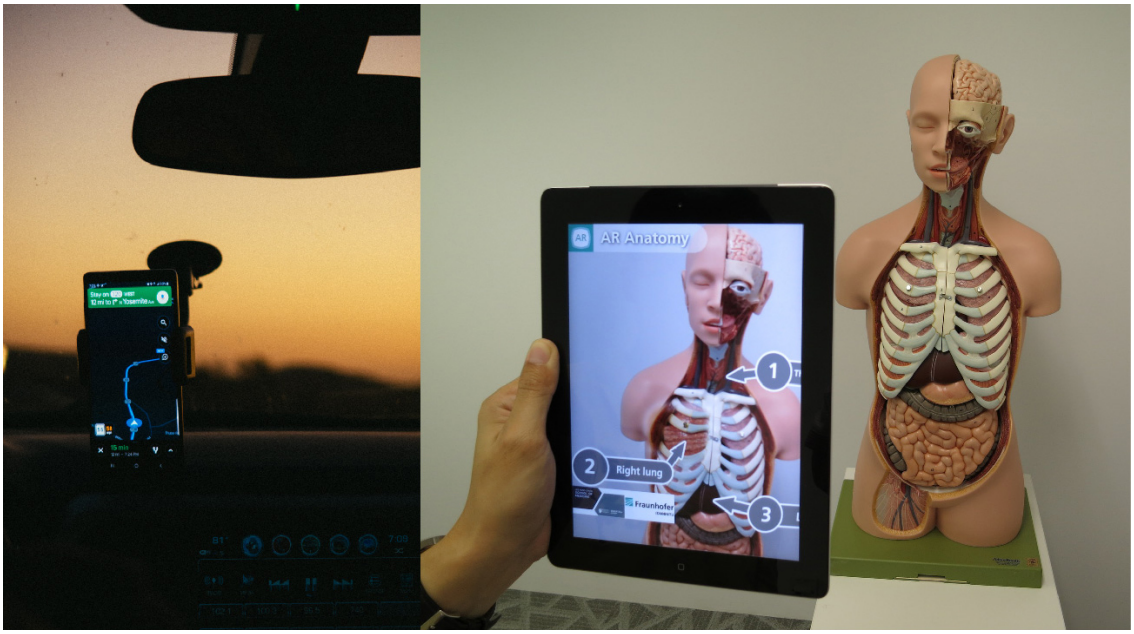


Figure 10.3: Just as mobile device roadmaps have replaced paper ones, augmented reality may replace our typical means interacting with the world. From learning about anatomy to cooking a meal to assembling a child's toy, we may reach a point in which we can't imagine living without AR. (Credit Zedinteractive / Pixabay)

The following activity is a good way for you to reflect on your own use of technology. It is always interesting to step back and actually see what platforms you use and how much time you spend using them.

ACTIVITY

Share your personal story about when you started using social media. Include what social media you use, how you use it, and how much time you spend doing so. At the end of this story, discuss what you might like to see in the future of social media. What other communication technologies do you wish were available to you, and why?

Are There Rules to Follow When Using Communication Technology?

Did you find anything significant about how you use social media? When you carefully looked at how much time you spent on the different platforms, were you surprised? It is probably a good thing to sometimes step back and take a look at how we use our communication tools, and even more importantly, we need to ask ourselves if we are using them to our advantage and not just to pass the time.

Netiquette

Just as it is important to know your responsibilities in using communication technologies, it is necessary for you to understand that there is a code of honor and etiquette to go along with them.

Here are a few pointers on how to go about being active on the Internet without offending or annoying others.

1. Don’t write emails, post to social media sites, or talk in chat rooms in ALL CAPS. CAPS can be interpreted as screaming or talking in a very loud voice.
2. Don’t make fun of others.
3. Apologize if someone was offended and did not “hear” what you were saying in the way you meant it.
4. When stating a strong opinion, it is not a bad idea to use the abbreviation of IMHO (in my humble opinion). It might keep people from reacting strongly right back at you.
5. Remember, no one can hear your tone of voice or see your facial expression, so use words carefully to get your message across.
6. Be respectful of your audience with the level of familiarity used.

College Netiquette

While these Netiquette guidelines are applicable in nearly every environment, communication in college may have additional or more stringent rules to consider. Always be particularly mindful of how you communicate in any official environments, such as online courses, course discussion boards, and even on social media specifically related to your college, such as a club or team page.

For example, if your political science class requires students to post in a discussion forum after each night’s reading, students may have the opportunity to argue about issues or politics. Vibrant discussion, and even argument, may be acceptable, but personal attacks or insults won’t advance the discussion and could result in more significant consequences. Just as you wouldn’t—and couldn't—become overly animated in an in-class argument, online arguments should remain civil. The goal is to make your points with evidence and reason, not emotion and assertiveness.

Finally, just as a note of caution, college codes of conduct regarding communication often apply to *any* interaction between members of the community, whether or not they occur on campus or in a campus online environment. Any inappropriate, offensive, or threatening comments or messages may have severe consequences.

Our communication in college conveys how we feel about others and how we’d like to interact with them. Unless you know for certain they don’t like it, you should use professional or semi-formal communication when interacting with college faculty and staff. For example, if you need to send a message explaining something or making a request, the recipient will likely respond more favorably to it if you address them properly and use thoughtful, complete sentences.

In a similar manner, you can make or break relationships with your classmates depending on how you communicate with them. Consider the following scenario:

Demetrius sends an email to several classmates about the details of a group assignment. He asks about availability and about which member of the group will take responsibility for which aspect of the project. He’s received four responses addressing availability, but no one volunteers for the responsibilities. Demetrius replies to all with an attempt at creating a division of responsibilities by typing different names next to each role. He uses ALL CAPS to make sure his classmates notice the suggestions. Lee responds

immediately. They don't like being forced into a specific role, and think Demetrius should have waited until the first group session instead of forcing his opinion on the group. Shirisha jumps in to mention that she's upset Demetrius chose to put her in a non-speaking role of recording secretary.

What mistake did Demetrius make? How might he have handled the situation more smoothly?

ACTIVITY

You most likely have considerable experience on a variety of social media platforms. Can you add three more suggestions for how to navigate these sites politely and with consideration for others?

Now, add three suggestions specifically related to considerate communication in online educational environments.

How Do You Control Your Online Communication Strategies?

> **"Whether digital media will be beneficial or destructive in the long run doesn't depend on the technologies, but on the literacy of those who use them."**
>
> *— Howard Rheingold*

What is important is that we have to decide what we are going to do with the new communication tools for our future. We need to understand when to log on and when to log off. These days you sometimes find yourself being bombarded with new technologies and social media platforms, and you don't know how you will keep up with them all. You have multiple sites sending you continuous notifications and find yourself scrambling to look at them and perhaps respond. Perhaps turning off those notifications will free up your mind a bit. Sitting at your desk in your dorm room and trying to do an assignment for a class can be difficult if your phone is blinking messages at you continuously.

It is probably important sometimes to take the focus away from the media itself and look at oneself. What is happening to our minds, our sense of self, and our ways of representing ourselves to others when we spend a significant portion of our time on various online sites? How do we mediate our relationships differently? What kinds of signals do we send, knowingly and unknowingly? Are we shaping the media we use, or is it shaping us? Sometimes we hide behind our on-screen identities as well as navigate social media sites in ways that make us communicate with people that are like ourselves. Do we use these new communication tools appropriately?

The following activity might help clarify how well you utilize your social media platforms.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Go outside your usual comfort zone and friend group. Find someone with whom you disagree, and think about how what they said had an effect on you. Did they use correct etiquette when saying what they said? If you respond, what would you do to make certain your response was heard correctly and was not offensive?

Ways to Take Control of Your Online Communication

Howard Rheingold, a technology guru who coined the term "virtual community" in 1993, has been thinking and writing about the changes that technology has been making over the years. He has come to the opinion that in order for us to deal with the new communication opportunities, we must learn about what he calls "mindful participation."[8] Rheingold doesn't suggest, as many others do, that these new technologies are bad for us. He offers ways to engage online that keep us in control of our actions and make us a bit more productive about our use of online platforms. He believes in social media literacy and suggests that learning the following five literacies will make our life on the Internet more productive, less stressful, and ultimately more enjoyable. If social media is our most often used form of communication, then the following five literacies should help us manage our time online and keep us in control of the tools we use for purposes of communication.

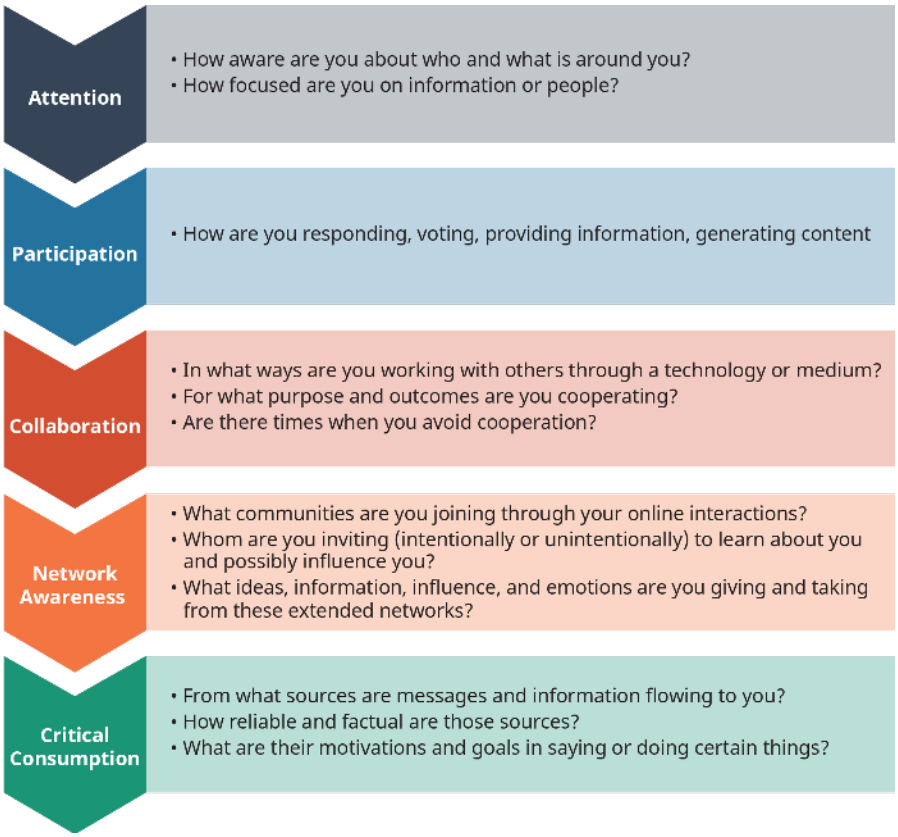


Figure 10.4: Howard Rheingold explores ways we can consider our use and consumption of media technologies, such as social media, in terms of five literacy areas. Asking ourselves questions will lead us to thoughtfully consider how an online environment may be changing us and our relationships. (Credit: Modification of work by Howard Rheingold.)

Attention

Attention is the first literacy and is the fundamental building block of how individuals think. It is sometimes difficult to focus our attention since our minds tend to wander in a random manner. It is therefore essential that you become more aware of how you are directing your attention. Consider being in a lecture hall and trying to focus on the professor and what she is saying. Is your full attention there? Are you also scrolling through some social media feed while listening to the lecture? When you are in your dorm room working on a class assignment, are you also watching your social media notifications, listening to music, talking to your roommate, and clicking on various ads on a website? On what is your attention most focused? Probably on everything and consequently on nothing. Learning how to pay attention to what is most important at the moment will help you fine-tune your skills.



Figure 10.5: Paying attention in class, in the face of many distractions, takes effort and awareness. The benefits, both for the class and for the long-term ability to retain your focus, will be extremely valuable. (Credit: Pixabay / Pexels)

Participation

And even though you might be really good at using online applications and connecting with friends, that does not necessarily mean that you always understand the implications of your participation or that you are actually participating.

Participation, the next literacy, is much broader as it recognizes the vast population of users that are connected. Participation is connecting with the tool, not people. It is a way of becoming an active citizen and not just a passive consumer. There are multiple ways to participate on a variety of social media platforms. In fact, you probably don't realize that clicking on a "like," making a short comment on a picture, or whatever else one does on a site is actually participating. Of course, the effect of your participation can vary, but it can also be very powerful. You participate when you post, fill out a survey, start your own blog, respond to others' blogs, or just watch a video on YouTube. All of these actions are a form of participation.

In college, participation with communication environments and other resources is often essential for success and for your grade. If you use learning management systems, online homework systems, polling or attendance software, or other educational media, you need to understand the levels and types of participation, as well as the implications of each. As with social media platforms, learning technology can be a powerful tool, and you'll likely engage with it throughout your academic and even your professional career.

Collaboration

The third literacy, **collaboration**, refers to your being able to work together using technology. Doing things together gives us more power than doing them alone. Think of all the times Twitter was used by multitudes of people to pass on information about major storms. When there was a bombing in Paris, people went to Twitter to let those people in the streets who'd been displaced know they had apartments and homes that they would open up to them. Of course, there are many collective intelligence projects, such as helping Coke come up with a new flavor, or GoFundMe sites to help people in need of money for health reasons. The collaborative efforts of people communicating around a big project are endless and a perfect way to use communication technologies. Tools allowing collaboration allow you to share resources and work as a team, and build on each other's ideas.

ACTIVITY

Think of a time when you collaborated with others to get something done. This could be organizing a party, planning transportation to an event, doing a school project, building a stage for a play, or any other activity that was done as a group. What forms of communication did you use to work as a team? How did the environment and the other people in the group influence tools and methods you used? Complete the table below to illustrate the challenges, opportunities, and communication approaches you might use (or have used) for each situation.

Table 10.2

	Challenges	Opportunities	Communication Methods and Tools
Group project for an on campus (traditional) course.			
Group project for an online-only course.			
Planning an event with your extended family.			
Planning an event with your friends/peers.			

Network Awareness

Network awareness is the fourth literacy. Technological networks now allow us to have a greater number of people we can contact. These networks multiply human capacity for social networking and allow connection in a matter of seconds. You can become a member of newsgroups, virtual communities, gossip sites, forums, and other organizations. Making use of these possibilities expands your ability to contribute to the vast stores of information on the Internet. At the same time, you should be conscious of the

people whom you're inviting to hear you and influence you. Have you ever been intrigued, angered, or persuaded by a friend of a friend (someone you don't know at all) who commented on a social media posting? If so, you are in a relationship with that stranger, and they are affecting you.



Figure 10.6: Do you follow influencers? What is their impact on you? (Credit: The Lazy Artist / Pexels)

Critical Consumption

The last literacy, critical consumption, helps us to discern what is true and what is not. We have to learn how to differentiate fact from fiction. Humans have a difficult time trusting people in everyday life; this also translates to the millions of people on the Internet using social media. Before believing what others have written, communicating with them, or using a tool, it is wise to do some detective work. Check the claims, the author's background, sources, and accuracy. Critical consumption is closely related to Informational Literacy.

Evolving Our Strategies to Match Our Evolving Technologies

Communication has changed because of the way we are using technology. Yes, we still write and talk, but where and how? There are myriad social media platforms that you can use for communication, from Snapchat to Twitter, each with its own set of rules and limitations. These platforms have completely changed many of the ways we transfer ideas and information, find romantic partners, keep in touch with friends and family, connect with our professors and classmates, make plans with teammates, look for employment, and so much more.

When using a device for communication, there are fewer nonverbal cues we can pick up on, only what the other person is posting or showing. In certain situations, such as talking on the phone, a person can't see hand gestures but can still hear a tone of voice. When typing, however, there is no tone of voice or hand gesture or body language. Sometimes typing may not convey the same message as saying what you're feeling.

Social media has made it easier to keep in contact with many people, but it also creates missed opportunities for new relationships since we are too often looking down at our phones instead of talking with the person standing next to us.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Technology has definitely had an effect on our society. Think about how it has this effect.

- Is that cell phone in your pocket something that has made life better?
- Are we empowering those who most often don't have access to power in our society?
- Or are we further alienating them?
- Does the ability to access global communications create people who are more open and free with their ideas?
- Is an email to a colleague in another country more significant than a snail mail letter?
- Are there any new platforms or apps that you are reluctant to try?

Socialization is an integral part of human behavior, and over time new technologies have made networking and communication more complex. The tools you have available for communication within your networks are powerful and fulfilling, but they can also

stand in the way of real-time thinking, doing, relating, and communicating. The past twenty years have seen an explosion in new tools and means of communication, but the next twenty may see similarly rapid growth and change. Adaptability may be as important a skill as any method specific to a certain platform. The key is mindfully participating and knowing when to use and when not to use the new technological tools available to us, which may require learning and acceptance. In this way your communication with others will be positive and allow you to be productive in all aspects of your life.

GET CONNECTED

Information is processed and transferred faster than ever. Social media has become the place where people obtain information. This could be news on YouTube, shocking events on IGTV, or even fake rumors on Facebook spread from friends of friends. It almost seems that information can't travel fast enough today, but it's vital to take everything you see with a grain of salt and evaluate the information given based on what it is, its source, context, and credibility.

- The Verge published a how-to guide on checking facts and sources online(opens in new window).
- Social networking addiction(opens in new window) occurs when people become so dependent on Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, and related platforms that all of their communication seems to take place within these virtual places. Many researchers conclude that addiction to social media is much stronger than an addiction to cigarettes or alcohol.
- Six Ways Social Media Changed the Way We Communicate(opens in new window) discusses how our ability and need to share and consume information quickly can lead to changes in our relationships and ourselves. The article also provides related links.

Footnotes

- 7 Turkle, Sherry. *Alone Together.* New York: Basic Books. 2011.
- 8 Rheingold, Howard. *Net Smart: How to Thrive Online*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 2012.

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10.5: The Context of Communication

Questions to Consider:

- Does my form of communication change in certain situations?
- Do I use an altered style of talking when I am with different people?
- What role does listening play in communication?

Does My Form of Communication Change in Certain Situations?

The circumstances surrounding a message provide the context. These include the setting you are in, the culture that guides you and whomever you are communicating with, and the purpose of the communication to begin with. Context also includes the values people have, appropriateness of the message, the timing you choose to convey your message, and the reason behind your wanting to communicate. This means considering your audience, the place, the time, and all other variables that impact communicating constructively.



Figure 10.7: Your career area, work environment, its accepted style of dress, and the relationships with your colleagues or clients all add context to your communication. (Credit (both photos): Lyncconf Games / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Generally, all communication happens for a reason. When you are communicating with people, are you always on the same wavelength? Are you wide-awake and your roommate almost asleep? Is the baseball game really important to you but totally boring to the person you are talking with? It is important that everyone involved understands the context of the conversation. Is it a party, which lends itself to frivolous banter? Is the conversation about something serious that occurred? What are some of the relevant steps to understanding context? First of all, pay attention to timing. Is there enough time to cover what you are trying to say? Is it the right time to talk to the boss about a raise? What about the location? Should your conversation take place in the elevator, over email, in a chat room? Is everyone in the conversation involved for the same reason?

The following is an activity that might help you understand what is meant by context.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Consider the context of a family dinner. You are at the table with siblings, cousins, parents, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. A wide variety of age groups are present around the dinner table. Are there any rules about how you behave in this circumstance? What are they?

Then put yourself in the context of a chat room with people you might know and some that you do not know. Are there rules for communicating in that situation? What are they?

Sometimes we have misconceptions about what is going on in a group situation. Perhaps we think that everyone there knows what we are talking about. Or we think we know everyone's opinions on an issue or situation. Or we come into the conversation already thinking we are right and they are wrong. Communication in these instances can go very wrong. Why? We aren't listening or even preparing ourselves adequately for the conversation we hope to have. So often we are only concerned about what we have to say to an individual or a group and we don't step back long enough to reflect on what our message might mean to them. We seem to not

care about how the message will be received and are often surprised by how poorly the communication actually went. Why? Because we didn't step back and think, "Hmmmm, my aunt is a really religious person and probably would be offended by a conversation about sexual intimacy." Or, "My father is having a bit of financial trouble, and this might not be the right time to bring up money I need for a new car."

Do I Use an Altered Style of Talking When I Am With Different People?

There are so many instances in our lives when we think about our needs first and blurt out what we are thinking, leading to some critical misunderstandings. It is really important not only to be concerned about our need to communicate, but to take into consideration with whom we are communicating, when and where we are communicating, and how we are going to do so in a positive way. First, you should step back and think about what you want to say and why. Then reflect on with whom you are attempting to communicate.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. Of the following methods, which is your preferred method of communication?
    a. In person/face-to-face
    b. Voice call
    c. Video call
    d. Email
    e. Texting (including texting apps)
    f. Social media environments
2. Which element of communication do you find most challenging?
    a. Understanding the audience/situation and using the best form/tone to fit it
    b. Speaking in front of a group of people
    c. Writing papers or reports
    d. Listening and interpreting
3. When writing a paper for a course, which aspect do you find most challenging?
    a. Coming up with an original idea/thesis/research question
    b. Finding sources and background information
    c. Evaluating the quality of sources or data
    d. Organizing the paper
    e. Writing/editing the paper
    f. Writing the bibliography/works cited list

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say(opens in new window) surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

Of the following methods, which is your preferred method of communication?

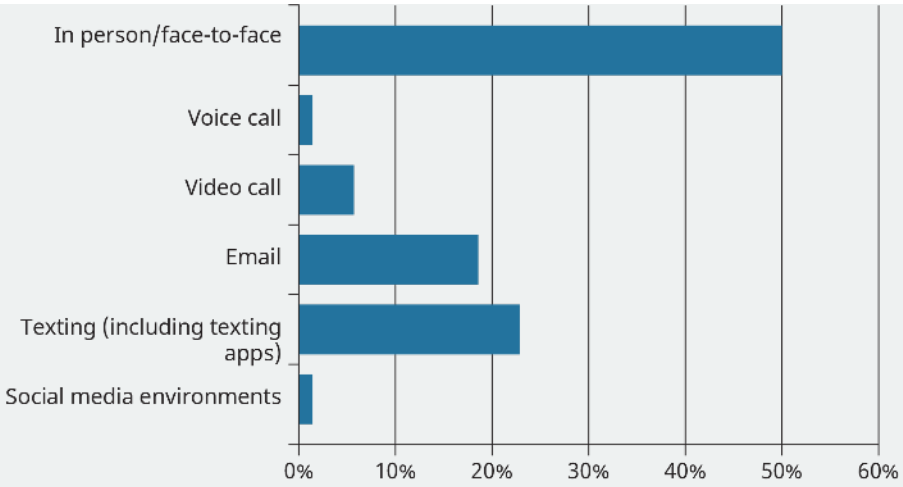


Figure 10.8

Which element of communication do you find most challenging?

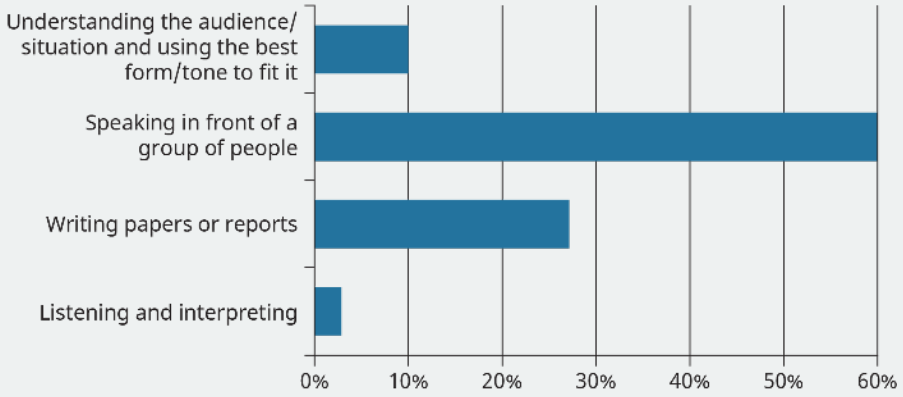


Figure 10.9

When writing a paper for a course, which aspect do you find most challenging?

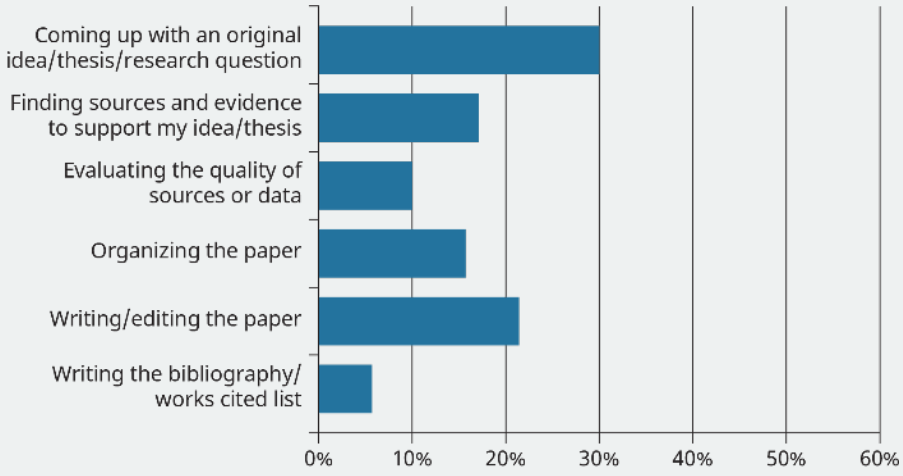


Figure 10.10

Emotional Intelligence

We've talked about emotional intelligence when it comes to listening. Recognizing your own emotions and those of others will help you avoid miscommunication as well. When you are aware of your own emotional state and you have the skills to address and adjust, your communication with others will improve. You're less likely to blurt out an angry retort to a perceived criticism, for example.

You're better able to manage communication when you recognize someone else's emotions, as well. A conversation can veer into hostile territory if someone feels attacked, or perhaps simply because they've had an emotional experience related to the conversation that you don't understand. Taking note of other people's emotional responses during a conversation and listening and speaking with empathy will help you manage the situation.

When conversations begin to feel heated, it's a good idea to pause and ask yourself why. If it's you who are feeling defensive and angry, make an effort to recognize the source of your frustration and try to take a step back, perhaps leaving the conversation until you're better able to control your emotions and communicate in a way that's more clearheaded and calm.

If it's someone else who's emotional, again, ask yourself why. Can you see reasons that this person may feel attacked, belittled, or usurped? If you can recognize their emotion and address it, you may be able to get the communication back on solid footing.

ACTIVITY

Think of what context and what communication tool you would consider in the following situations:

1. You need to let your professor know you won't be able to hand in your assignment on time. What will you say, when and where will you say it, and what form of communication will you use and why?
2. Your roommate wants to have friends over for a party and you aren't sure you are up for that. What and how do you tell your roommate?
3. The weekend is full of activities, but you are expected home for a family gathering. How do you let your parents know you aren't coming?

Listening Is a Communication Action

Our communication includes both sending and, especially, receiving messages. Unfortunately, we often don't take the time to focus on the latter part. Often we are already thinking about what we are going to say next and not listening to what is being said to us. This lack of focus occurs in intense, oppositional discussions, but it can also be common in one-on-one conversations and when someone is confiding in us. When we listen, we need to embrace the concept of empathy, meaning you understand what a person might be feeling, and understand why that person's actions made sense to them at the time. This way our ideas can be communicated in a way that makes sense to others, and it helps us understand others when they communicate with us.

Even though it is silent, listening is communication. We can often "hear" what is being said but don't really listen well enough to discern what is meant by the person trying to communicate with us. In order to listen effectively, we should consider it an active process, in the same way we think about speaking or messaging.

So what does active listening entail? There are some strategies you can use to help you become a good listener. First of all, stop talking. You can't listen if you are talking. Secondly, turn off the television, put your phone in your pocket, silence the music and, if needed, go somewhere quiet, so you can actually focus on what is being said. Next, have empathy for the person talking to you. In other words, don't begin thinking of ways to answer. Even if someone has a problem (with you or something else), avoid trying to immediately solve it; consider whether the person speaking to you really wants advice or action, or might simply want to be seen and heard. Finally, before you say anything as a reply, repeat what you heard so the other person can confirm that you heard them correctly. You would be amazed at how well these strategies work to help avoid misunderstandings and confusion.



Figure 10.11: Being a good listener takes practice and focus. To help, try to eliminate distraction and avoid giving too much advice or telling your own related stories. Even if you're only listening to a brief summary after running into someone in the hallway, do your best to internalize what they're saying. (Credit: University of the Fraser Valley / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Think about all the times you have gone through a drive-through for food or coffee. The scenario is most often the same, right? You order, let's say, medium fries, a burger with no cheese or onions, and a large soft drink. You then listen to the person inside the restaurant say back to you, "You want medium fries, a quarter pounder with no cheese or onions, and a large Coke." If that is the right order, you say yes and move on to pay. This can be seen as active listening on both sides. The following activity can help you reflect on active listening.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

This is an activity of self-analysis. As said above, listening and hearing are not the same thing, and the difference can often lead to faulty communication. Think back on a time when your attempt at communicating with someone (face-to-face or online) didn't go the way you intended. The message you were trying to convey wasn't received in the way you meant it, and this led to some discord between you and whomever you were "talking" to. Write down what happened. Then think a bit about what could have been done differently. Was the problem yours? Did you send a message that wasn't very clear? Did the receiver of this message not really "listen" to what you were saying? What got in the way of what should have been just a simple bit of communication between you and someone else?

As said earlier, emotions are frequently involved in communication.It would be nice if everything was logical and everyone was always coming from that place of no emotion. But that's not how it works in most instances. People have opinions, needs, desires, and outcomes they are looking for; feelings that can be hurt; and differing attitudes. The list could go on and on. What is important is that we need to be aware of our own emotions, and those of others, when attempting to communicate. Consider other people's feelings as well as your own. Have empathy. And in the midst of trying to do that, listen, don't just hear!

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10.6: Barriers to Effective Communication

Questions to consider:

- Can you remember a time when you were surprised that what you communicated was not well received?
- What are some other barriers to effective communication?

> **"Words are the source of misunderstandings."**
>
> *— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince*[9]

Meredith and Anvi are working together on a project on marketing for a communications class: Anvi will create content for a flier, and Meredith will determine the best platform for advertising. In their brainstorming session the two realized they had some outstanding questions about how much content the flier should contain and whether they needed to turn in additional documentation. Meredith left it to Anvi to clarify this material since the content of the flier was her responsibility. Meredith waited impatiently the entire class session for Anvi to ask about the assignment. With class time almost up, Meredith spoke up, telling the instructor in front of the class that Anvi had a question about the assignment.

Anvi clarified the assignment with the professor, but when Meredith tried to find her after class to talk about next steps, Anvi had gone. Meredith was surprised to receive an angry text from Anvi soon after class accusing Meredith of embarrassing her. Anvi pointed out that she'd managed to complete every assignment so far in the course and she didn't need Meredith to take over on this one.

Communication can go awry for a number of reasons. One could use jargon or technical language that is unfamiliar. There can be differences in the perception of an issue. People may speak different languages, or the colloquialisms that one uses don't make sense to everyone.

As in the case with Meredith and Anvi, cultural considerations can also affect the way people communicate. Anvi, for instance, prefers not to speak to the instructor during class because she feels that she's interrupting. She prefers to approach the instructor after class time is over. Meredith, on the other hand, usually has a task list she likes to tick off one by one to make sure everything is moving on time, and she can sometimes become insensitive to the communication styles of others.

Some barriers are likely to be emotional, often caused by topics that are sometimes considered problematic, such as sex, politics, or religion, which can interfere with effective communication. Sometimes what you are trying to communicate is embarrassing or otherwise a bit personal, and you kind of skirt around the edges of really saying what you want to say. Other emotions, such as stress, anger, depression, sadness, and the like, can have an effect on how well you communicate with another person, or they with you. Physical disabilities, such as hearing loss, can also come into play and get in the way of successful communication.

Some of our behavior and communication is based on previous encounters, and we don't see past that and start fresh. Sometimes the barrier can be a lack of interest or attention on the part of the receiver. There are also expectations about what might be said or stereotyping on the part of the sender or the receiver. Often when we communicate with people we have preconceptions about who they are, what they are thinking, and how they will react to whatever we say. These preconceptions can get in the way of productive communication. A person could have an attitude that comes with whatever is being said or written. Or perhaps there is a lack of motivation to clarify what you want to communicate, and the end result is not what you were hoping for.

ACTIVITY

Take into consideration some of your own stereotypes and preconceptions, and try them out on the following scenario.

You are walking down the street and need to ask someone for change for a dollar because you need it for the parking meter. There are only a few people around you, and you have to choose whom to ask for help. Which person would you choose, and why?

- A person with tattoos all over their arms
- An elderly woman who is hunched over and walking gingerly
- A person of color who is absorbed in their own phone
- A parent with three children who is frantically trying to keep them together
- A well-dressed man, with shiny leather shoes, walking briskly to wherever he is going

Preconceptions and Assumptions

Have you ever thought about the message you are conveying to others? If you were the one standing on the street corner, what would others see? How do you play into others' preconceptions simply based on your appearance?

Of course, you should be yourself, but certain environments or situations require us to consider and, perhaps, change our appearance. Wearing a T-shirt with a "message" may be appropriate when you're at leisure, but you wouldn't wear it to a job interview.

College presents us with many situations where people's preconceived notions of our appearance may come into play. For example, while it might not be fair, faculty may have a certain perception of students who attend lecture or office hours in pajamas. Consider the implications of sitting in your instructor's office, asking for help, when they think you haven't changed your clothes since you woke up. You are absolutely free to express yourself in a certain manner, but your appearance may miscommunicate your motivation or intent. Recognizing how our own preconceptions come into play, and acknowledging those of others, generally leads to more effective interactions.

One of the biggest changes about the way we interact is the vast number of people available with whom we can communicate. This is a wonderful thing as we get to meet many people from diverse places. It can also be challenging because we are not always prepared to communicate with people from varying cultures, genders, ages, or religious and political views. Sometimes a simple lack of familiarity can lead to errors or even offense.

ACTIVITY

Think about how you communicate to different types of people. For each person in the left-most column and each example of something you need to describe, write some notes on how you might communicate, the types of words you might use, or what you may consider when speaking to them.

Activity

	Describing a sporting event you watched.	**Describing an argument you got into on social media.**	**Describing a night out with friends.**
An eight-year-old			
A 20-year-old woman			
A middle-aged man			
An elderly person			

Did your answers come from stereotypes or experience? (Or both?) Did you choose your words carefully with the child? Did you assume the man would know more about sports than the woman? Did you assume the elderly person wouldn't know about Twitter or Instagram? Perhaps being mindful in your interactions with others will help bring clarity to your communication.

Unfortunately, relying on stereotypes often results in failed communication. Our understanding of others is often masked by the stereotypes that have infiltrated our society. Think about if you bring your own stereotypes to the table. Do you think others do the same? If so, those probably get in the way of a successful conversation.

> **"Precision of communication is important, more important than ever, in our era of hair trigger balances, when a false or misunderstood word may create as much disaster as a sudden thoughtless act."**
>
> *— James Thurber*[10]

How Can Identities and Experiences Lead to Communication Barriers?

Aside from our actual communication abilities and tools, we bring to each interaction many unique aspects based on who we are and where we come from. Diversity, as important and great as it is, requires us to consider the different perspectives and experiences others bring to a discussion or interaction, and to understand that our own views and contexts may be unfamiliar to

others. While we shouldn't shy away from this diversity, we should exercise patience and practice when communicating with new people.

Part of this consideration is known as cultural competency. Below are several aspects of people's lives that you might consider when communicating.

Identity is generally a feeling of belonging to a group. It is your self-perception and is usually related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, sexual orientation, gender, generation, region or any social group that has its own distinct identity. Examples of cultural identity markers include the rituals people observe, the music that a group prefers, the style of clothing that is worn, the languages actual ethnic group one belongs to and its various foods and celebrations, or possibly the games that are a preferred sport in some communities. All of these variables can constitute a cultural identity for people. And belonging to these groups gives people an identity and a frame of reference on how to communicate and relate to the world around them.

Gender identity refers to the deeply held, internal sense of a person's gender. Sometimes, a person's genetically assigned sex does not line up with their gender identity. These individuals might refer to themselves as transgender, nonbinary, or gender-nonconforming.[11] Thus, gender is what a person identifies with.

While gender is internal, social influences and perceptions can shape a person's attitude and method of communication. For example, in some families and cultures, men are raised to be more dominant or less emotionally expressive. Their use of that approach may lead to communication problems with others. However, people's *assumptions* about men may also lead to communication problems. The same can happen with other gender identities.

What are your communication experiences with different genders? Have you seen people communicate a specific way based on the genders involved in the conversation? For example, does a classmate have a way of speaking to men that is different from their way of speaking to women? Does that difference become a barrier or issue in the communication?

Age can have a very significant impact on communication. This is a little easier to understand, as people from varying generations bring very different experiences to their contact with others. We all grow up surrounded by certain music, clothing styles, language, and cultural influences. Modes of parenting have evolved, food choices have expanded, and tragedies and world politics have occurred, and each of these had an effect on the generation that experienced them firsthand. And, of course, most of us live or have lived with multiple generations in our lives and have experienced many of the differences ourselves. Think of the times you've tried to explain what you do on your social media platforms to your grandparent (though some grandparents are pretty good at all the new technologies!). And think of how very young family members—age three or four—describe the videos they watch or the games they play.

As you can see from the above categories of cultural identity, gender, age, and our own stereotypes about people, there are many barriers that can come into play when you are trying to communicate with someone. In fact, on a college campus you probably will run into a large variety of differences in the people you meet. Many come from other countries, cultures, religions, and family backgrounds. Some may be in the country solely for the purpose of going to college, and intend to return home when they graduate. Some may have a lot of life experience, while others could be high school students in a dual enrollment program. All of that will have an effect on how they communicate, as your own upbringing and experiences have had an influence on who you are. Keep that in mind as you try to create relationships with the many people that are available to you, both face-to-face and online.

FootnotesQuick fix

- 9 Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de, and Katherine Woods. The Little Prince. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1961.
- 10 Thurber, James. Lanterns and Lances. Harper and Brothers. 1961.
- 11 Newman, Tim. "Sex and gender: What's the Difference?" *Medical News Today*. February 7, 2018 medicalcnewstoday.com [www.medicalnewstoday.com]

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10.7: Summary

Chapter Takeaways

Listening

- Learning involves following a cycle of preparing, absorbing, recording, and reviewing.
- The most important difference between high school learning and college learning is that colleges expect you to take full responsibility for your learning. Many of the support mechanisms you had in high school do not exist in college.
- Listening takes place in two primary situations: where there can be open interaction with the speaker (social conversation, small group discussions, business meetings, and small classes) and where there is limited interaction with the speaker (lectures, online courses, and podcasts).
- In situations where interaction is allowed, active listening principles work well.
- In lecture situations, additional strategies are required. They include physical preparation, seating for listening, eliminating distractions, thinking critically about the material as it is presented, taking notes, and asking appropriate questions.
- Prepare for listening by completing all assignments for the class and reviewing the syllabus. Ask yourself what you expect to gain from the class and how that ties in to the rest of the course material.
- Think critically about what you are listening to. Do you agree with what the instructor is saying? How does it tie to the rest of the material in the course? What does this new material mean to you in "real" life?
- Actively engaging in your college education is essential for success, including attending classes, participating, and communicating with your instructors.
- Students benefit in several important ways when they participate in class and feel free to ask questions.
- Successful participation in class and interaction with your instructor begin with fully preparing for class and working on communication skills.
- Networking with instructors has additional benefits for your future and may lead to finding a helpful mentor.
- Both impromptu speaking in class and more formal class presentations help develop key skills.
- Learning to work well in a group is an element of college success.

Communication is one of the basic components of how we live our lives. It's a foundation of society and civilization as a whole. And the better we become at navigating through all of our various communication options, the more fulfilled and productive we will become. You have the capability to communicate with myriad people and groups in faraway places, as well as just next door or the room down the hall. In all of those interactions, the sender and recipient of each message brings their own context, purpose, and perspective. Your communication will be much more effective if you think about those differences before sending and especially before *responding* to people.

Sometimes thinking so deeply about a simple conversation seems overwhelming and unnecessary, but keeping in mind the reasons you're communicating and focusing on the words you use can lead to better relationships and outcomes. Listening, practicing empathy, and working on your cultural competence will enrich you and the people around you.

Chapter Activities

Chapter Review

1. List as many benefits of participating in class as you can think of.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Consider the instructors in your current classes. Which instructor have you spoken with the least (in or outside of class)?

   _____

Are you hesitant to speak up in this class—or to see the instructor outside of class? Why?

_____

_____

When you have a question for this instructor about an assignment or reading, which form of communication would be most appropriate?

_____

3. List ways to be prepared if you have a question to ask in a large lecture class.

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Think ahead through to the end of your college experience. If you were to develop a mentoring relationship with one of your present instructors, what sorts of things might you talk about in the future with that instructor after the current class has ended?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Review the six stages for preparing and giving a class presentation. Which stage(s) do you feel you personally need to pay special attention to next time you are assigned a presentation?

_____

_____

What specifically can you plan to do to ensure your success in those stages in your next presentation?

Outside the Book

Choose your current class with the largest enrollment and decide to ask the instructor a question in the next class or during office hours. Prepare by carefully reviewing your class and reading notes and select a subject area that you do not feel confident you fully understand. Focus in on a specific topic and write down a question whose answer would help you better understand the topic. Go to class prepared to ask that question if it is relevant to the day's discussion or lecture; if it is not relevant, visit your instructor during office hours and ask the question. If this is your first time talking with this instructor, remember to introduce yourself and explain your interest in the topic as you ask the question. Remember that your second goal is to begin establishing a relationship with this instructor.

Make an Action List

Attending Class

I sometimes don't go to class because

_____

_____

I'll keep myself motivated to go to every class by

_____

_____

Participating in Class

I tend to participate most in this class:

_____

I need to make an effort to participate more in this class:

_____

I need to participate more because

_____

_____

I will take the following steps to be ready to ask a question:

_____

_____

Attending Lecture Classes

I tend to do these nonproductive things if I feel bored in a lecture:

_____

_____

I will work on staying more actively engaged in lectures in these ways:

_____

_____

Talking with Instructors Outside of Class

I have not yet spoken to this instructor outside of class:

_____

Within the next two weeks, I will stop by during office hours to talk about the following:

_____

_____

This instructor's office hours are

_____

Using E-mail

The following are my worst e-mail habits:

_____

_____

The following current instructors prefer student questions through e-mail:

_____

_____

I will follow these professional e-mail practices:

_____

_____

Speaking Publicly

I am nervous about giving class presentations because

_____

_____

I realize that the best way to overcome my anxiety about public speaking and succeed in class presentations is to

_____

_____

Career Connection

Check the methods of communication you would most likely use for each of the following. Then write an explanation for why you have chosen the various forms of communication and how your choice had a link to the purpose of communicating with these different people.

Career Connection

	Face-to-Face	Email	Letter	Phone	Facebook	Instagram	Snapchat
Parent							
Peer							
Sibling							
Boss							
Doctor							
Professor							
Waitress							
Office assistant							
Significant other							

Take a close look at how you filled out the above chart. Do you find that there were definitely different purposes to how and why you used email instead of the phone, or Snapchat instead of a letter? It is good for you to reflect on your communication choices so that they are always most effective.

Look at the forms of communication you chose for “boss.” Perhaps you chose face-to-face and email as the two forms of communication you would use with your boss. Think through how those might have had an effect on the success of your communication with them. Now select two other forms of communication. Would you have been able to get the same response from your boss?

Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter, and consider one option you learned in this chapter that might change your answer to one of them.

1. I think my mobile device is effective and appropriate for most communication.
2. I have a good sense of how to communicate in different environments/situations.
3. I listen more than I talk.
4. I have a lot of experience with research projects and essays.

Where do you go from here?

Staying aware of how and when you communicate is important to every aspect of your life. As you learned throughout this chapter, there are many variables that come into play when you communicate. Most of the time none of us really think about all of these before we send out some kind of communication. Perhaps you would like to learn a little more about how to be mindful of your methods of communication. It will serve you well throughout your life.

Choose a topic that interests you from the list below. Then search for sources that inform this topic and create an annotated bibliography that would be useful to someone who is interested in doing further research.

- Communication using social media can be detrimental to mental health.
- It is imperative that you pay attention to cultural norms when trying to communicate with others.
- Listening is important to successful communication, and there are steps that can be taken to hone listening skills.
- Men and women are said to communicate differently.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence

11.1: Prelude to Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
11.3: Categories of Diversity
11.4: Living with Diversity
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
11.6: Inclusivity and Civility- What Role Can I Play?
11.7: Summary

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11.1: Prelude to Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence

Learning Objectives

1. Define civility and cultural competence and explain their importance in diverse settings.
2. Identify various categories of diversity and understand their relevance in contemporary discussions.
3. Analyze the impact of diversity on personal and professional environments.
4. Evaluate strategies for living with and navigating diversity to foster inclusivity and respect.
5. Determine individual roles and responsibilities in promoting inclusivity and civility in diverse settings.



Figure 11.1: (Credit John Martinez Pavliga / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Student Survey

How do you feel about diversity, equity, and inclusion? These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As you are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed. Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning "least like me" and 4 meaning "most like me."

1. I'm aware of the different categories of diversity and the various populations I may encounter.
2. I think we sometimes go too far in trying to be sensitive to different groups.
3. I think nearly everybody in our society has equal opportunity.
4. It's not my role to ensure equity and inclusiveness among my peers or colleagues.

You can also take the Chapter 11 survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

"For the vast majority of my life, I thought being an Asian-American—who went through the Palo Alto School District—meant that I was supposed to excel in academics. But, in reality, I did the opposite. I struggled through college, both in classes and in seeking experiences for my future. At first, I thought I was unique in not living up to expectations. But as I met more people from all different backgrounds, I realized my challenges were not unique.

"I began capturing videos of students sharing their educational issues. Like me, many of my peers lack the study skills required to achieve our academic goals. The more I researched and developed videos documenting this lack of skill, the more I realized that student identities are often lost as they learn according to a traditional pedagogy. I began documenting students' narratives and the specific strategies they used to overcome difficulty. Once we can celebrate a diverse student body and showcase their strengths and identities as well as the skills necessary to excel academically, my hope is that students of all backgrounds can begin to feel that they belong."

> —**Henry Fan**, Foothill College and San Jose State University

About This Chapter

In this chapter you will learn about diversity and how it plays a role in personal, civic, academic, and professional aspects of our lives. By the end of the chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Articulate how diverse voices have been historically ignored or minimized in American civic life, education, and culture.
- Describe categories of identity and experience that contribute to diverse points of view.
- Acknowledge implicit bias and recognize privilege.
- Evaluate statements and situations based on their inclusion of diverse perspectives.

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11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?

Questions to Consider:

- Historically, has diversity always been a concern?
- What does it mean to be civil?
- Why do people argue about diversity?

What Would Shakespeare Say?

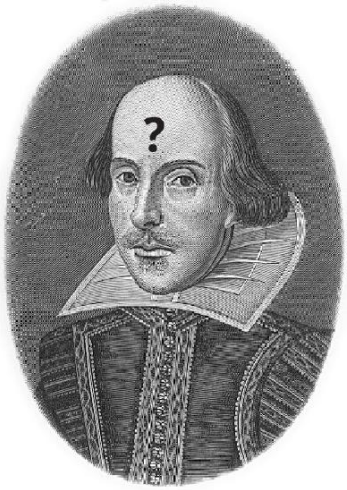


Figure 11.2: (Credit: Sourced originally from Helmolt, H.F., ed. History of the World. Dodd, Mead and Company, 1902 / Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas at Austin / Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain).

In our classroom, everyone is the same…

Consider a classroom containing 25 college students and their instructor. In this particular class, all of the students and the instructor share the same racial group—white. In fact, everyone in the class is a white American from the Midwest.

The instructor is leading the class through reading a scene from William Shakespeare's drama *Romeo and Juliet*. As students read their parts, each one is thinking carefully about the role he or she has been given.

One of the male students wonders what it would be like to read the part of Juliet; after all, men originally played the part in Shakespeare's day. The young woman reading Juliet wonders if anyone would object to her taking the role if they knew she was a lesbian. What would it be like, she wonders, if Romeo, her love interest, were also played by a woman? One reader strongly identifies as German American, but he is reading the part of an Italian. Another student has a grandmother who is African American, but he looks like every other white student in the room. No one recognizes his mixed-race heritage.

After the students finish reading the scene, the instructor announces, "In our classroom, everyone is the same, but these days when Shakespeare is staged, there is a tendency for nontraditional casting. Romeo could be black, Juliet could be Latina, Lady Montague could be Asian. Do you think that kind of casting would disrupt the experience of seeing the play?"

In this case, the instructor makes the assumption that because everyone in the class *looks* the same, they *are* the same. What did the instructor miss about the potential for diversity in his classroom? Have you ever made a similar mistake?

Diversity is more than what we can recognize from external clues such as race and gender. Diversity includes many unseen aspects of identity, like sexual orientation, political point of view, veteran status, and many other aspects that you may have not considered. To be inclusive and civil within your community, it is essential that you avoid making assumptions about how other people define or identify themselves.

In this chapter we will discover that each person is more than the sum of surface clues presented to the world. Personal experience, social and family history, public policy, and even geography play a role in how diversity is constructed. We'll also explore elements of civility and fairness within the college community.

One important objective of civility is to become culturally competent. Culturally competent people understand the complexity of their own personal identity, values, and culture. In addition, they respect the personal identities and values of others who may not

share their identity and values. Further, culturally competent people remain open-minded when confronted with new cultural experiences. They learn to relate to and respect difference; they look beyond the obvious and learn as much as they can about what makes each person different and appreciated.

These concepts tie closely to understanding communication with a focus on Emotional Intelligence and Overcoming Barriers to Communication.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. Do you think the diversity of your school's student body is reflected in course offerings and campus activities?
    a. Yes
    b. Somewhat
    c. No
2. How comfortable are you when discussing issues of race, sexuality, religion, and other aspects of civility?
    a. Extremely comfortable
    b. Somewhat comfortable
    c. Somewhat uncomfortable
    d. Extremely uncomfortable
3. Do you generally feel welcomed and included on campus?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. It varies significantly by class or environment.

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say surveys(opens in new window) to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

Do you think the diversity of your school's student body is reflected in course offerings and campus activities?

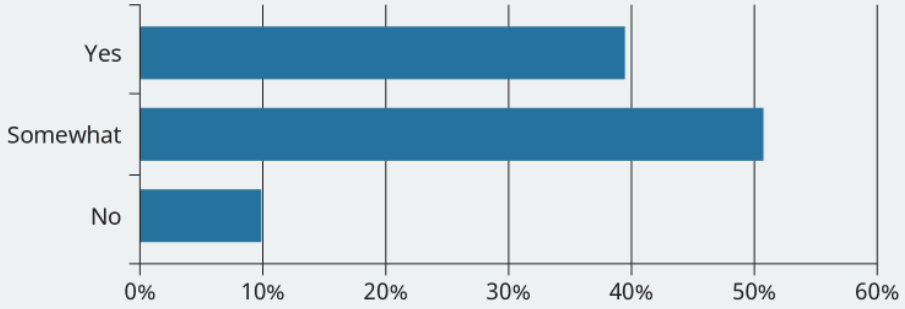


Figure 11.3

How comfortable are you when discussing issues of race, sexuality, religion, and other aspects of civility?

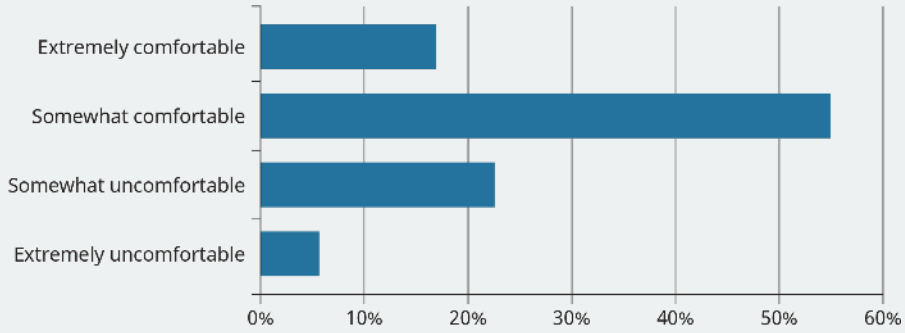


Figure 11.4

Do you generally feel welcomed and included on campus?

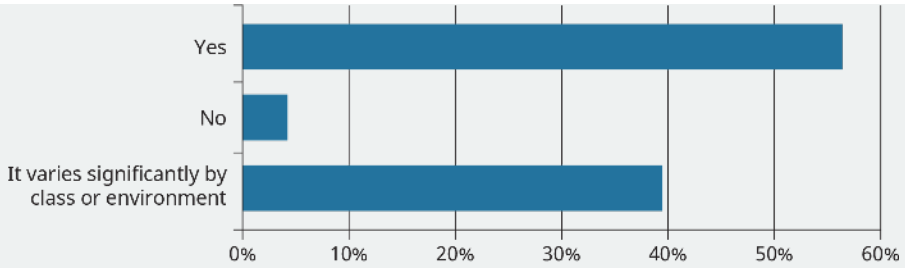


Figure 11.5

Why Diversity Matters

The United States of America is viewed the world over as a leader in democracy and democratic ideals. Our nation, young by most standards, continues to evolve to make the freedoms and opportunities available to all. Where the benefits of citizenship have been imperfect, discord over issues related to civil rights and inclusion have often been at the center of the conflict.

To understand the importance of civility and civil engagement, it is necessary to acknowledge our country's history. The United States is a country born out of protest. Colonists protesting what they felt were unfair taxes under King George III was at the foundation of the Revolutionary War. Over time, many groups have been given their civil liberties and equal access to all that our country has to offer through that same spirit of protest and petition.



Figure 11.6: (Credit: Carl Campbell / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

The United States is often described as a "melting pot," a rich mixture made up of people of many colors, religions, abilities, etc. working together to make one great big stew. That is the image generations of Americans grew up learning, and it is a true one. The United States is a nation of immigrants, and cultural influences from around the world have added to its strength.

Historically, however, not all contributions and voices have been acknowledged equally or adequately. Some groups have had to struggle to have their contributions acknowledged, be treated fairly, and be allowed full participation in the civic life of the country. Entire populations of people have been oppressed as a part of the nation's history, something important for Americans to confront and acknowledge. For example, in what is known as the Trail of Tears, the U.S. government forcibly removed Native Americans from their homelands and made them walk to reservations; some had to travel more than 1,000 miles, and over 10,000 died on the journey. Further, in an act of forced assimilation, Native American children were taken from their families and placed in schools where they were not allowed to practice cultural traditions or speak their Native languages. This practice continued as late as the 1970s. As a result, many Native American languages have been lost or are at risk of being lost.

The slavery of Africans occurred in America for close to 250 years. Much of the wealth in the United States during that time came directly from the labor of enslaved people; however, the enslaved people themselves did not benefit financially. During World War II, Japanese Americans were placed into internment camps and considered a danger to our country because our nation was at war with Japan.

For many years, all women and minority men were traditionally left out of public discourse and denied participation in government, industry, and even cultural institutions such as sports. For example, the United States Supreme Court was founded in 1789; however, the court's first female justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, was not appointed until 1981, almost 200 years later. Jackie Robinson famously became the first African American major league baseball player in 1947 when he was hired by the Brooklyn Dodgers, although the major leagues were established in 1869, decades earlier. The absence of white women and minorities was not an accident. Their exclusion was based on legal discrimination or unfair treatment.

These are all examples of mistreatment, inequality, and discrimination, and they didn't end without incredible sacrifice and heroism. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the equal rights movement for women's rights in the 1970s are examples of how public protests work to bring attention to discriminatory practices and to create change. Because racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, and other forms of bias and intolerance still exist, civil engagement and protests continue, and policies must be constantly monitored. Many people still work to ensure the gains these communities have made in acquiring the rights of full citizenship are not lost.

Diversity refers to differences in the human experience. As different groups have gained in number and influence, our definition of diversity has evolved to embrace many variables that reflect a multitude of different backgrounds, experiences, and points of view, not just race and gender. Diversity takes into account age, socioeconomic factors, ability (such as sight, hearing, and mobility), ethnicity, veteran status, geography, language, sexual orientation, religion, size, and other factors. At one time or another, each group has had to make petitions to the government for equal treatment under the law and appeals to society for respect. Safeguarding these groups' hard-won rights and public regard maintains diversity and its two closely related factors, *equity* and *inclusion.*

ACTIVITY

Our rights and protections are often acquired through awareness, effort, and, sometimes, protest. Each one of the following groups has launched protests over discrimination or compromises to their civil rights. Choose three of the groups below and do a quick search on protests or efforts members of the group undertook to secure their rights. To expand your knowledge, choose some with which you are not familiar.

Record the name, time frame, and outcomes of the protest or movements you researched.

The groups are as follows:

- Veterans
- Senior citizens
- Blind or visually impaired people
- Muslims
- Christians
- LGBTQ+ community
- Hispanic/Latinos
- People with intellectual disabilities
- Undocumented immigrants
- Little people
- College students
- Jewish Americans
- Farm workers
- Wheelchair users

Diversity in Healthcare

Receiving medical care from a provider who shares a similar cultural background or ethnicity can make patients feel more at ease. Research has shown that a more diverse healthcare workforce is associated with higher-quality patient care. For instance, a 2022 Columbia University study found that states with greater nurse diversity reported fewer health complications for mothers during childbirth. Patients often feel more comfortable and are more likely to trust healthcare providers who share or understand their cultural backgrounds and experiences. This can lead to more open communication and better patient-provider relationships. Diverse healthcare teams can provide more culturally sensitive care, leading to more accurate diagnoses, better adherence to

treatment plans, and overall improved health outcomes. Diverse healthcare teams bring a range of perspectives and experiences, fostering innovation and problem-solving in patient care. This can lead to more comprehensive and effective treatment plans. Patients are more likely to be satisfied with their care when they feel understood and respected, leading to better patient retention and positive health experiences.

Cultural beliefs play a role in the receiving and delivery of healthcare. In countries like the United States, people think diseases happen because of natural scientific reasons. They use medicine to fight germs and advanced technology to find and treat illnesses. In other places, people believe sickness comes from supernatural causes, so they use prayer or spiritual methods to make the powerful forces happy again.

Remember that culture is not limited to religious, racial, or ethnic groups. For example, the Deaf and LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and others) communities have distinct cultures. Internet Citation: Consider Culture: Tool 10. Content last reviewed February 2024. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. ahrq.gov [www.ahrq.gov]

The Role of Equity and Inclusion

Equity plays a major part in achieving fairness in a diverse landscape. Equity gives everyone equal access to opportunity and success. For example, you may have seen interpreters for deaf or hard of hearing people in situations where a public official is making an announcement about an impending weather emergency. Providing immediate translation into sign language means that there is no gap between what the public official is saying and when all people receive the information. Simultaneous sign language provides equity.[1] Similarly, many students have learning differences that require accommodations in the classroom. For example, a student with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) might be given more time to complete tests or writing assignments. The extra time granted takes into account that students with ADHD process information differently.

If a student with a learning difference is given more time than other students to complete a test, that is a matter of equity. The student is not being given an advantage; the extra time gives them an equal chance at success.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) is a federal government policy that addresses equity in the workplace, housing, and public places. The ADA requires “reasonable accommodations” so that people with disabilities have equal access to the same services as people without disabilities. For example, wheelchair lifts on public transportation, automatic doors, entrance ramps, and elevators are examples of accommodations that eliminate barriers of participation for people with certain disabilities.

Without the above accommodations, those with a disability may justly feel like second-class citizens because their needs were not anticipated. Further, they might have to use their own resources to gain equal access to services although their tax dollars contribute to providing that same access and service to other citizens.

Equity levels the playing field so that everyone’s needs are anticipated and everyone has an equal starting point. However, understanding equity is not enough.

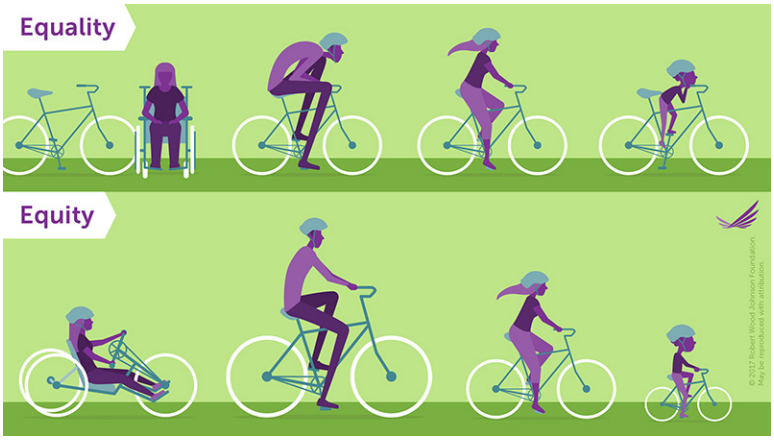


Figure 11.7: Equality is a meaningful goal, but it can leave people with unmet needs; equity is more empowering and fair. In equality portion of the graphic, people all sizes and a person who uses a wheelchair are all given the same bicycle, which is unusable for most. In the equity portion, each person gets a bicycle specifically designed for them, enabling them to successfully ride it. Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation / Custom License: “May be Produced with Attribution[2]”)

When equity is properly considered, there is also inclusion. *Inclusion* means that there are a multiplicity of voices, skills, and interests represented in any given situation. Inclusion has played a major role in education, especially in terms of creating inclusion classrooms and inclusive curricula. In an inclusion classroom, students of different skill levels study together. For example, students with and without developmental disabilities study in the same classroom. Such an arrangement eliminates the stigma of the "special education classroom" where students were once segregated. In addition, in inclusion classrooms all students receive support when needed. Students benefit from seeing how others learn. In an inclusive curriculum, a course includes content and perspectives from underrepresented groups. For example, a college course in psychology might include consideration of different contexts such as immigration, incarceration, or unemployment in addition to addressing societal norms.

Inclusion means that these voices of varied background and experience are integrated into discussions, research, and assignments rather than ignored.

Our Country Is Becoming More Diverse

You may have heard the phrase "the browning of America," meaning it is predicted that today's racial minorities will, collectively, be the majority of the population in the future. The graph from the Pew Research Center projects that by the year 2065, U.S. demographics will have shifted significantly. In 2019, the white population made up just over 60% of the population. In 2065, the Pew Research Center predicts that whites will be approximately 46% of the population. The majority of Americans will be the non-white majority, 54% Hispanic/Latinos, blacks, and Asians.

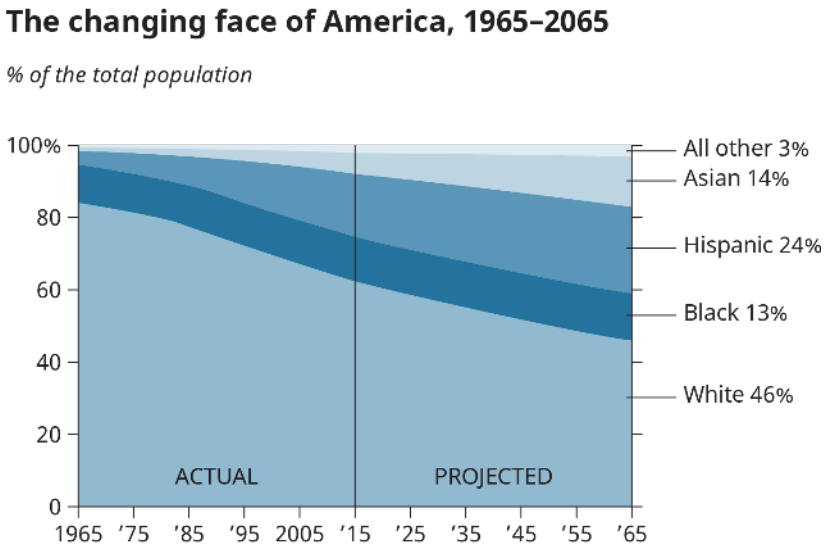


Figure 11.8: United States demographics (or statistical characteristics of populations) are changing rapidly. In just over 35 years, the country as a whole will be a "majority minority" nation, with ethnic/racial minorities making up more than half of the population. (Credit: Based on work by the Pew Research Center.)

What does this mean? It could mean that the United States begins accepting Spanish as a mainstream language since the Hispanic/Latino population will be significantly larger. It could mean a changing face for local governments. It could mean that our country will elect its second nonwhite president. Beyond anything specific, the shifting demographics of the United States could mean greater attention is paid to diversity awareness, equity, and inclusion.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

How should the United States prepare for its projected demographic shift? What changes do you suppose will take place as part of the "browning of America"?

Education: Equity for All

Education has been one of the most significant arenas for social change related to our rights as Americans. And the effects of that change have significantly impacted other power dynamics in society. You need look no further than the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) to see how our nation has responded passionately in civil and uncivil ways to appeals for equity and inclusion in public education.

For much of the 20th century, African Americans lived under government-sanctioned separation better known as segregation. Not only were schools segregated, but Jim Crow laws allowed for legal separation in transportation, hospitals, parks, restaurants, theaters, and just about every aspect of public life. These laws enacted that there be "whites only" water fountains and restrooms. Only white people could enter the front door of a restaurant or sit on the main level of a movie theater, while African Americans had to enter through the back door and sit in the balcony. The segregation also included Mexican Americans and Catholics, who were forced to attend separate schools. *Brown v. Board of Education* was a landmark Supreme Court case that challenged the interpretation of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The case involved the father of Linda Brown suing the Topeka, Kansas, board of education for denying his daughter the right to attend an all-white school. Oliver Brown maintained that segregation left his black community with inferior schools, a condition counter to the equal protection clause contained in Section I of the 14th Amendment:

> **"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."**

There was widespread heated opposition to desegregated education across the country. Passions were even more severe after *Brown v. Board of Education* was won by the plaintiff on appeal to the United States Supreme Court. In effect, the case changed the power dynamics in America by leveling the playing field for education. No longer were white schools (and their better resources) legally segregated. In principal, there was equity—equal access.

Debates in the courtrooms surrounding *Brown* were passionate but professional. Protests and debate in those communities directly affected by the decision, especially in the South, were intense, violent confrontations that demonstrated the height of incivility. One thing you may notice about uncivil behavior is the difficulty most have looking back on those actions.



Figure 11.9: After the Brown v Board of Education decision, Americans pursued their rights for equal education in other districts. In Arkansas, a group of teenagers, which would come to be known as the Little Rock Nine, were blocked from entering a formerly whites-only school. Facing angry protestors, the state governor, and even the National Guard, the nine students finally took their rightful place in the school after a judge ruled in their favor and President Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne Division to secure the situation. (Credit: Courtesy of the National Archives, sourced from The US Army / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY))

Educational institutions like colleges and school districts are critically important spaces for equity and inclusion, and debates around them remain challenging. Transgender students in America's schools face discrimination, harrassment, and bullying, which causes nearly 45 percent of LGBTQ+ to feel unsafe becuase of their gender expression and 60 percent of to feel unsafe due to their sexual orientation. Many of these students miss school or experience significant stress, which usually has a negative impact on their grades, participation, and overall success.[3] In essence, this hostility creates inequality. Regardless of individual state or district laws

on bathroom use and overall accommodation, federal law protects *all* students from discrimination, especially that based on categories such as gender. But implementation of these federal protections varies, and, in general, many outside the transgender community do not fully unerstand, empathize with, or support transgender rights.

How can the circumstances improve for transgender students? In other societal changes throughout our nation's history, court decisions, new legislation, protests, and general public opinion combined to right past wrongs and provide justice and protection for mistreated people. For example, in 2015, the Supreme Court upheld the right to same-sex marriage under the 14th Amendment. Just as African Americans publicly debated and protested educational inequality, the gay community used discusion, protest, and debate to sway public and legal opinion. Proponents of gay marriage faced fervent argument against their position based on religion and culture; like other minority groups, they were confronted with name-calling, job insecurity, family division, religious isolation, and physical confrontation. And as has often been the case, success in achieving marriage equality eventually came through the courts.

Legal remedies are significant, but can take a very long time. Before they see success in the courts or legislatures, transgender students in America's schools will continue to undergo harsh treatment. Their lives and education will remain very difficult until people from outside their community better understand their situation.

Debates: Civility vs. Incivility

Healthy debate is a desirable part of a community. In a healthy debate, people are given room to explain their point of view. In a healthy airing of differences, people on opposing sides of an argument can reach common ground and compromise or even agree to disagree and move on.

However, incivility occurs when people are not *culturally competent*. An individual who is not culturally competent might make negative assumptions about others' values, lack an open mindset, or be inflexible in thinking. Instead of being tolerant of different points of view, they may try to shut down communication by not listening or by keeping someone with a different point of view from being heard at all. Out of frustration, a person who is uncivil may resort to name-calling or discrediting another person only with the intention of causing confusion and division within a community. Incivility can also propagate violence. Such uncivil reaction to difficult issues is what makes many people avoid certain topics at all costs. Instead of seeking out diverse communities, people retreat to safe spaces where they will not be challenged to hear opposing opinions or have their beliefs contested.

Debates on difficult or divisive topics surrounding diversity, especially those promoting orchestrated change, are often passionate. People on each side may base their positions on deeply held beliefs, family traditions, personal experience, academic expertise, and a desire to orchestrate change. With such a strong foundation, emotions can be intense, and debates can become uncivil.

Even when the disagreement is based on information rather than personal feelings, discussions can quickly turn to arguments. For example, in academic environments, it's common to find extremely well-informed arguments in direct opposition to each other. Two well-known economics faculty members from your college could debate for hours on financial policies, with each professor's position backed by data, research, and publications. Each person could feel very strongly that they are right and the other person is wrong. They may even feel that the approach proposed by their opponent would actually do damage to the country or to certain groups of people. But for this debate—whether it occurs over lunch or on an auditorium stage—to remain civil, the participants need to maintain certain standards of behavior.

ACTIVITY

1. Describe a time when you could not reach an agreement with someone on a controversial issue.
2. Did you try to compromise, combining your points of view so that each of you would be partially satisfied?
3. Did either of you shut down communication? Was ending the conversation a good choice? Why or why not?

Civility is a valued practice that takes advantage of cultural and political systems we have in place to work through disagreements while maintaining respect for others' points of view. Civil behavior allows for a respectful airing of grievances. The benefit of civil discussion is that members of a community can hear different sides of an argument, weigh evidence, and decide for themselves which side to support.

You have probably witnessed or taken part in debates in your courses, at social events, or even at family gatherings. What makes people so passionate about certain issues? First, some may have a personal stake in an issue, such as abortion rights. Convincing other people to share their beliefs may be intended to create a community that will protect their rights. Second, others may have deeply held beliefs based on faith or cultural practices. They argue based on deeply held moral and ethical beliefs. Third, others

may be limited in their background knowledge about an issue but are able to speak from a “script” of conventional points of view. They may not want to stray from the script because they do not have enough information to extend an argument.

Rules for Fair Debate



Figure 11.10: You’ll participate in classroom or workplace debate throughout your academic or professional career. Civility is important to productive discussions, and will lead to worthwhile outcomes. (Credit: Creative Sustainability / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

The courtroom and the public square are not the only places where serious debate takes place. Every day we tackle tough decisions that involve other people, some of whom have strong opposing points of view. To be successful in college, you will need to master sound and ethical approaches to argument, whether it be for a mathematical proof or an essay in a composition class.

You probably already know how to be sensitive and thoughtful when giving feedback to a family member or friend. You think about their feelings and the best way to confront your disagreement without attacking them. Of course, sometimes it’s easier to be less sensitive with people who love you no matter what. Still, whether in a classroom, a workplace, or your family dinner table, there are rules for debating that help people with opposing points of view get to the heart of an issue while remaining civil:

1. Avoid direct insults and personal attacks—the quickest way to turn someone away from your discussion is to attack them personally. This is actually a common logical fallacy called ad hominem, which means “to the person,” and it means to attack the person rather than the issue.
2. Avoid generalizations and extreme examples—these are two more logical fallacies called bandwagon, or ad populum, and reduction to absurdity, or argumentum ad absurdum. The first is when you argue that everyone is doing something so it must be right. The second is when you argue that a belief or position would lead to an absurd or extreme outcome.
3. Avoid appealing to emotions rather than facts—it’s easy to get emotional if you’re debating something about which you feel passionate. Someone disagreeing with you can feel like a personal affront. This fallacy, called argument to compassion, appeals to one’s emotions and happens when we mistake feelings for facts. While strong and motivating, our feelings are not great arbiters of the truth.
4. Avoid irrelevant arguments—sometimes it’s easy to change the subject when we’re debating, especially if we feel flustered or like we’re not being heard. Irrelevant conclusion is the fallacy of introducing a topic that may or may not be sound logic but is not about the issue under debate.
5. Avoid appeal to bias—you may not have strong opinions on every topic but, no doubt, you are opinionated about things that matter to you. This strong view can create a bias, or a leaning toward an idea or belief. While there’s nothing wrong with having a strong opinion, you must be mindful to ensure that your bias doesn’t create prejudice. Ask yourself if your biases influence the ways in which you interact with other people and with ideas that differ from your own.
6. Avoid appeal to tradition—just because something worked in the past or was true in the past does not necessarily mean that it is true today. It’s easy to commit this fallacy, as we often default to “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” It’s appealing because it seems to be common sense. However, it ignores questions such as whether the existing or old policy truly works as well as it could and if new technology or new ways of thinking can offer an improvement. Old ways can certainly be good ways, but not simply because they are old.
7. Avoid making assumptions—often, we think we know enough about a topic or maybe even more than the person talking, so we jump ahead to the outcome. We assume we know what they’re referring to, thinking about, or even imagining, but this is a dangerous practice because it often leads to misunderstandings. In fact, most logical fallacies are the result of assuming.
8. Strive for root cause analysis—getting at the root cause of something means to dig deeper and deeper until you discover why a problem or disagreement occurred. Sometimes, the most obvious or immediate cause for a problem is not actually the most

significant one. Discovering the root cause can help to resolve the conflict or reveal that there isn't one at all.

9. Avoid obstinacy—in the heat of a debate, it's easy to dig in your heels and refuse to acknowledge when you're wrong. Your argument is at stake, and so is your ego. However, it's important to give credit where it's due and to say you're wrong if you are. If you misquoted a fact or made an incorrect assumption, admit to it and move on.
10. Strive for resolution—while some people like to debate for the sake of debating, in the case of a true conflict, both parties should seek agreement, or at least a truce. One way to do this is to listen more than you speak. Listen, listen, listen: you'll learn and perhaps make better points of your own if you deeply consider the other point of view.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Have you ever witnessed incivility in person or an argument in the news? Briefly describe what happened. Why do you think individuals are willing to shut down communication over issues they are passionate about?

Online Civility

The Internet is the watershed innovation of our time. It provides incredible access to information and resources, helping us to connect in ways inconceivable just a few decades ago. But it also presents risks, and these risks seem to be changing and increasing at the same rate as technology itself. Because of our regular access to the Internet, it's important to create a safe, healthy, and enjoyable online space.

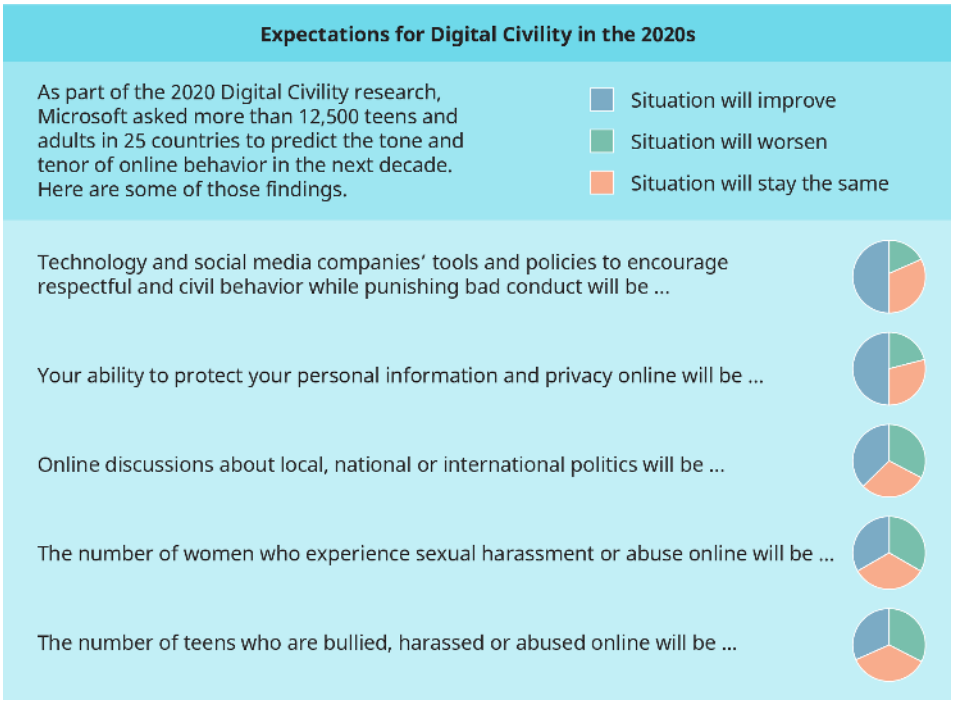


Figure 11.11: Microsoft's Digital Civility Research survey asked people their opinions on the future of online behavior and communication. While in some cases, the respondents thought circumstances would improve, predictions about the others, such as harassment and bullying, are more bleak. (Credit: Based on work from Microsoft, "Expectations for Digital Civility 2020."[4])

In the survey conducted by Microsoft, "nearly 4 in 10 [respondents] feel unwanted online contact (39%), bullying (39%) and unwelcome sexual attention (39%) will worsen [in 2020]. A slightly smaller percentage (35%) expect people's reputations, both professional and personal, will continue to be attacked online. One-quarter (25%) of respondents see improvement across each of these risk areas in 2020."

Digital civility is the practice of leading with empathy and kindness in all online interactions and treating each other with respect and dignity. This type of civility requires users to fully understand and appreciate potential harms and to follow the new rules of the digital road. Some best practices for online communication, often referred to as Netiquette, can help to avoid conflict and miscommunication. Below are some basic guidelines to help exercise digital civility:

- **Live the "Golden Rule"** and treat others with respect and dignity both online and off.
- **Respect differences** of culture, geography, and opinion, and when disagreements surface, engage thoughtfully.

- **Pause before replying** to comments or posts you disagree with, and ensure responses are considerate and free of name-calling and abuse.
- **Stand up for yourself and others** if it's safe and prudent to do so.

Footnotes

- 1 nad.org [www.nad.org]
- 2 rwjt.org [www.rwjf.org]
- 3 2017 National School Climate Survey, GLESN. glsen.org [www.glsen.org]
- 4 Expectations for Digital Civility. Note: Link leads to direct download.

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11.3: Categories of Diversity

Questions to consider:

- What is identity?
- Can a person have more than one identity?
- Can identity be ambiguous?
- What are fluidity and intersectionality?

The multiple roles we play in life—student, sibling, employee, roommate, for example—are only a partial glimpse into our true identity. Right now, you may think, "I really don't know what I want to be," meaning you don't know what you want to do for a living, but have you ever tried to define yourself in terms of the sum of your parts?

Social roles are those identities we assume in relationship to others. Our social roles tend to shift based on where we are and who we are with. Taking into account your social roles as well as your nationality, ethnicity, race, friends, gender, sexuality, beliefs, abilities, geography, etc., who are you?

Who Am I?

Popeye, a familiar 20th-century cartoon character, was a sailor-philosopher. He declared his own identity in a circular manner, landing us right where we started: "I am what I am and that's all that I am." Popeye proves his existence rather than help us identify him. It is his title, "The Sailor Man," that tells us how Popeye operates in the social sphere.

According to the American Psychological Association, personal identity is an individual's sense of self defined by (a) a set of physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that is not wholly shared with any other person and (b) a range of affiliations (e.g., ethnicity) and social roles. Your identity is tied to the most dominant aspects of your background and personality.[1] It determines the lens through which you see the world and the lens through which you receive information.

ACTIVITY

Complete the following statement using no more than four words:

I am _____.

It is difficult to narrow down our identity to just a few options. One way to complete the statement would be to use gender and geography markers. For example, "I am a male New Englander" or "I am an American woman." Assuming they are true, no one can argue against those identities, but do those statements represent everything or at least most things that identify the speakers? Probably not.

Try finishing the statement again by using as many words as you wish.

I am _____.

If you ended up with a long string of descriptors that would be hard for a new acquaintance to manage, don't worry. Our identities are complex and reflect that we lead interesting and multifaceted lives.

To better understand identity, consider how social psychologists describe it. Social psychologists, those who study how social interactions take place, often categorize identity into four types: personal identity, role identity, social identity, and collective identity.

Personal identity captures what distinguishes one person from another based on life experiences. No two people, even identical twins, live the same life.

Role identity defines how we interact in certain situations. Our roles change from setting to setting, and so do our identities. At work you may be a supervisor; in the classroom you are a peer working collaboratively; at home, you may be the parent of a 10-year-old. In each setting, your bubbly personality may be the same, but how your coworkers, classmates, and family see you is different.

Social identity shapes our public lives by our awareness of how we relate to certain groups. For example, an individual might relate to or "identify with" Korean Americans, Chicagoans, Methodists, and Lakers fans. These identities influence our interactions with others. Upon meeting someone, for example, we look for connections as to how we are the same or different. Our awareness

of who we are makes us behave a certain way in relation to others. If you identify as a hockey fan, you may feel an affinity for someone else who also loves the game.

Collective identity refers to how groups form around a common cause or belief. For example, individuals may bond over similar political ideologies or social movements. Their identity is as much a physical formation as a shared understanding of the issues they believe in. For example, many people consider themselves part of the collective energy surrounding the #metoo movement. Others may identify as fans of a specific type of entertainment such as Trekkies, fans of the Star Trek series.

"I am large. I contain multitudes." Walt Whitman

In his epic poem *Song of Myself*, Walt Whitman writes, "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large. I contain multitudes.)." Whitman was asserting and defending his shifting sense of self and identity. Those lines importantly point out that our identities may evolve over time. What we do and believe today may not be the same tomorrow. Further, at any one moment, the identities we claim may seem at odds with each other. Shifting identities are a part of personal growth. While we are figuring out who we truly are and what we believe, our sense of self and the image that others have of us may be unclear or ambiguous.

Many people are uncomfortable with identities that do not fit squarely into one category. How do you respond when someone's identity or social role is unclear? Such ambiguity may challenge your sense of certainty about the roles that we all play in relationship to one another. Racial, ethnic, and gender ambiguity, in particular, can challenge some people's sense of social order and social identity.

When we force others to choose only one category of identity (race, ethnicity, or gender, for example) to make ourselves feel comfortable, we do a disservice to the person who identifies with more than one group. For instance, people with multiracial ancestry are often told that they are too much of one and not enough of another.

The actor Keanu Reeves has a complex background. He was born in Beirut, Lebanon, to a white English mother and a father with Chinese-Hawaiian ancestry. His childhood was spent in Hawaii, Australia, New York, and Toronto. Reeves considers himself Canadian and has publicly acknowledged influences from all aspects of his heritage. Would you feel comfortable telling Keanu Reeves how he must identify racially and ethnically?

There is a question many people ask when they meet someone whom they cannot clearly identify by checking a specific identity box. Inappropriate or not, you have probably heard people ask, "What are you?" Would it surprise you if someone like Keanu Reeves shrugged and answered, "I'm just me"?

Malcom Gladwell is an author of five New York Times best-sellers and is hailed as one of Foreign Policy's Top Global Thinkers. He has spoken on his experience with identity as well. Gladwell has a black Jamaican mother and a white Irish father. He often tells the story of how the perception of his hair has allowed him to straddle racial groups. As long as he kept his hair cut very short, his fair skin obscured his black ancestry, and he was most often perceived as white. However, once he let his hair grow long into a curly Afro style, Gladwell says he began being pulled over for speeding tickets and stopped at airport check-ins. His racial expression carried serious consequences.



Figure 11.12: Writer Malcolm Gladwell's racial expression has impacted his treatment by others and his everyday experiences. (Credit: Kris Krug, Pop!Tech / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Gender

More and more, gender is also a diversity category that we increasingly understand to be less clearly defined. Some people identify themselves as gender fluid or non-binary. "Binary" refers to the notion that gender is only one of two possibilities, male or female. Fluidity suggests that there is a range or continuum of expression. Gender fluidity acknowledges that a person may vacillate between male and female identity.

Asia Kate Dillon is an American actor and the first non-binary actor to perform in a major television show with their roles on *Orange is the New Black* and *Billions*. In an article about the actor, a reporter conducting the interview describes his struggle with trying to describe Dillon to the manager of the restaurant where the two planned to meet. The reporter and the manger struggle with describing someone who does not fit a pre-defined notion of gender identity. Imagine the situation: You're meeting someone at a restaurant for the first time, and you need to describe the person to a manager. Typically, the person's gender would be a part of the description, but what if the person cannot be described as a man or a woman?

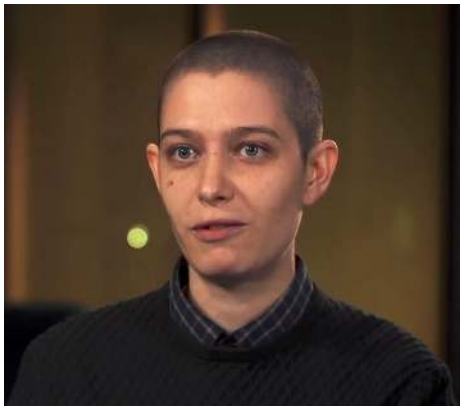


Figure 11.13: Asia Kate Dillon is a non-binary actor best known for their roles on *Orange Is the New Black* and *Billions*. (Credit: *Billions* Official Youtube Channel / Wikimedia Commons / Attribution 3.0 Unported (CC-BY 3.0))

Within any group, individuals obviously have a right to define themselves; however, collectively, a group's self-determination is also important. The history of black Americans demonstrates a progression of self-determined labels: Negro, Afro-American, colored, black, African American. Similarly, in the nonbinary community, self-described labels have evolved. Nouns such as *genderqueer* and pronouns such as *hir, ze*, and *Mx*. (instead of *Miss, Mrs. or Mr.)* have entered not only our informal lexicon, but the dictionary as well.

> ***Merriam-Webster's dictionary includes a definition of "they" that denotes a nonbinary identity, that is, someone who fluidly moves between male and female identities.***

Transgender men and women were assigned a gender identity at birth that does not fit their true identity. Even though our culture is increasingly giving space to non-heteronormative (straight) people to speak out and live openly, they do so at a risk. Violence against gay, nonbinary, and transgender people occurs at more frequent rates than for other groups.

To make ourselves feel comfortable, we often want people to fall into specific categories so that our own social identity is clear. However, instead of asking someone to make us feel comfortable, we should accept the identity people choose for themselves. Cultural competency includes respectfully addressing individuals as they ask to be addressed.

Table 11.1 The website Transstudent.org provides educational resources such as the above graphic for anyone seeking clarity on gender identity. Note that these are only examples of some gender pronouns, not a complete list.

Table Gender Pronoun Examples

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themself	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

Intersectionality

The many layers of our multiple identities do not fit together like puzzle pieces with clear boundaries between one piece and another. Our identities overlap, creating a combined identity in which one aspect is inseparable from the next.

The term intersectionality was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe how the experience of black women was a unique combination of gender and race that could not be divided into two separate identities. In other words, this group could not be seen solely as women or solely as black; where their identities overlapped is considered the "intersection," or crossroads, where identities combine in specific and inseparable ways.

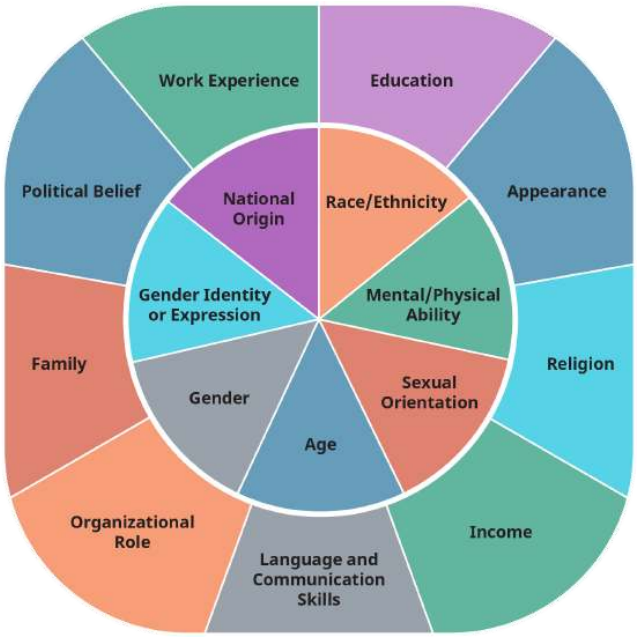


Figure 11.14: Our identities are formed by dozens of factors, sometimes represented in intersection wheels. Consider the subset of identity elements represented here. Generally, the outer ring are elements that may change relatively often, while the inner circle are often considered more permanent. (There are certainly exceptions.) How does each contribute to who you are, and how would possible change alter your self-defined identity?

Intersectionality and awareness of intersectionality can drive societal change, both in how people see themselves and how they interact with others. That experience can be very inward-facing, or can be more external. It can also lead to debate and challenges. For example, the term "Latinx" is growing in use because it is seen as more inclusive than "Latino/Latina," but some people—including scholars and advocates—lay out substantive arguments against its use. While the debate continues, it serves as an important reminder of a key element of intersectionality: Never assume that all people in a certain group or population feel the same way. Why not? Because people are more than any one element of their identity; they are defined by more than their race, color, geographic origin, gender, or socio-economic status. The overlapping aspects of each person's identity and experiences will create a unique perspective.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Consider the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality; religion, ethnicity, and geography; military experience; age and socioeconomic status; and many other ways our identities overlap. Consider how these overlap in you.

Do you know people who talk easily about their various identities? How does it inform the way you interact with them?

Footnotes

1. APA Dictionary of Psychology dictionary.apa.org [dictionary.apa.org] proper citation to come

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11.4: Living with Diversity

Ours is a very diverse society—and increasingly so. Already in many parts of the country, non-Hispanic whites comprise less than 50 percent of the population, and by 2020 an estimated one in three Americans will be a person of color, as will be about half of all college students. But "diversity" means much more than a variety of racial and ethnic differences. As we'll use the term here, diversity refers to the great variety of human characteristics—ways that we are different even as we are all human and share more similarities than differences. These differences are an essential part of what enriches humanity.

We'll look first at some of the ways that people differ and explore the benefits of diversity for our society generally and for the college experience. While we should all celebrate diversity, at the same time we need to acknowledge past issues that grew from misunderstandings of such differences and work together to bring change where needed.

What Diversity Really Means

Differences among people may involve where a person was born and raised, the person's family and cultural group, factual differences in personal identity, and chosen differences in significant beliefs. Some diversity is primarily cultural (involving shared beliefs and behaviors), other diversity may be biological (race, age, gender), and some diversity is defined in personal terms (sexual orientation, religion). Diversity generally involves things that may significantly affect some people's perceptions of others—not just any way people happen to be different. For example, having different tastes in music, movies, or books is not what we usually refer to as diversity.

When discussing diversity, it is often difficult to avoid seeming to generalize about different types of people—and such generalizations can seem similar to dangerous stereotypes. The following descriptions are meant only to suggest that individuals are different from other individuals in many possible ways and that we can all learn things from people whose ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values, backgrounds, experiences, and behaviors are different from our own. This is a primary reason college admissions departments frequently seek diversity in the student body. Following are various aspects of diversity:

- **Diversity of race.**Race refers to what we generally think of as biological differences and is often defined by what some think of as skin color. Such perceptions are often at least as much social as they are biological.
- **Diversity of ethnicity.**Ethnicity is a cultural distinction that is different from race. An ethnic group is a group of people who share a common identity and a perceived cultural heritage that often involves shared ways of speaking and behaving, religion, traditions, and other traits. The term "ethnic" also refers to such a group that is a minority within the larger society. Race and ethnicity are sometimes interrelated but not automatically so.
- **Diversity of cultural background.**Culture, like ethnicity, refers to shared characteristics, language, beliefs, behaviors, and identity. We are all influenced by our culture to some extent. While ethnic groups are typically smaller groups within a larger society, the larger society itself is often called the "dominant culture." The term is often used rather loosely to refer to any group with identifiable shared characteristics.
- **Diversity of educational background.** Colleges do not use a cookie-cutter approach to admit only students with identical academic skills. Diversity of educational background helps ensure a free flow of ideas and challenges those who might become set in their ways.
- **Diversity of geography.** People from different places within the United States or the world often have a range of differences in ideas, attitudes, and behaviors.
- **Diversity of socioeconomic background.** People's identities are influenced by how they grow up, and part of that background often involves socioeconomic factors. Socioeconomic diversity can contribute a wide variety of ideas and attitudes.
- **Diversity of**gender roles**.** Women have virtually all professional and social roles, including those once dominated by men, and men have taken on many roles, such as raising a child, that were formerly occupied mostly by women. These changing roles have brought diverse new ideas and attitudes to college campuses.
- **Diversity of age.** While younger students attending college immediately after high school are generally within the same age range, older students returning to school bring a diversity of age. Because they often have broader life experiences, many older students bring different ideas and attitudes to the campus.
- **Diversity of sexual orientation.** Gays and lesbians make up a significant percentage of people in American society and students on college campuses. Exposure to this diversity helps others overcome stereotypes and become more accepting of human differences.
- **Diversity of religion.** For many people, religion is not just a Sunday morning practice but a larger spiritual force that infuses their lives. Religion helps shape different ways of thinking and behaving, and thus diversity of religion brings a wider benefit of

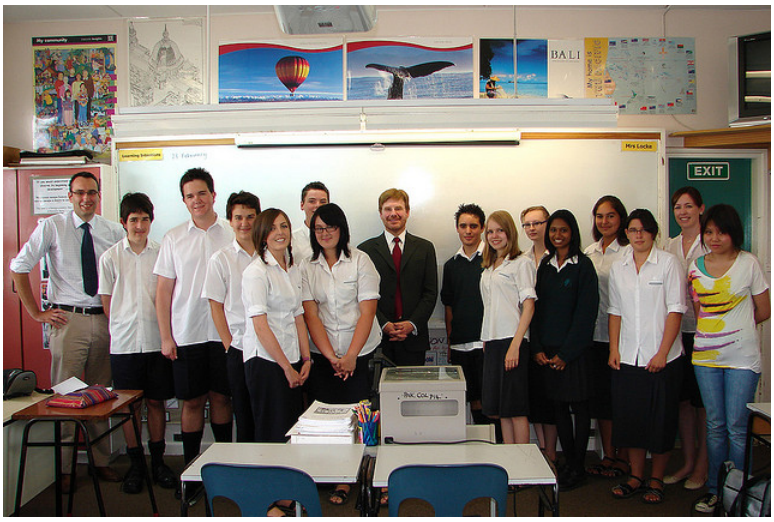
diversity to college.

- **Diversity of political views.** A diversity of political views helps broaden the level of discourse on campuses concerning current events and the roles of government and leadership at all levels. College students are frequently concerned about issues such as environmentalism and civil rights and can help bring about change.
- **Diversity of physical ability.** Some students have athletic talents. Some students have physical disabilities. Physical differences among students brings yet another kind of diversity to colleges—a diversity that both widens opportunities for a college education and also helps all students better understand how people relate to the world in physical as well as intellectual ways.
- **Diversity of extracurricular abilities.** As you remember from your college applications, colleges ask about what you do outside of class—clubs, activities, abilities in music and the arts, and so on. A student body with diverse interests and skills benefits all students by helping make the college experience full and enriching at all levels.

These are just some of the types of diversity you are likely to encounter on college campuses and in our society generally.

The Benefits of Diversity

Figure 10.15



Diversity in the classroom is a goal of college admissions offices.

US Embassy – Late February – The Year 12 History class at Pakuranga College and Ambassador Huebner – CC BY-ND 2.0.

The goal of many college admissions departments is to attract diverse students from a broad range of backgrounds involving different cultural, socioeconomic, age, and other factors—everything in the preceding list. But why is diversity so important? There are many reasons:

- **Experiencing diversity at college prepares students for the diversity they will encounter the rest of their lives.** Learning to understand and accept people different from ourselves is very important in our world. While many high school students may not have met or gotten to know well many people with different backgrounds, this often changes in college. Success in one's career and future social life also requires understanding people in new ways and interacting with new skills. Experiencing diversity in college assists in this process.
- **Students learn better in a diverse educational setting.** Encountering new concepts, values, and behaviors leads to thinking in deeper, more complex, and more creative ways, rather than furthering past ideas and attitudes. Students who experience the most racial and ethnic diversity in their classes are more engaged in active thinking processes and develop more intellectual and academic skills (and have higher grade point averages) than others with limited experience of diversity.
- **Attention to diversity leads to a broader range of teaching methods, which benefits the learning process for all students.** Just as people are different in diverse ways, people from different backgrounds and experiences learn in different ways. College teaching has expanded to include many new teaching techniques. All students gain when instructors make the effort to address the diverse learning needs of all students.
- **Experiencing diversity on campus is beneficial for both minority and majority students.** Students have more fulfilling social relationships and report more satisfaction and involvement with their college experience. Studies show *all* students on

campus gain from diversity programs. All the social and intellectual benefits of diversity cited in this list hold true for all students.

- **Diversity experiences help break the patterns of segregation and prejudice that have characterized American history.**Discrimination against others—whether by race, gender, age, sexual orientation, or anything else—is rooted in ignorance and sometimes fear of people who are different. Getting to know people who are different is the first step in accepting those differences, furthering the goal of a society free of all forms of prejudice and the unfair treatment of people.
- **Students of a traditional college age are in an ideal stage of development for forming healthy attitudes about diversity.** Younger students may not yet have reached a point at which they can fully understand and accept very different ideas and behaviors in others. The college years are a time of growth and maturation intellectually, socially, and emotionally, and a sustained experience of diversity is an opportunity to heighten this process.
- **Experiencing diversity makes us all better citizens in our democracy.** When people can better understand and consider the ideas and perspectives of others, they are better equipped to participate meaningfully in our society. Democratic government depends on shared values of equality and the public good. An attitude of "us versus them," in contrast, does not further the public good or advance democratic government. Studies have shown that college graduates with a good experience of diversity generally maintain patterns of openness and inclusivity in their future lives.
- **Diversity enhances self-awareness.** We gain insights into our own thought processes, life experiences, and values as we learn from people whose backgrounds and experiences are different from our own.

While all the benefits described have been demonstrated repeatedly on campuses all across the country in study after study, and while admissions and retention programs on virtually all campuses promote and celebrate diversity, some problems still remain. Society changes only slowly, and sadly, many students in some areas—including gay and lesbian students, students with disabilities, and many minority students—still feel marginalized in the dominant culture of their campuses. Even in a country that elected an African American president, racism exists in many places. Gays and lesbians are still fighting for equal rights under the law and acceptance everywhere. Women still earn less than men in the same jobs. Thus society as a whole, and colleges in particular, need to continue to work to destroy old stereotypes and achieve a full acceptance of our human differences.

Multiculturalism is *not* political correctness. We've all heard jokes about "political correctness," which suggests that we do or say certain things not because they are right but because we're expected to pay lip service to them. Unfortunately, some people think of colleges' diversity programs as just the politically correct thing to do. Use your critical thinking skills if you hear such statements. In the world of higher education, truth is discovered through investigation and research—and research has shown repeatedly the value of diversity as well as programs designed to promote diversity.

Older "Nontraditional" Students and Diversity

Sometimes overlooked among the types of diversity on most college campuses are older students, often called nontraditional students, who are returning to education usually after working a number of years. While many college students are younger and enroll in college immediately after high school, these older students help bring a wider range of diversity to campuses and deserve special attention for the benefits they bring for all students. As a group, older students often share certain characteristics that bring unique value to the college experience overall. Older students often

- have well-established identities and broader roles and responsibilities on which to base their thinking;
- more fully represent the local community and its values;
- have greater emotional independence and self-reliance;
- have well-developed problem-solving, self-directing, and decision-making skills;
- can share important life lessons and insights not found in textbooks;
- have relationships and experience with a greater variety of people;
- can be positive role models for younger students with less experience and maturity.

In many ways, these "nontraditional" students benefit the campus as a whole and contribute in meaningful ways to the educational process. Both instructors and "traditional" students gain when older students share their ideas and feelings in class discussions, study groups, and all forms of social interaction.

Accepting and Celebrating Diversity and Working for Change

More than anything, multiculturalism is an attitude. Multiculturalism involves accepting and respecting the ideas, feelings, behaviors, and experiences of people different from oneself—all the forms of diversity described earlier. America is not actually a

"melting pot" in the sense that people from diverse backgrounds somehow all become the same. America has always included a great diversity of ideas, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, the constitutional separation of church and state, a fundamental principle present since early days in the United States, guarantees that people of all religion have the same freedoms and rights for worship and religious behavior. People of diverse religious backgrounds are not expected to "melt" together into one religion. Other laws guarantee the equal rights of all people regardless of skin color, gender, age, and other differences—including more recently, in some states, equality under the law for those with diverse sexual orientation. The United States does not even have an official national language—and many government and other publications in various geographical areas are offered in a variety of languages as well. In short, America as a nation has always recognized the realities and benefits of diversity.

Colleges similarly make commitments to ensure they respect and value differences among people and promote a wide understanding of such differences. Most colleges now have formal diversity programs to help all students not only accept and understand differences among students of varied backgrounds but also celebrate the benefits for all.

What Students Can Do

While diversity exists in most places, not everyone automatically understands differences among people and celebrates the value of those differences. Students who never think about diversity and who make no conscious effort to experience and understand others gain less than others who do. There are many ways you can experience the benefits of diversity on your college campus, however, beginning with your own attitudes and by taking steps to increase your experiences with diverse individuals.

Acknowledge your own uniqueness, for you are diverse, too. Diversity doesn't involve just other people. Consider that you may be just as different to other people as they are to you. Don't think of the other person as being the one who is different, that you are somehow the "norm." Your religion may seem just as odd to them as theirs does to you, and your clothing may seem just as strange looking to them as theirs is to you—until you accept there is no one "normal" or right way to be. Look at yourself in a mirror and consider why you look as you do. Why do you use the slang you do with your friends? Why did you just have that type of food for breakfast? How is it that you prefer certain types of music? Read certain books? Talk about certain things? Much of this has to do with your cultural background—so it makes sense that someone from another cultural or ethnic background is different in some ways. But both of you are also individuals with your own tastes, preferences, ideas, and attitudes—making you unique. It's only when you realize your own uniqueness that you can begin to understand and respect the uniqueness of others, too.

Consider your own (possibly unconscious) stereotypes. A stereotype is a fixed, simplistic view of what people in a certain group are like. It is often the basis for prejudice and discrimination: behaving differently toward someone because you stereotype them in some way. Stereotypes are generally learned and emerge in the dominant culture's attitudes toward those from outside that dominant group. A stereotype may be explicitly racist and destructive, and it may also be a simplistic generalization applied to any group of people, even if intended to be flattering rather than negative. As you have read this chapter so far, did you find yourself thinking about any group of people, based on any kind of difference, and perhaps thinking in terms of stereotypes? If you walked into a party and saw many different kinds of people standing about, would you naturally avoid some and move toward others? Remember, we learn stereotypes from our cultural background—so it's not a terrible thing to admit you have inherited some stereotypes. Thinking about them is a first step in breaking out of these irrational thought patterns.

Examples of Cultural Differences in Body Language

While we should be careful not to stereotype individuals or whole cultures, it is important to be aware of potential differences among cultures when interacting with other people. For example, body language often has different meanings in different cultures. Understanding such differences can help you better understand your interaction with others. Here are a few examples:

- Some Americans clap their hands together to emphasize a point, while some French clap to end a conversation.
- Many Americans cross their legs when seated and thus may point the bottom of their shoe toward another person; many Japanese find this gesture offensive.
- Many Americans may wave their index fingers at someone else to make a point, but this gesture is often offensive to Mexicans and Somali, who may use that gesture only for dogs.
- In America, men and women shake hands with each other, but in some other cultures, handshakes across genders are not acceptable.
- In America, eye contact is generally considered polite and a sign of interest, whereas in many Asian cultures, people show their respect for others by bowing their head slightly and consider steady eye contact aggressive.

Activity: Challenge Your Thinking

Read each of the following scenarios quickly and respond immediately without stopping to think. There are no right or wrong answers.

Scenario 1. You are walking home down a dark sidewalk when ahead you see three people standing around. Something about the way they are hanging out makes you a little frightened to walk past them.

Be honest with yourself: what did you just imagine these people looked like?

_____

Why do think you might have associated this particular mental picture with the emotion of feeling frightened?

_____

Scenario 2. In a café on campus, you see a student from another country sitting alone—someone you know casually from a class—and you walk over and are just about to ask if you can join him, when two other students also from his country appear and sit down with him. You hesitate.

Would you have hesitated if this person had the same cultural background as you? What makes this situation different?

_____

As you hesitate, you overhear them conversing in a language other than English.

Be honest with yourself: how does that make you feel now?

_____

Scenario 3. A couple you know invites you to join them and one of their friends, whom you have not met, on a "double date"—a movie and dinner after. When you meet them outside the theater, you see that their friend, your date, is of a race different from your own.

Are you surprised or shocked? What is your first reaction?

_____

Do you anticipate any more difficulty making conversation with your date than with anyone else whom you have just met?

_____

Should your friends have told you in advance? Why or why not?

_____

If they had told you, would that have made any difference? Explain.

_____

Now think for a minute about how you responded in these scenarios. Did your mental image in the first scenario involve a negative stereotype? What images in the media or society might have contributed to that response? The second and third scenarios involve simple situations in which you couldn't help but note some difference between you and another person. What might you feel in such situations in real life? Again, there is no "right" answer, and an awareness of differences is normal and natural even if it may cause some discomfort at first. On the other hand, if you have had significant experiences with diverse others, you might have read these scenarios and simply wondered, "So what? What's the big deal?" *It's worthwhile thinking about what that means*.

Do not try to ignore differences among people. Some people try so hard to avoid stereotyping that they go to the other extreme and try to avoid seeing any differences at all among people. But as we have seen throughout this chapter, people *are* different in many ways, and we should accept that if we are to experience the benefits of diversity.

Don't apply any group generalizations to individuals. As an extension of not stereotyping any group, also don't think of any individual person in terms of group characteristics. People are individuals first, members of a group second, and any given generalization simply may not apply to an individual. Be open minded and treat everyone with respect as an individual with his or her own ideas, attitudes, and preferences.

Develop cultural sensitivity for communication. Realize that your words may not mean quite the same thing in different cultural contexts or to individuals from different backgrounds. This is particularly true of slang words, which you should generally avoid until you are sure the other person will know what you mean. Never try to use slang or expressions you think are common in the cultural group of the person you are speaking with. Similarly, since body language often varies among different cultures, avoid strong gestures and expressions until the responses of the other person signify he or she will not misinterpret the messages sent by your body language.

Take advantage of campus opportunities to increase your cultural awareness. Your college likely has multiculturalism courses or workshops you can sign up for. Special events, cultural fairs and celebrations, concerts, and other programs are held frequently on most campuses. There may also be opportunities to participate in group travel to other countries or regions of cultural diversity.

Take the initiative in social interactions. Many students just naturally hang out with other students they are most like—that almost seems to be part of human nature. Even when we're open minded and want to learn about others different from ourselves, it often seems easier and more comfortable to interact with others of the same age, cultural group, and so on. If we don't make a small effort to meet others, however, we miss a great opportunity to learn and broaden our horizons. Next time you're looking around the classroom or dorm for someone to ask about a class you missed or to study together for a test or group project, choose someone different from you in some way. Making friends with others of different backgrounds is often one of the most fulfilling experiences of college students.

Work through conflicts as in any other interaction. Conflicts simply occur among people, whether of the same or different background. If you are afraid of making a mistake when interacting with someone from a different background, you might avoid interaction altogether—and thus miss the benefits of diversity. Nothing risked, nothing gained. If you are sincere and respect the other, there is less risk of a misunderstanding occurring. If conflict does occur, work to resolve it as you would any other tension with another person, as described earlier.

Take a Stand against Prejudice and Hate

Unfortunately prejudice and hate still exist in America, even on college campuses. In addition to racial prejudice, some people are also prejudiced against women, people with disabilities, older adults, gays and lesbians—virtually all groups that can be characterized as "different." All campuses have policies against all forms of prejudice and discriminatory behaviors. But it is not enough for only college administrators to fight prejudice and hate—this is a responsibility for all good citizens who take seriously the shared American value of equality for all people. So what can you as a college student do?

- **Decide that it does matter.** Prejudice threatens us all, not just the particular group being discriminated against in a specific incident. Don't stand on the sidelines or think it's up to the people who may be victimized by prejudice or hate to do something about it. We can all do something.
- **Talk with others.** Communication has great value on campuses. Let others know how you feel about any acts of prejudice or hatred that you witness. The more everyone openly condemns such behavior, the less likely it is to reappear in the future. This applies even if you hear another student telling a racist joke or putting down the opposite sex—speak up and tell the person you find such statements offensive. You don't want that person to think you agree with them. Speaking up can be difficult to do, but it can be done tactfully. People can and do learn what is acceptable in a diverse environment.
- **Report incidents you observe.** If you happen to see someone spray-painting a hateful slogan, for example, be a good citizen and report it to the appropriate campus office or the police.
- **Support student groups working for change.** America has a great tradition of college students banding together to help solve social problems. Show your support for groups and activities that celebrate diversity and condemn prejudice. Even if you are a shy, quiet person, your attendance at a parade or gathering lends support. Or you can write a letter to the editor in a student newspaper, help hand out leaflets for an upcoming rally, or put up posters on campus. Once you become aware of such student activities on campus, you'll find many ways you can help take a stand.
- **Celebrate diversity.** In many ways, you can learn more about diversity through campus programs and activities. The more all students participate, the closer the campus will come to being free of prejudice and hate. Be a role model in how you act and what you say in relation to diversity, and you may have more effect on others than you realize.

Dealing with Prejudice

If you yourself experience prejudice or discrimination related to your race or ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or any other aspect of diversity, don't just try to ignore it or accept it as something that cannot be changed. As discussed

earlier, college students can do much to minimize intolerance on campus. Many overt forms of discrimination are frankly illegal and against college policies. You owe it to yourself, first and foremost, to report it to the appropriate college authority.

You can also attack prejudice in other ways. Join a campus organization that works to reduce prejudice or start a new group and discuss ways you can confront the problem and work for a solution. Seek solidarity with other groups. Organize positive celebrations and events to promote understanding. Write an article for a campus publication explaining the values of diversity and condemning intolerance.

What if you are directly confronted by an individual or group making racist or other discriminatory remarks? In an emotionally charged situation, rational dialogue may be difficult or impossible, and a shouting match or name-calling seldom is productive. If the person may have made an offensive remark inadvertently or because of a misunderstanding, then you may be able to calmly explain the problem with what they said or did. Hopefully the person will apologize and learn from the experience. But if the person made the remark or acted that way intentionally, confronting this negative person directly may be difficult and not have a positive outcome. Most important, take care that the situation does not escalate in the direction of violence. Reporting the incident instead to college authorities may better serve the larger purpose of working toward harmony and tolerance.

Journal Entry

If you are in the dominant cultural group on your campus, write a paragraph describing values you share with your cultural group. Then list things that students with a different background may have difficulty understanding about your group. If your racial, ethnic, or cultural background is different from the dominant cultural group on your campus, write a paragraph describing how students in the dominant culture seem to differ from your own culture.

Look back at what you just wrote. Did you focus on characteristics that seem either positive or negative? Might there be any stereotypes creeping into your thinking?

Write a second paragraph focusing on yourself as a unique individual, not a part of a group. How would others benefit from getting to know you better?

Key Takeaways

- Diversity refers to a great variety of human characteristics, and ways in which people differ.
- Diversity in the college environment has many benefits for all students, faculty, and others. Students learn more in a diverse setting, are better prepared for the future, and contribute more fully in positive ways to society.
- Nontraditional students bring many unique characteristics to the college environment that help enrich all students' social and educational experiences.
- Multiculturalism involves respecting the ideas, feelings, behaviors, and experiences different from oneself in any way. Colleges promote both diversity in the student body and multiculturalism among all students.
- As an individual, each of us can gain the benefits of diversity as we challenge our own stereotypes, understand and celebrate differences in others, and learn to interact well with others different from ourselves. Take advantage of campus opportunities to increase your cultural awareness and to form social relationships with diverse others.
- Although we would hope that all college campuses would be free of hate and discrimination, it can become necessary to take a stand against prejudice.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. List as many types of diversity as you can think of.

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Write a description of someone who is of a different race from yourself but who may not be different ethnically.

   _____

   _____

3. List several characteristics of *your own* cultural background that may be different from the cultural background of some others on your campus.

_____

_____

_____

4. For each of the following statements about diversity, circle T for true or F for false:

T	F	A diverse educational environment is primarily good for students from minority groups.
T	F	Students of traditional college age are usually already too old to be open to new ideas and attitudes learned from others with diverse backgrounds.
T	F	We gain insights into ourselves when we learn from others who are different from ourselves.
T	F	You can better understand an individual from a cultural group other than your own if you apply generalizations about that other culture to the person.
T	F	The best way to avoid a conflict that may arise from cultural differences is to interact only politely and in superficial ways with people who seem different from yourself.

5. Is it a cultural observation or a stereotype to say, for example, that Mexicans are more relaxed about time commitments than Americans? (Think a minute before answering. How would you justify and explain your answer if challenged? Could both answers be right in some way?)

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. List at least three ways you may be able to increase your cultural awareness and understanding of diversity on your campus.

_____

_____

_____

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11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape

Questions to consider:

- What happens when we make assumptions about others?
- Are microaggressions honest mistakes?
- How do I know if I have a diversity "problem"?
- How important is diversity awareness in the college classroom?

Avoid Making Assumptions

By now you should be aware of the many ways diversity can be both observable and less apparent. Based on surface clues, we may be able to approximate someone's age, weight, and perhaps their geographical origin, but even with those observable characteristics, we cannot be sure about how individuals define themselves. If we rely too heavily on assumptions, we may be buying into stereotypes, or generalizations.

Stereotyping robs people of their individual identities. If we buy into stereotypes, we project a profile onto someone that probably is not true. Prejudging people without knowing them, better known as prejudice or bias, has consequences for both the person who is biased and the individual or group that is prejudged. In such a scenario, the intimacy of real human connections is lost. Individuals are objectified, meaning that they only serve as symbolic examples of who we assume they are instead of the complex, intersectional individuals we know each person to be.

Stereotyping may be our way of avoiding others' complexities. When we stereotype, we do not have to remember distinguishing details about a person. We simply write their stories for ourselves and let those stories fulfill who we expect those individuals to be. For example, a hiring manager may project onto an Asian American the stereotype of being good at math, and hire her as a researcher over her Hispanic counterpart. Similarly, an elementary school teacher may recruit an Indian American sixth-grader to the spelling bee team because many Indian American students have won national tournaments in the recent past. A real estate developer may hire a gay man as an interior designer because he has seen so many gay men performing this job on television programs. A coach chooses a white male student to be a quarterback because traditionally, quarterbacks have been white men. In those scenarios, individuals of other backgrounds, with similar abilities, may have been overlooked because they do not fit the stereotype of who others suspect them to be.

Earlier in this chapter, equity and inclusion were discussed as going hand in hand with achieving civility and diversity. In the above scenarios, equity and inclusion are needed as guiding principles for those with decision-making power who are blocking opportunity for nontraditional groups. Equity might be achieved by giving a diverse group of people access to internships to demonstrate their skills. Inclusion might be achieved by assembling a hiring or recruiting committee that might have a better chance of seeing beyond stereotypical expectations.

APPLICATION

Often, our assumptions and their impacts are not life-changing, but they can be damaging to others and limiting to our own understanding. Consider the following scenarios, and answer the questions that follow.

Scenario 1:

During an in-class conversation about a new mission to explore Mars, two classmates offer opinions.

- Student A says, "We should focus on this planet before we focus on others."
- Student B responds immediately with, "If we're going to stop climate change, we'll probably find the answer through science related to space travel."

What assumption did student B make about student A's point? What else, aside from climate change, could student A have been considering?

Scenario 2:

For an important group project, an instructor designates teams of six students and gives them time to set up their work schedule for the assignment. One group of students, most of whom don't know each other well, agrees to meet two nights later. They initially propose to get together in the library, but at the last moment one member suggests an off-campus restaurant; several of the others agree right away and move on to other topics. The remaining two students look at each other uncomfortably. One

interjects, suggesting they go back to the original idea of meeting in the library, but the others are already getting up to leave. It's clear that two of the students are uncomfortable meeting at the restaurant.

What might be the reason that two of the students are not comfortable meeting over dinner? What assumptions did the others make?

Being civil and inclusive does not require a deep-seated knowledge of the backgrounds and perspectives of everyone you meet. That would be impossible. But avoiding assumptions and being considerate will build better relationships and provide a more effective learning experience. It takes openness and self-awareness and sometimes requires help or advice, but learning to be sensitive—practicing assumption avoidance—is like a muscle you can strengthen.

Be Mindful of Microaggressions

Whether we mean to or not, we sometimes offend people by not thinking about what we say and the manner in which we say it. One danger of limiting our social interactions to people who are from our own social group is in being insensitive to people who are not like us. The term *microaggression* refers to acts of insensitivity that reveal our inherent biases, cultural incompetency, and hostility toward someone outside of our community. Those biases can be toward race, gender, nationality, or any other diversity variable. The individual on the receiving end of a microaggression is reminded of the barriers to complete acceptance and understanding in the relationship. Let's consider an example.

Ann is new to her office job. Her colleagues are friendly and helpful, and her first two months have been promising. She uncovered a significant oversight in a financial report, and, based on her attention to detail, was put on a team working with a large client. While waiting in line at the cafeteria one day, Ann's new boss overhears her laughing and talking loudly with some colleagues. He then steps into the conversation, saying, "Ann, this isn't a night at one of your clubs. Quiet down." As people from the nearby tables look on, Ann is humiliated and angered.

What was Ann's manager implying? What could he have meant by referring to "*your* clubs?" How would you feel if such a comment were openly directed at you? One reaction to this interaction might be to say, "So what? Why let other people determine how you feel? Ignore them." While that is certainly reasonable, it may ignore the pain and invalidation of the experience. And even if you could simply ignore some of these comments, there is a compounding effect of being frequently, if not constantly, barraged by such experiences.

There are many other forms of microaggressions that occur in healthcare. For example:

- telling a person with obesity that they should eat less
- Assuming a patient's socioeconomic status based on appearance.
- Making assumptions about a patient's health literacy.
- Using language that is culturally insensitive or offensive.
- Dismissing a patient's concerns or symptoms based on stereotypes.
- Treating patients differently based on their race or ethnicity.

Consider the table below, which highlights common examples of microaggressions. In many cases, the person speaking these phrases may not mean to be offensive. In fact, in some cases the speaker might think they are being *nice*. However, appropriate terminology and other attitudes or acceptable descriptions change all the time. Before saying something, consider how a person could take the words differently than you meant them. Emotional intelligence and empathy can help understand another's perspective.

Table 11.2 Have you made statements like these, perhaps without realizing the offense they might cause? Some of these could be intended as compliments, but they could have the unintended effect of diminishing or invalidating someone. (Credit: Modification of work by Derald Wing Sue[1].)

Microaggressions		
Category	**Microaggression**	**Why It's Offensive**
Educational Status or Situation	"You're an athlete; you don't need to study."	Stereotypes athletes and ignores their hard work.
	"You don't get financial aid; you must be rich.	"Even an assumption of privilege can be invalidating.

	Microaggressions	
	“Did they have honors classes at your high school?”	Implies that someone is less prepared or intelligent based on their geography.
Race, Ethnicity, National Origin“	You speak so well for someone like you.”	Implies that people of a certain race/ethnicity can’t speak well.
	“No, where are you *really* from?”	Calling attention to someone’s national origin makes them feel separate.“
	You must be good at _____.”	Falsely connects identity to ability.
	“My people had it so much worse than yours did.”	Makes assumptions and diminishes suffering/difficulty.
	“I’m not even going to try your name. It looks too difficult.”	Dismisses a person’s culture and heritage.
	“It’s so much easier for black people to get into college.”	Assumes that merit is not the basis for achievement.
Gender and Gender Identity	“They’re *so* emotional.”	Assumes a person cannot be emotional and rational.
	“I guess you can’t meet tonight because you have to take care of your son?”	Assumes a parent (of any gender) cannot participate.
	“I don’t get all this pronoun stuff, so I’m just gonna call you what I call you.”	Diminishes the importance of gender identity; indicates a lack of empathy.
	“I can’t even tell you used to be a woman.”	Conflates identity with appearance, and assumes a person needs someone else’s validation.
	“You’re too good-looking to be so smart.”	Connects outward appearance to ability.
Sexual Orientation	“I support you; just don’t throw it in my face.”	Denies another person’s right to express their identity or point of view.
	“You seem so rugged for a gay guy.”	Stereotypes all gay people as being “not rugged,” and could likely offend the recipient.
	“I might try being a lesbian.”	May imply that sexual orientation is a choice.
	“I can’t even keep track of all these new categories.”	Bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and other sexual orientations are just as valid and deserving of respect as more binary orientations.
	“You can’t just love whomever you want; pick one.”	
Age	“Are you going to need help with the software?”	May stereotype an older person as lacking experience with the latest technology.
	“Young people have it so easy nowadays.”	Makes a false comparison between age and experience.
	“Okay, boomer.”	Dismisses an older generation as out of touch.
Size	“I bet no one messes with you.”	Projects a tendency to be aggressive onto a person of large stature.

	Microaggressions	
	"You are so cute and tiny."	Condescending to a person of small stature.
	"I wish I was thin and perfect like you."	Equates a person's size with character.
Ability	(To a person using a wheelchair) "I wish I could sit down wherever I went."	Falsely assumes a wheelchair is a luxury; minimizes disabilities.
	"You don't have to complete the whole test. Just do your best."	Assumes that a disability means limited intellectual potential.
	"I'm blind without my glasses."	Equating diminished capacity with a true disability.

Everyone Has a Problem: Implicit Bias

One reason we fall prey to stereotypes is our own implicit bias. Jo Handelsman and Natasha Sakraney, who developed science and technology policy during the Obama administration, defined implicit bias.

According to Handelsman and Sakraney, "A lifetime of experience and cultural history shapes people and their judgments of others. Research demonstrates that most people hold unconscious, implicit assumptions that influence their judgments and perceptions of others. Implicit bias manifests in expectations or assumptions about physical or social characteristics dictated by stereotypes that are based on a person's race, gender, age, or ethnicity. People who intend to be fair, and believe they are egalitarian, apply biases unintentionally. Some behaviors that result from implicit bias manifest in actions, and others are embodied in the absence of action; either can reduce the quality of the workforce and create an unfair and destructive environment."[2]

The notion of bias being "implicit," or unconsciously embedded in our thoughts and actions, is what makes this characteristic hard to recognize and evaluate. You may assume that you hold no racial bias, but messages from our upbringing, social groups, and media can feed us negative racial stereotypes no matter how carefully we select and consume information. Further, online environments have algorithms that reduce our exposure to diverse points of view. Psychologists generally agree that implicit bias affects the judgements we make about others.

Harvard University's Project Implicit website offers an interactive implicit association test that measures individual preference for characteristics such as weight, skin color, and gender. During the test, participants are asked to match a series of words and images with positive or negative associations. Test results, researchers suggest, can indicate the extent to which there is implicit bias in favor of or against a certain group. Completing a test like this might reveal unconscious feelings you were previously aware you had.

The researchers who developed the test make clear that there are limitations to its validity and that for some, the results of the test can be unsettling. The test makers advise not taking the test if you feel unprepared to receive unexpected results.

APPLICATION

Take the Project Implicit(opens in new window) test and write a brief passage about your results.

Do you think the results accurately reflect your attitude toward the group you tested on? Can you point to any actions or thoughts you have about the group you tested on that are or are not reflected in the test results? Will you change any behaviors or try to think differently about the group you tested on based on your results? Why or why not?

Cultural Competency in the College Classroom

We carry our attitudes about gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and other diversity categories with us wherever we go. The college classroom is no different than any other place. Both educators and students maintain their implicit bias and are sometimes made uncomfortable by interacting with people different than themselves. Take for example a female freshman who has attended a school for girls for six years before college. She might find being in the classroom with her new male classmates a culture shock and dismiss male students' contributions to class discussions. Similarly, a homeschooled student may be surprised to find that no one on campus shares his religion. He may feel isolated in class until he finds other students of similar background and experience. Embedded in your classroom may be peers who are food insecure, undocumented, veterans, atheist, Muslim, or politically liberal

or conservative. These identities may not be visible, but they still may separate and even marginalize these members of your community. If, in the context of classroom conversations, their perspectives are overlooked, they may also feel very isolated.

In each case, the students' assumptions, previous experience with diversity of any kind, and implicit bias surface. How each student reacts to the new situation can differ. One reaction might be to self-segregate, that is, locate people they believe are similar to them based on how they look, the assumption being that those people will share the same academic skills, cultural interests, and personal values that make the student feel comfortable. The English instructor at the beginning of this chapter who assumed all of his students were the same demonstrated how this strategy could backfire.

You do not have to be enrolled in a course related to diversity, such as Asian American literature, to be concerned about diversity in the classroom. Diversity touches all aspects of our lives and can enter a curriculum or discussion at any time because each student and the instructor bring multiple identities and concerns into the classroom. Ignoring these concerns, which often reveal themselves as questions, makes for an unfulfilling educational experience.

In higher education, diversity includes not only the identities we have discussed such as race and gender, but also academic preparation and ability, learning differences, familiarity with technology, part-time status, language, and other factors students bring with them. Of course, the instructor, too, brings diversity into the classroom setting. They decide how to incorporate diverse perspectives into class discussions, maintain rules of civility, choose inclusive materials to study or reference, receive training on giving accommodations to students who need them, and acknowledge their own implicit bias. If they are culturally competent, both students and instructors are juggling many concerns.

How do you navigate diversity in the college classroom?

Academic Freedom Allows for Honest Conversations

Academic freedom applies to the permission instructors and students have to follow a line of intellectual inquiry without the fear of censorship or sanction. There are many heavily contested intellectual and cultural debates that, for some, are not resolved. A student who wants to argue against prevailing opinion has the right to do so based on academic freedom. Many point to a liberal bias on college campuses. Conservative points of view on immigration, education, and even science, are often not accepted on campus as readily as liberal viewpoints. An instructor or student who wants to posit a conservative idea, however, has the right to do so because of academic freedom.

Uncomfortable conversations about diversity are a part of the college classroom landscape. For example, a student might use statistical data to argue that disparities in degrees for men and women in chemistry reflect an advantage in analytical ability for men. While many would disagree with that theory, the student could pursue that topic in a discussion or paper as long as they use evidence and sound, logical reasoning.

"I'm just me."

Remember the response to the "What are you?" question for people whose racial or gender identity was ambiguous? "I'm just me" also serves those who are undecided about diversity issues or those who do not fall into hard categories such as feminist, liberal, conservative, or religious. Ambiguity sometimes makes others feel uncomfortable. For example, if someone states she is a Catholic feminist unsure about abortion rights, another student may wonder how to compare her own strong pro-life position to her classmate's uncertainty. It would be much easier to know exactly which side her classmate is on. Some people straddle the fence on big issues, and that is OK. You do not have to fit neatly into one school of thought. Answer your detractors with "I'm just me," or tell them if you genuinely don't know enough about an issue or are not ready to take a strong position.

Seek Resources and Projects That Contribute to Civility

A culturally responsive curriculum addresses cultural and ethnic differences of students. Even in classrooms full of minority students, the textbooks and topics may only reflect American cultural norms determined by the mainstream and tradition. Students may not relate to teaching that never makes reference to their socio-economic background, race, or their own way of thinking and expression. Educators widely believe that a culturally responsive curriculum, one that integrates relatable contexts for learning and reinforces cultural norms of the students receiving the information, makes a difference.

The K-12 classroom is different than the college classroom. Because of academic freedom, college instructors are not required to be culturally inclusive. (They *are* usually required to be respectful and civil, but there are different interpretations of those qualities.) Because American colleges are increasingly more sensitive to issues regarding diversity, faculty are compelled to be inclusive. Still, diversity is not always adequately addressed. In his TED "Talk Can Art Amend History?" the artist Titus Kaphar

tells the story of the art history class that influenced him to become an artist and provides an example of this absence of diversity in the college classroom. Kaphar explains that his instructor led his class through important periods and artists throughout history, but failed to spend time on black artists, something that Kaphar was anxiously awaiting. The instructor stated that there was just not enough time to cover it. While the professor probably did not intend to be noninclusive, her choice resulted in just that. Kaphar let his disappointment fuel his passion and mission to amend the representation of black figures in historical paintings. His work brings to light the unnoticed black figures that are too often overlooked.



Figure 11.16: In *Twisted Tropes*, Titus Kaphar reworks a painting to bring a black figure to the forefront of an arrangement in which she had previously been marginalized. (Credit: smallcurio / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Any student can respond to a lack of diversity in a curriculum as Titus Kaphar did. Where you find diversity missing, when possible, fill in the gaps with research papers and projects that broaden your exposure to diverse perspectives. Take the time to research contributions in your field by underrepresented groups. Discover the diversity issues relevant to your major. Are women well-represented in your field? Is there equity when it comes to access to opportunities such as internships? Are veterans welcomed? Do the academic societies in your discipline have subgroups or boards focused on diversity and equity? (Most do.) Resources for expanding our understanding and inclusion of diversity issues are all around us.

Directly Confront Prejudice

To draw our attention to possible danger, the Department of Homeland Security has adopted the phrase, “If you see something, say something.” That credo can easily be adopted to confront stereotypes and bias: “If you hear something, say something.” Academic freedom protects students and instructors from reprisal for having unpopular opinions, but prejudice is never correct, nor should it be tolerated. Do not confuse hate speech, such as sexist language, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and acts that reflect those points of view, with academic freedom. Yes, the classroom is a place to discuss these attitudes, but it is not a place to direct those sentiments toward fellow students, educators, or society in general.

Most higher education institutions have mission statements and codes of conduct that warn students about engaging in such behavior. The consequences for violators are usually probation and possibly dismissal. Further policies such as affirmative action and Title IX are instituted to evaluate and maintain racial and gender equity.

APPLICATION

No one knows when a racist or sexist attack is coming. The Barnard Center for Research on Women has created a video suggesting ways to be an ally to people victimized by intolerant behavior(opens in new window).

Affirmative Action and Higher Education

Affirmative action is a policy that began during the John F. Kennedy administration to eliminate discrimination in employment. Since that time, it has expanded as a policy to protect from discrimination in a number of contexts, including higher education. Most notably in higher education, affirmative action has been used to create equity in access. Institutions have used affirmative action as a mandate of sorts in admission policies to create diverse student bodies. Colleges sometimes overlook traditional admissions criteria and use socioeconomic and historical disparities in education equity as criteria to admit underrepresented groups. Affirmative action is a federal requirement to be met by entities that contract with the federal government; most colleges are federal government contractors and must adhere to the policy by stating a timeline by which its affirmative action goals are met.

Many interpret "goals" as quotas, meaning that a certain number of students from underrepresented groups would be admitted, presumably to meet affirmative action requirements. Opposition to affirmative action in college admissions has been pursued in several well-known court cases.

Regents of the University of California v. Bakke

This 1978 case resulted in a U.S. Supreme Court decision to allow race to be used as one of the criteria in higher education admission policies as long as quotas were not established and race was not the only criterion for admission. The case stemmed from Alan Bakke, an applicant to the University of California at Davis Medical School, suing the university because he was not admitted but had higher test scores and grades than minority students who had been accepted. Lawyers for Bakke referenced the same equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment used to desegregate public schools in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The "reverse discrimination" denied him equal protection under the law.

Fisher v. University of Texas

In 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court decided another affirmative action case regarding Fisher v. University of Texas. Abigail Fisher also argued that she had been denied college admission based on race. The case ended in favor of the university. Justice Kennedy, in the majority opinion, wrote:

> ***"A university is in large part defined by those intangible "qualities which are incapable of objective measurement but which make for greatness." Considerable deference is owed to a university in defining those intangible characteristics, like student body diversity, that are central to its identity and educational mission."***

In each of the above landmark cases, affirmative action in college admission policies were upheld. However, cases of reverse discrimination in college admission policies continue to be pursued.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Examine your college's code of conduct. You may find it in your student handbook, as part of an office of community standards or engagement, or by simply searching your college site. How does the code of conduct protect academic freedom but guard against hate speech, prejudice, and intolerance?

Title IX and Higher Education

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." As with affirmative action, Title IX applies to institutions that receive federal funding, such as public and charter schools, for-profit schools, libraries, and museums in the United States and its territories.

According to the Office for Civil Rights, educational programs and activities receiving federal funds must operate in a nondiscriminatory manner. Title IX addresses recruitment, admissions, and counseling; financial assistance; athletics; sex-based harassment; treatment of pregnant and parenting students; discipline; single-sex education; and employment.

Before the enactment of Title IX, there were few if any protections provided for women college students. To give some perspective, consider this description of the circumstances:

"Young women were not admitted into many colleges and universities, athletic scholarships for women were rare, and math and science was a realm reserved for boys. Girls square danced instead of playing sports, studied home economics instead of training for 'male-oriented' (read: higher-paying) trades. Girls could become teachers and nurses, but not doctors or principals; women rarely were awarded tenure and even more rarely appointed college presidents. There was no such thing as sexual harassment

because 'boys will be boys,' after all, and if a student got pregnant, her formal education ended. Graduate professional schools openly discriminated against women."[3]

The protections of Title IX have been invoked in college athletics to ensure women's athletic programs are sustained. In addition, schools must make efforts to prevent sexual harassment and violence. Gender discrimination under Title IX extends to the protection of transgender students so that they are treated as the gender they identify with.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Based on the cases against affirmative action in higher education, are admissions policies that use race, along with other factors, as admissions criteria fair? What other options do you think would create equity in admissions?

Footnotes

1. Adapted from Sue, Derald Wing, Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation, Wiley & Sons, 2010
2. Handlesman, Jo and Sakraney, Natasha. White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. obamawhitehouse.archives.org [obamawhitehouse.archives.gov...4-15_final.pdf].
3. WInslow, Barbara. "The Impact of Title IX." Gilder-Lerhman Institute. faculty.uml.edu [faculty.uml.edu]

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11.6: Inclusivity and Civility- What Role Can I Play?

Questions to consider:

- Is it my fault that I have privilege?
- How long will diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts continue?
- What is to be gained by cultural competency?

Privilege Is Not Just for White People

Privilege is a right or exemption from liability or duty granted as a special benefit or advantage. Oppression is the result of the "use of institutional privilege and power, wherein one person or group benefits at the expense of another,"[1] according to the University of Southern California Suzanne Dworak Peck School of Social Work.

Just as everyone has implicit bias, everyone has a certain amount of privilege, too. For example, consider the privilege brought by being a certain height. If someone's height is close to the average height, they likely have a privilege of convenience when it comes to many day-to-day activities. A person of average height does not need assistance reaching items on high store shelves and does not need adjustments to their car to reach the brake pedal. There's nothing wrong with having this privilege, but recognizing it, especially when considering others who do not share it, can be eye-opening and empowering.

Wealthy people have privilege of not having to struggle economically. The wealthy can build retirement savings, can afford to live in the safest of neighborhoods, and can afford to pay out of pocket for their children's private education. People with a college education and advanced degrees are privileged because a college degree allows for a better choice of employment and earning potential. Their privilege doesn't erase the hard work and sacrifice necessary to earn those degrees, but the degrees often lead to advantages. And, yes, white people are privileged over racial minorities. Remember Malcolm Gladwell's explanation of how he was treated when people assumed he was white as opposed to how people treated him when they assumed he was black?

It is no one's fault that they may have privilege in any given situation. In pursuit of civility, diversity, equity, and inclusion, the goal is to not exploit privilege but to share it. What does that mean? It means that when given an opportunity to hire a new employee or even pick someone for your study group, you make an effort to be inclusive and not dismiss someone who has not had the same academic advantages as you. Perhaps you could mentor a student who might otherwise feel isolated. Sharing your privilege could also mean recognizing when diversity is absent, speaking out on issues others feel intimidated about supporting, and making donations to causes you find worthy.

> ***In pursuit of civility, diversity, equity, and inclusion, the goal is to not exploit privilege but to share it.***

When you are culturally competent, you become aware of how your privilege may put others at a disadvantage. With some effort, you can level the playing field without making yourself vulnerable to falling behind.

APPLICATION

Think about a regular activity such as going to a class. In what ways are you privileged in that situation? How can you share your privilege with others?

"Eternal vigilance is the price of civility."

The original statement reads, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." History sometimes credits that statement to Thomas Jefferson and sometimes to Wendell Holmes. Ironically, no one was paying enough attention to document it accurately. Still, the meaning is clear—if we relax our standards, we may lose everything.

Civility is like liberty; it requires constant attention. We have to adjust diversity awareness, policies, and laws to accommodate the ever-changing needs of society. Without the vigilance of civil rights workers, society could have lapsed back into the Jim Crow era. Without activists such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Flo Kennedy remaining vigilant, women might not have made the gains they did in the 1970s. Constant attention is still needed because in the case of women's earning power, they only make about 80 cents for every dollar a man makes. Constant vigilance requires passion and persistence. The activism chronologies of Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, the LGBTQ+ community, immigrants, students, labor, and other groups is full of

stops and starts, twists and turns that represent adjustments to their movements based on the shifting needs of younger generations. As long as there are new generations of these groups, we will need to pursue diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Your Future and Cultural Competency

Where will you be in five years? Will you own your own business? Will you be a stay-at-home parent? Will you be making your way up the corporate ladder of your dream job? Will you be pursuing an advanced degree? Maybe you will have settled into an entry-level job with good benefits and be willing to stay there for a while. Wherever life leads you in the future, you will need to be culturally competent. Your competency will be a valuable skill not only because of the increasing diversity and awareness in America, but also because we live in a world with increasing global connections.

If you do not speak a second language, try to learn one. If you can travel, do so, even if it's to another state or region of the United States. See how others live in order to understand their experience and yours. To quote Mark Twain, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness." The more we expose ourselves to different cultures and experiences, the more understanding and tolerance we tend to have.

The United States is not perfect in its practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Still, compared to much of the world, Americans are privileged on a number of fronts. Not everyone can pursue their dreams as freely as Americans do. Our democratic elections and representative government give us a role in our future.

Understanding diversity and being culturally competent will make for a better future for everyone.

Footnotes

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11.7: Summary

Understanding diversity, especially in the context of our country's history, is an important part of being an engaged citizen who can help us to adapt to a changing world. Diversity goes hand in hand with the concepts of equity and inclusion, which increase the chances of equal opportunity and representation. Sometimes creating inclusive communities upsets the social order with which people are familiar. Change can be difficult, and people are passionate. These passions can disrupt communities and communication with uncivil behavior, or people can "fight fair" and use strategies that allow for the smooth exchange of ideas.

Everyone has a personal identity made up of various aspects and experiences—intersectionality. Some elements of identity place people in a diversity category. Some categories are expansive and well understood; others are new and may face scrutiny. Policies and laws have been put in place to protect underrepresented citizens from discrimination. These standards are constantly being challenged to make sure that they allow for the shifting demographics of the United States and shifting values of its citizens.

Cultural competency, which includes our ability to adapt to diversity, is a valuable skill in our communities and workplaces. The more culturally competent we are, the more we can help safeguard diversity and make equitable and inclusive connections on a global scale.

Career Connection

Keisha went to a temp agency to sign up for part-time work. The person in charge there gave her several tests on office skills. She checked Keisha's typing speed, her ability to handle phone calls, and her writing skills. Keisha also took a grammar test and a test about how to handle disputes in the office. The tester also had Keisha answer questions about whether it was OK to take home office supplies and other appropriate things to do and not to do.

The tester told Keisha that she scored very well on the evaluations, but she never called Keisha back for a job or even an interview. Keisha knows that she presented herself well, but wonders if she was not called back because she wears her hair in dreadlocks or because she has been told that her name sounds African American?

Reflection questions:

- Can this student say that she was discriminated against?
- What would you do to determine why you were not called back for a job?
- Should Keisha ask about how her name and appearance were received?

Career Connection in Healthcare: Experiences of a Caribbean immigrant- going beyond clinical care

Learning Objectives

At the end of this case, students will be able to:

- Discuss the roots of racism in the US and how systemic racism presents
- Distinguish between a health disparity and a difference in health status
- Discuss how systemic racism contributes to health disparities

Introduction

Racism is a multidimensional construct that infiltrates every aspect of life in the United States.[1] Its basic principles involve the subordination and discrimination of one racial group by another, with race used to determine superiority. The origins, history and evolution of the United States is rooted in racism, which presents as the favored group (white persons) acquiring and having access to more resources and power.

The United States is founded on a harsh and violent history, including the stealing of Native American land, followed by centuries of oppression of Africans through their labor on this stolen land.[2] These are only a few of the events which are the source of the debates surrounding the phrase "all men are created equal," found within the US Declaration of Independence. Since its adoption in 1776, there has been much debate about the meaning of 'all men.' The simplest of arguments infer that this equality excludes women, African Americans, indigenous people, and other persons of color. Since this time, American history has demonstrated that not all men are created equal, with a preference for white persons while all others have been traditionally oppressed. This oppression is still present today throughout all institutions and is considered the most complex form of racism, systemic racism.[1,2] This level of racism is evidenced by systems which favor the majority and dominant white culture. Persons belonging to the

majority hold the power, and thus can create the regulations, policies and procedures governing all of society's institutions, which are reflective of their beliefs and biases. Freedom and equality are not enjoyed by all, and despite hundreds of years of US evolution, this inequality for certain groups has remained.

One major example of systemic racism is depicted by the practice of redlining by mortgage lenders. Pursuant to the Great Depression, several federal policies were put in place in the 1930s in an attempt to 'right' the housing market by preventing foreclosures and assisting with housing for those who lost their homes.[3] The Home Owners Loan Corporation was created for this, controlling mortgage risk by implementing a system of property appraisals. Neighborhoods were graded on attributes such as area quality and population composition. As a result, neighborhoods with all forms of minority populations were graded lower than others, and these grades were used by financial institutions to determine loan eligibility. This led to the systematic denial of loans to persons of color. Despite the illegality of redlining today, it has majorly contributed to the long-term disenfranchisement of historically poorly graded neighborhoods.

Education is another sector of society where outcomes are significantly impacted by systemic racism. Persons of color experience many barriers that impede their success in their pursuit of education. From as early as kindergarten, Black students have a higher likelihood of suspension in comparison to white students.[4,5] This is thought to be because of the trend of suspicion of guilt (e.g., darker skin tone is associated with perceptions of evil) which Black persons face throughout all aspects of their lives.[6] On a more pervasive level, schools enrolled with mainly students of color are typically underfunded and have less resources.[7] Access to less resources also leads to students in these groups having to take on more debt when pursuing higher levels of education. All these barriers and more work together to result in lower graduation rates for students of color at all levels in comparison to white students.

The effects of systemic racism are also experienced in healthcare. One of these effects is the presentation of health disparities, which are more than differences in health status when comparing one group to another. A disparity is a direct result of a social disadvantage, with resulting differences in health status that could have been prevented, and therefore, are unjust.[8] For instance, lack of appropriate training of healthcare professionals fails to prepare them to adequately assess and manage occurrences of pain reported by Black patients. This leads to Black patients with similar conditions as white patients being less likely to receive pain medications.[9,10] Furthermore, common stereotypes still persist, such as Black patients having thicker skin and nerve endings, giving them higher pain thresholds.[11] Cultural competency training to promote life-long cultural humility is not mandatory for most healthcare professions programs. As a result, providers are not equipped or able to interact with patients belonging to under-represented groups in a culturally sensitive manner. This in turn leads to patients not trusting their healthcare professionals, which then leads to non-adherence to their respective therapy.[12,13]

As one of the most trusted professions, pharmacists have a duty to include strategies while caring for patients which may help lessen the impact of systemic racism and the resulting health disparities. They should be part of the solution as opposed to contributing to the problem. Consider that lack of cultural competence, as well as implicit and explicit biases in providers, help perpetuate systemic racism. It is up to pharmacists to work together with other healthcare professionals to make experiences within the healthcare system for patients of color, in the very least, survivable.

Activity

? Case Scenario

You are a healthcare provider working on an interdisciplinary healthcare team in an infectious disease clinic. JS is a 70-year-old female immigrant from the Caribbean who states "I'm here for a follow-up with my caseworker and to sort out my medication."

History of present illness: She contracted HIV from her (now deceased) husband of 45 years. According to JS, she was first diagnosed with HIV in her home country in her early thirties but only started antiretroviral therapy when she became a US resident. JS initially sought therapy for her condition when her husband became gravely ill one year prior to his death. In addition to her diagnosis of HIV, JS also has been diagnosed with arthritis and high cholesterol. JS reports no alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drug use. When asked about any symptoms or concerns, JS reports no major change since her last visit six months ago. The only complaint she has is that her joints are "extra stiff" now with the colder weather. She reports that she remembers to take her HIV medication as scheduled because she knows how important it is.

Additional context: While catching up with JS, you learn that she is transferring herself out of the health system where you manage her. She mentions that she has finally found an HIV specialist who is from the same island that she is from. The new

HIV specialist is farther from where she lives, but she is willing to commute the additional 45 minutes. JS states that she is only presenting to your clinic today to see the Caribbean case worker, and because she would like you to transfer her cholesterol medications to her new pharmacy.

You decide to have a deeper conversation with JS since this may be the last time you have the opportunity. At your clinic, patients with HIV usually have their follow-up visits scheduled for every two to three months. However, JS has been classified as a patient who is non-compliant with regards to clinic visits. This non-compliance has led to JS having challenges adhering to her antiretroviral therapy. Through your conversation with JS, you learn that she has always been uncomfortable accessing healthcare in your health system. Her mother, who died of breast cancer 10 years ago, visited one of the oncologists here. In her opinion, her mother's pain and discomfort were never managed appropriately. According to JS, the oncologist rebuked her mother for seeking alternative means of pain management. She also watched as her mother agonized and begged for more pain relief in her final days. These pleas were largely ignored.

JS also shares that both of her daughters had pregnancies that were "touch and go." She continues to tell you that for her eldest daughter's first child, the OB-GYN was not very knowledgeable of and sensitive towards their cultural background. Their breakdown in communication led to many delivery complications, which almost resulted in her daughter's death. As a result, her daughter sought out an OB-GYN from the Caribbean for her second pregnancy, which had a more favorable delivery. To end your conversation, JS remarks, "Besides most people here don't look and sound like me."

Case Questions

1. What specific experiences did JS and her family have that contributed to them seeking only providers who shared their cultural background?
2. JS' daughter experienced complications during her first pregnancy that were near fatal. Which groups of women in the United States have the highest rates of maternal morbidity and mortality?
3. How does systemic racism frame the experiences of this patient and her family?
4. How has systemic racism contributed to the health disparities experienced by JS?
5. How can pharmacists provide care to patients with a background like JS?
6. Within the normal scope of transitioning care, what are some highlights worth mentioning to JS' new HIV healthcare team?
7. How can pharmacists help decrease the occurrence of systemic racism in our healthcare system?

Author Commentary by Akesha E. Edwards(opens in new window)

One of the most important takeaways about systemic racism is that it is pervasive throughout all institutions. For this type of racism to still be having an impact on certain groups of patients over so many centuries, means that it is actively being maintained and supported, most often by the complicity of those who benefit from it. For professionals within healthcare, we can simplify the definition of systemic racism by looking at its impact on our patients. It is important to acknowledge that there is a basic mechanism of action at play here, where one group has access to all levels of power, using their status as leverage and to disadvantage other groups with little to no power. Over time, the face of systemic racism may change but its goal of maintaining power and advantage over one group never does.

The presentation of health disparities, which affect specific patient groups, is only one of the adverse effects of systemic racism in healthcare. Pharmacists, along with other healthcare professionals, must act together to champion systemic change. Therefore, it is essential to recognize that systemic racism is a public health issue, acknowledge that healthcare disparities exist, and understand the role that implicit and explicit bias and cultural competence plays when being an advocate for patients.

Patient Approaches and Opportunities

Individuals who do not identify as a person of a color must become allies (someone who belongs to the majority but is willing to use their privilege and power to fight alongside persons belonging to the disadvantaged groups, and support actions of change). To achieve this, one of the first things that must occur is listening and realizing the truth in what you are being told. Even if one does not engage in individual racist acts, there are advantages and privileges throughout society and different institutions that they receive as a member of the majority.

Allyship has a place in patient interactions as well. Pharmacists and all persons providing healthcare can enact change by becoming an advocate. Trust is important for patients of color and a basic essential of any successful relationship (professional or personal). Accordingly, healthcare providers in all specialties should strive to become a long-term partner of their patients by gaining their

trust and getting to know them on a holistic level. For instance, one must acknowledge that there are many layers of factors at play when a patient pursues healthcare that may in turn affect their health outcomes. Understanding and being empathetic towards the different barriers a patient may be experiencing in their healthcare pursuit is likely one of the simplest actions that can be taken as a pharmacist to start effecting change in our healthcare system.

Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter, and consider one option you learned in this chapter that might make you rethink how you answered each one. Has this chapter prompted you to consider changing any of your feelings or practices?

Rank the following questions on a scale of 1–4. 1 = “least like me” and 4 = “most like me.”

1. I'm aware of the different categories of diversity and the various populations I may encounter.
2. I think we sometimes go too far in trying to be sensitive to different groups.
3. I think nearly everybody in our society has equal opportunity.
4. It’s not my role to ensure equity and inclusiveness among my peers or colleagues.

Where do we go from here?

This chapter touched on many elements of civility and diversity, and mentioned a wide array of groups, identities, and populations. But the chapter certainly did not explore every concept or reflect every group you may encounter. In a similar way, you can’t know everything about everyone, but you can build cultural competency and understanding to make people feel included and deepen your abilities and relationships.

Sometimes learning about one group or making one person feel comfortable can be as important as addressing a larger population. To that end, consider researching or discussing one of the following topics to increase your level of civility and understanding:

- Appropriate terminology and ways to address members of certain populations. For example, ways to properly describe people with certain disabilities, or discuss issues around racial or gender identity.
- Discussions or debates related to civility and intersectionality, such as whether “Latinx” should be used instead of “Latino/Latina,” or whether certain sports team mascots can be considered offensive.
- Major historical figures or events related to a certain group.
- Academic majors and research centers/groups related to aspects of diversity.
- Historical events at your college or in your city related to civil rights.

Important Resources

Related chapters of interest:

- Communicating health information: hidden barriers and practical approaches.
- Saying what you mean doesn’t always mean what you say: cross-cultural communication
- Plant now, harvest later: services for rural underserved patients
- More than just diet and exercise: social determinants of health and well-being
- You say medication, I say meditation: effectively caring for diverse populations
- Equity for all: providing accessible healthcare for patients living with disabilities
- Expanding the pharmacists’ role: assessing mental health and suicide
- The great undoing: a multigenerational journey from systemic racism to social determinants of health

External resources:

- Websites:
  - Harvard University. Project Implicit. harvard.edy [implicit.harvard.edu]
  - Transcultural C.A.R.E. Associates. Transcultural care. transculturalcare.net [transculturalcare.net]
  - African American Wellness Project. aawellnessproject.org [aawellnessproject.org]
  - Coates T. The Atlantic. The case for reparations. The Atlantic [www.theatlantic.com]
  - Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Resources for addressing disparities and improving quality. nhqrnet.ahrq.gov [nhqrnet.ahrq.gov]
- Videos:

- Race Forward. What is systemic racism? raceforward.org [www.raceforward.org]
- Vox. Glad you asked, season 2. Series of five videos. youtube.com [www.youtube.com]
- Jones LA. Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. youtube.com [www.youtube.com]
- PBS. Health disparities. pbs.org [www.pbs.org]

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Glossary and Abbreviations

- Glossary
- AbbreviationsQuick fix

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Understanding Financial literacy

12.1: Prelude to Understanding Financial literacy
12.2: Personal Financial Planning
12.3: Making Money
12.4: Spending Less
12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
12.6: Credit Cards and Other Debt
12.7: Paying for College
12.8: Defending against Attack- Securing Your Identity and Accounts
12.9: Summary

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12.1: Prelude to Understanding Financial literacy

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the principles of personal financial planning and their importance in managing finances effectively.
2. Analyze different methods for earning money and their implications for financial stability.
3. Identify strategies to reduce spending and manage personal expenses wisely.
4. Evaluate the role of banking, emergency funds, and credit management in maintaining financial health.
5. Assess strategies for securing personal identity and financial accounts against potential threats and fraud.



Figure 12.1: Financial success depends on getting a good start and avoiding setbacks and wrong turns. It's a lifelong process, more like a marathon than a sprint. (Credit: Bengt Nyman / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Student Survey

How financially literate are you? This survey will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As we are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed. Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking the statements on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning "least like me" and 4 meaning "most like me."

1. I actively and regularly plan and/or monitor my finances.
2. I understand the benefits and risks of credit.
3. I have a plan to repay my student loans.
4. I regularly take steps to protect my identity and assets.

You can also take the Chapter 12 survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

"A big part of the college experience for many students is the art of the student loan process. This has been both a painful and challenging experience for me over the course of the first semester. The biggest struggle for me has been simply understanding what everything means and what I'm supposed to do. Another challenge has been determining how exactly I'm going to pay these loans back while also saving for rent, utilities, additional expenses, and a study abroad fund with a part-time job that I don't even have yet."

—Hanna Moyster

About This Chapter

In this chapter, you will learn to reach your personal life goals by implementing financial planning and strategies to protect yourself, manage your money today, and put yourself in a better position for tomorrow. How you act today impacts your tomorrow.

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

1. Align your personal and financial goals through smart financial planning.
2. Create a saving and spending plan and track your performance.
3. Plan for emergencies.
4. Identify best practices and risks associated with credit cards and other debt.
5. Determine the best opportunities for you to finance your college education.
6. Articulate specific ways to secure your identity and accounts.

What Would You Do?

Everything was working out for Elan. They got into the college they wanted to, and some friends were planning to attend as well. They felt like an adult, and were looking forward to new freedoms and opportunities. Elan's parents let them get a credit card after high school graduation. Elan shared an apartment with their friends just off campus, and was able to get where they needed to go because they had a car. Elan had also saved over $1,000 from gifts and a summer job. They needed a new laptop.

Elan planned to stay within set limits. They went to the store found a very knowledgeable salesperson, Jermain, who said he knew exactly what Elan needed. Jermain pointed out that the laptop in Elan's budget would do schoolwork just fine, but it was not as powerful as the best top-of-the line unit with advanced gaming features. Plus, the better computer came with new headphones! Jermain suggested that Elan could later sell the computer to incoming students. (Most freshmen bought used computers if they did not have one when they came to school.) The high-powered computer was $2,000, though, and Elan didn't have that much money. Maybe they should use the credit card? Maybe their new part-time job would pay for it. But Jermain arranged for a small down payment and monthly payments of only $100. That did not seem too bad to Elan. The future looked bright!

At least, that's what Elan thought. They soon realized that working more hours meant fewer hours to study. Meanwhile, Elan's rent and gas usage went up, and, as a young car owner, their insurance was through the roof. Only three months into the first semester, Elan missed a payment on the laptop and accrued a late fee. They put the next laptop payment on the credit card. Soon, Elan was alternating payments between the credit card, laptop, and car, building up interest and late charges. Now Elan was having trouble paying their rent and started getting calls from creditors. Everything had seemed so promising. Elan didn't know where they had gone wrong.

Elan comes to you and shares the situation. They ask, "What could I have done differently?"

This chapter offers you insight into your finances so that you can make good decisions and avoid costly mistakes. We all face chances to spend money and try to get what we want. Many think only about now and not next month, next year, or ten years from now, but our behavior now has consequences later. Not everyone can own all the latest technology, drive their dream car, continually invest for their retirement, or live in the perfect home at this moment. But by understanding the different components of earning money, banking, credit, and budgeting, you can begin working toward your personal and financial goals. We'll also discuss a related topic, safeguarding your accounts and personal information, which is critical to protecting everything you've worked for. By the end of this chapter, you will have good insights for Elan . . . and you!

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12.2: Personal Financial Planning

Questions to consider:

- What simple steps do I take to create a financial plan?
- How do I use financial planning in everyday life?
- How is the financial planning process implemented for every purchase?

> ***If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.***

Honestly, practicing money management isn't that hard to figure out. In many ways it's similar to playing a video game. The first time you play a game, you may feel awkward or have the lowest score. Playing for a while can make you OK at the game. But if you learn the rules of the game, figure out how to best use each tool in the game, read strategy guides from experts, and practice, you can get really good at it.

Money management is the same. It's not enough to "figure it out as you go." If you want to get good at managing your money, you must treat money like you treat your favorite game. You have to come at it with a well-researched plan. Research has shown that people with stronger finances are healthier[1] and happier,[2] have better marriages,[3] and even have better cognitive functioning.[4]

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. What is your top immediate financial priority?
    a. Minimizing debt
    b. Get a better job
    c. Pay for college
    d. Move out on my own
    e. Get a car
    f. Increase my savings or money on hand
2. Which aspect of your finances concerns you the most?
    a. The amount of debt I have or will have
    b. Getting a job that will pay well enough
    c. Being financially independent
    d. Supporting my family
    e. Planning/saving for the future
3. When considering how to pay for college, which of the following do you know *least* about?
    a. Grants
    b. Scholarships
    c. Loans
    d. Work-study programs

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say surveys(opens in new window) to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

What is your top immediate financial priority?

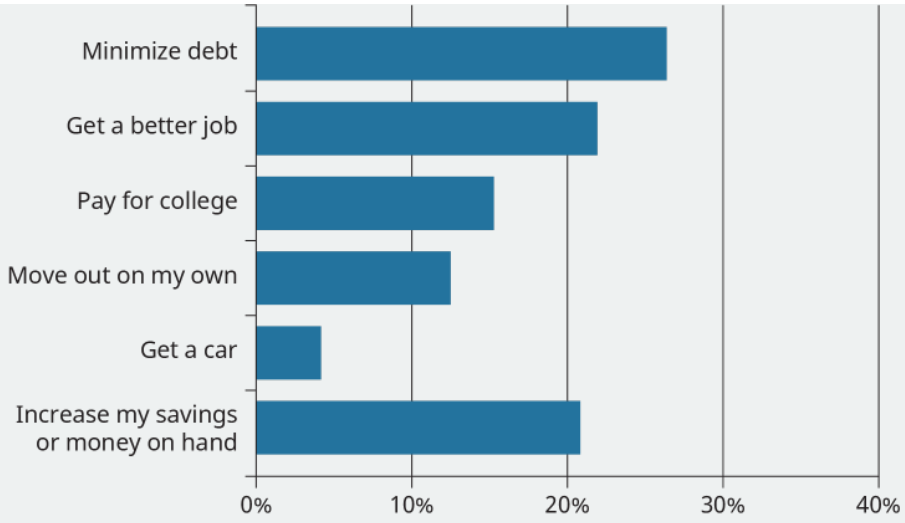


Figure 12.2

Which aspect of your finances concerns you the most?

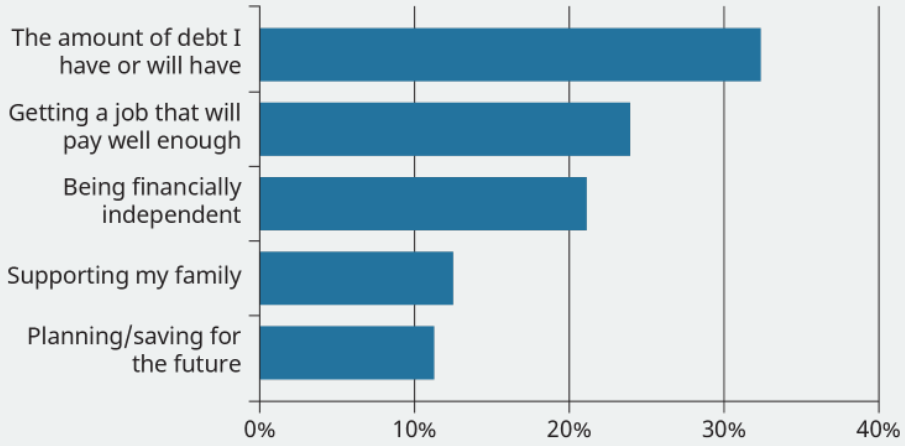


Figure 12.3

When considering how to pay for college, which of the following do you know *least* about?

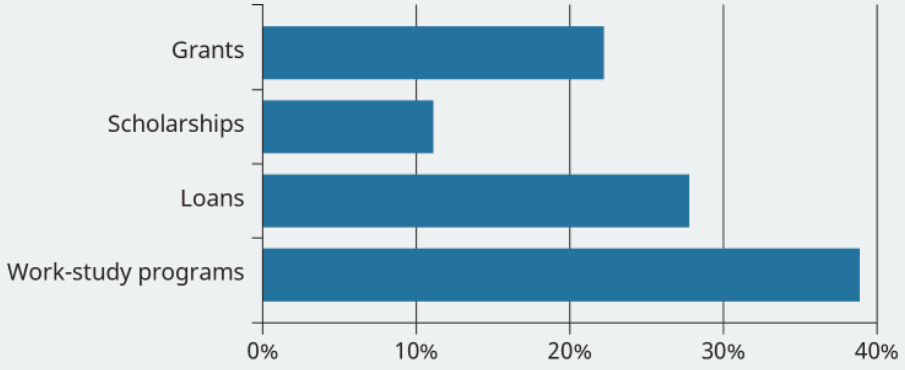


Figure 12.4

Financial Planning Process

Personal goals and behaviors have a financial component or consequence. To make the most of your financial resources, you need to do some financial planning. The financial planning process consists of five distinct steps: goal setting, evaluating, planning, implementing, and monitoring.

Financial Planning in Five Steps

1. Develop Personal Goals
   - What do I want my life to look like?
2. Identify and Evaluate Alternatives for Achieving Goals for My Situation
   - What do my savings, debt, income, and expenses look like?
   - What creative ways are available to get the life I want?
3. Write My Financial Plan
   - What small steps can I take to start working toward my goals?
4. Implement the Plan
   - Begin taking those steps, even if I can only do a few small things each week.
5. Monitor and Adjust the Plan
   - Make sure I don't get distracted by life. Keep taking those small steps each week. Make adjustments when needed.



Figure 12.5: Steps of financial planning.

How to Use Financial Planning in Everyday Life

The financial planning process isn't only about creating one big financial plan. You can also use it to get a better deal when you buy a car or computer or rent an apartment. In fact, anytime you are thinking about spending a lot of money, you can use the financial planning process to pay less and get more.

To explore financial planning in depth, we'll use the example of buying a car.

1. Develop Goals

First, what do you really need? If you're looking for a car, you probably need transportation. Before you decide to buy a car, consider alternatives to buying a car. Could you take a bus, walk, or bike instead? Often one goal can impact another goal. Cars are typically not good financial investments. We have cars for convenience and necessity, to earn an income and to enjoy life. Financially, they are an expense. They lose value, or depreciate, rather than increasing in value, like savings. So buying a car may slow your savings or retirement plan goals. Cars continually use up cash for gas, repairs, taxes, parking, and so on. Keep this in mind throughout the planning process.

2. Identify and Evaluate Alternatives for Achieving Goals in Your Current Situation.

For this example, let's assume that you have determined the best alternative is to buy a car. Do you need a new car? Will your current car last with some upkeep? Consider a used car over a new one. On average, a new car will lose one-fifth of its value during its first year.[5] Buying a one-year-old car is like getting a practically new car for a 20 percent discount. So in many cases, the best deal may be to buy a five- or six-year-old car. Sites such as the Kelley Blue Book website (KBB.com) and Edmunds.com can show you depreciation tables for the cars you are considering. Perhaps someone in your family has a car they will sell you at a discount.

Do you know how much it will cost in total to own the car? It will help to check out the total cost of ownership tools (also on KBB.com and Edmunds.com) to estimate how much each car will cost you in maintenance, repairs, gas, and insurance. A cheap car that gets poor gas mileage and breaks down all the time will actually cost you more in the long run.



Figure 12.6: Weighing all the factors is critical when deciding on any purchase, especially amajor one like a car. (Credit: Greg Gjerdingen / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

3. Write Down Your Financial Plan

Table 12.1 Examples of financial plans for a car and a computer.

Goal	Item	Details	Budget	Timeline
Transportation/Car	2014 Toyota Camry	Black, A/C, power windows, less than 60,000 miles	Car $12,000 (max) Down payment $3,000 Insurance $100/mo Sales tax $900 + Licensing $145 Cash needed $4,145	Have $3600 in savings for this. Save $50/week. Purchase in approximately 11 weeks.
Computer	Used or refurbished laptop	Dell w/ Windows, minimum 13", 128G hard drive, HD Graphics	$300 Use free Windows update from school. Use free Wi-Fi at school.	Sell current laptop for $100. Buy refurbished from Dell site for $289. $189 on credit card. Pay off when statement comes.

4. Implement Your Plan

Once you've narrowed down which car you are looking for, do more online research with resources such as Kelley Blue Book to see what is for sale in your area. You can also begin contacting dealerships and asking them if they have the car you are looking for with the features you want. Ask the dealerships with the car you want to give you their best offer, then compare their price to your researched price. You may have to spend more time looking at other dealerships to compare offers, but one goal of online research is to save time and avoid driving from place to place if possible.

When you do go to buy the car, bring a copy of your written plan into the dealership and stick to it. If a dealership tries to switch you to a more expensive option, just say no, or you can leave to go to another dealership. Remember Elan in our opening scenario? He went shopping alone and caved to the pressure and persuasion of the salesperson. If you feel it is helpful, take a responsible friend or family member with you for support.

5. Monitor and Adjust the Plan to Changing Circumstances and New Life Goals

Life changes, and things wear out. Keep up the recommended maintenance on the car (or any other purchase). Keep saving money for your emergency fund, then for your next car. The worst time to buy a car is when your current car breaks down, because you are easier to take advantage of when you are desperate. When your car starts giving you trouble or your life circumstances start to change, you will be ready to shop smart again.

A good practice is to keep making car payments once the car loan is paid off. If you are paying $300 per month for a car loan, when the loan is paid off, put $300 per month into a savings account for a new car instead. Do it long enough and you can buy your next car using your own money!

Use the Financial Planning Process for Everything

The same process can be used to make every major purchase in your life. When you rent an apartment, begin with the same assessment of your current financial situation, what you need in an apartment, and what goals it will impact or fulfill. Then look for an apartment using a written plan to avoid being sold on a more expensive place than you want.

You can even use the process of assessing and planning for small things such as buying textbooks or weekly groceries. While saving a few bucks each week may seem like a small deal, you will gain practice using the financial planning process, so it will become automatic for when you make the big decisions in life. Stick to your plan.

Footnotes

1. sciencedirect.com [www.sciencedirect.com]
2. academic.oup.com [academic.oup.com]
3. onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/...9.2012.00715.x and onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/1...715.x/abstract
4. science.sciencemag.org/conte...41/6149/976%20
5. Krome, Charles. “Car Depreciation.” 2018, Carfax. carfax.com [www.carfax.com]

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12.3: Making Money

Most college students work while in school. Whether you work summers only or part time or full time all year, work can have both benefits and drawbacks. The difference may result as much from the type of job you work as from the number of hours you work.

A Job Can Help or Hurt

In addition to helping pay the bills, a job or internship while in school has other benefits:

- Experience for your résumé
- Contacts for your later job search network
- Employment references for your résumé

Work or internship experience related to your future career has significant value. Not all students can find such opportunities in their community, however. But even a job or volunteering outside your field can have value and say something about you to future employers. Your job may demonstrate that you have initiative, are responsible, are a team player or can work independently, and can take on financial responsibility. Potential future employers will check your work references. Having an employer from your college years say you did a good job, were always on time to work, and were honest and responsible in doing your job definitely gives you an advantage over students who graduate without having worked at all.

At the same time, some jobs contribute more to your overall college experience. Remember, you're in college for an education and to gain a wide range of skills—not just for the degree. The best student jobs help you engage more deeply in the college experience, while the wrong kind of job gets in the way of that experience. Here are some factors to consider as you look for a job:

- **What kinds of people will you be interacting with?** Other students, instructors, researchers? Interacting with others in the world of college can broaden your college experience, help motivate you to study, and help you feel part of a shared experience. You may work with or meet people who in the future can refer you to employers in your field. On the other hand, working in a business far from campus, for example, may offer a steady paycheck but can separate you from the academic community and detract from a positive college experience.
- **Is the job flexible enough to meet a college student's needs?** Will you be able to change your work hours during final exam week or when a special project is due? A rigid work schedule may cause difficulty at times when you really need to focus on your classes.
- **What will you be able to say about your work in your future résumé?** Does it involve any skills—including people skills or financial or managerial responsibilities—that your employer can someday praise you for? Will working this job help you get a different, better job next year?

These factors can make a job ideal for college students, but in the real world many students will have to work less-than-ideal jobs. Working at a fast food restaurant or overnight shipping company may not seem very glamorous or offer the benefits described previously, but it may be the only job available at present. Don't despair—things can always change. Make the money you need to get by in college but don't become complacent and stop looking for more meaningful work. Keep your eyes and ears open for other possibilities. Visit the campus student employment office frequently (or check online) for new postings. Talk to other students.

At the same time, even with a dull job, do your best and keep a good attitude. Remember that your boss or supervisor may someday be a work reference who can help (or hurt) your chances of getting a job you really want.

Student Jobs

The number of hours college students work per week varies considerably, from five to ten hours a week to full time and everywhere in between. Before deciding how much you need to work, first make a detailed budget as described later. Your goal should be to make as much as you need, and hopefully a little more to save, but first you need to know your true need. Remember your goals in college and stay focused on your education. Cut back on your optional spending so that you don't have to work so many hours that your studies are impacted.

Where to Find a Job

Start at your campus financial aid office or student employment office. If they don't have anything right for you at first, check back frequently for new job postings.

For off-campus jobs, check the classified ads in your local newspaper and Craigslist. Many jobs are never advertised, however, so ask friends, family members, and other students. Visit appropriate companies in your area and ask if they have openings.

If you applied for financial aid when you applied to your college, you probably already know whether you qualify for a work study program. Often these jobs are ideal because they are designed for students. If your financial circumstances change, be sure to check in with the financial aid office because your eligibility may have changed.

Many government agencies also have summer jobs or internships for college students. This work may be an ideal way to gain experience related to your chosen field. (See “Additional Resources” below for more information.)

Go to Work for Yourself

If you have energy and initiative, you can create your own work. While it may take some time to get started, flexibility and being your own boss can make up for this drawback. Students often make money in ways like these:

- Tutor classmates in a subject you are good in.
- Sell your technical skills to help others set up new computer hardware, teach software skills such as PowerPoint or Excel, or design Web sites.
- Sell things you no longer need (video games, DVDs, textbooks) on eBay or Craigslist. Earn a commission by helping others sell their stuff online.
- Provide services to faculty members and residents in the nearby community: lawn mowing, snow shoveling, housecleaning, babysitting, pet sitting, dog walking, and so on.

Additional Resources

Campus jobs and work study. Check with your campus student employment or financial aid office.

Broad listing of links for federal government jobs and internships for students. See www.usajobs.gov/StudentsAndGrads

Student Opportunities at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). See epa.gov(opens in new window) [www.epa.gov].

Student Opportunities at the U.S. Department of Defense. See godefense website(opens in new window) [godefense.cpms.osd.mil].

Student Opportunities at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. See hhs.gov(opens in new window) [www.hhs.gov].

Student Opportunities at the National Science Foundation. nsf.gov(opens in new window) [www.nsf.gov].

Student Internships at the State Department. See careers.state.gov(opens in new window) [careers.state.gov].

Balancing the Job You Have with Your Ideal Job

A growing percentage of students are working full time when they return to school, and many continue in the same jobs. If you’re in this situation, you know that balancing work and college is one of the most difficult things you’ve ever done. You’re used to working—but not used to finding time for class and studying at the same time. You likely feel harried and frustrated at times, and you may even start to wonder if you’re cut out for college. The time may come when you start thinking about dropping classes or leaving college altogether. It may be hard to stay motivated.

If you start feeling this way, focus on your big goals and don’t let the day-to-day time stresses get you down. As difficult as it may be, try to keep your priorities, and remember that while you face temporary difficulties now, a college degree is forever.

- Acknowledge that sacrifice and compromise may be needed.
- Reduce your expenses, if you can, so you can cut back on the number of hours you work. This may mean temporarily giving up some things you enjoy in order to reach your goals.
- If you cannot cut your expenses and work hours and simply do not have the time to do well in your classes, you may have to cut back on how many classes you take per term. Try everything else first, but know that it’s better to succeed a little at a time than to push too hard and risk not succeeding. If you do have to cut back, keep a positive attitude: you’re still working toward your future ideal.

If you ever feel the temptation to quit, see your college counselor to explore all your options. Resources may be available that you don't know about.

Key Takeaways

- The best student jobs have value for your college experience and future résumé and network, while the wrong kinds of jobs may detract from your college experience.
- How much you work should be based on a realistic budget and your financial goals and needs.
- To find the best job for you, use all the resources available.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. What are the primary benefits of a student job on campus? (List as many as you can.)

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Considering your abilities and interests, what would be your ideal job while a college student?

   _____

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12.4: Spending Less

Where Does the Money Go?

Most people aren't really sure where a lot of their money goes. Take this survey to see how much you remember about how you have spent money recently.

Do your best to remember how much you have spent in the last thirty days in each of the following categories:

budget

Category	Amount in Dollars (Per Month)
Coffee, soft drinks, bottled water	
Newspapers, magazines	
Movies, music concerts, sports events, night life	
Fast food lunches, snacks, gum, candy, cookies, and so on	
Social dining out with friends (lunch, dinner)	
Music, DVDs, other personal entertainment	
Ringtones and mobile phone applications	
Bank account fees, ATM withdrawal fees	
Credit card finance charges	
Lottery tickets	
Cigarettes, smokeless tobacco	
Beer, wine, liquor purchased in stores	
Beer, wine, liquor purchased in restaurants and bars	
Gadgets, video or computer games, and so on	
Gifts	
Hobbies	
Travel, day trips	
Total:	

Now be honest with yourself: is this *really* all you spent on these items? Most of us forget small, daily kinds of purchases or underestimate how much we spend on them—especially when we pay with cash.

You'll notice also that this list does not include essential spending for things like room and board or an apartment and groceries, utilities, college tuition and books, and so on. The greatest potential for cutting back on spending is in the area of optional things.

Spending on Essentials, Spending on Optionals

More people get into financial trouble because they're spending too much than because they're making (or receiving) too little. While spending may seem a simple matter—"I need to buy this, I'd like to buy that"—it's actually very complex. America is a consumer society, and we're deluged by advertisements promising that we'll be happier, more successful, better liked by more people, sexier, and everything else if only we buy *this*. Companies have spent billions of dollars researching how to manipulate our buying behavior. No wonder it's so tough to resist these pressures!

Why does a person feel compelled to buy fast food for lunch, or a new CD with a song they just heard on the radio, or a new video game a friend says is so good, or a new article of clothing? We owe it to ourselves to try to understand our own attitudes about money and spending. Here's a good place to start:

- **Having money or not having money doesn't define who you are.** Your real friends will think no less of you if you make your own lunch and eat it between classes or take the bus to campus rather than drive a new car. You are valued more by others for who you are as a person, not for what things you have.
- **You don't have to spend as much as your friends to be one of the group.** Some people always have more money than others and spend more. Resist any feeling that your friends who are big spenders are the norm. Don't feel you have to go along with whatever expensive activities they propose just so you fit in.
- **A positive attitude leads to success.** Learn to relax and not get stressed out about money. If you need to make changes in how you spend money, view this as an exciting accomplishment, not a depressing fact. Feel good about staying on a budget and being smart about how you spend your money.
- **Be realistic about what you can accomplish.** Most students have financial problems, and they don't just go away by waving a magic wand of good intentions. If your budget reveals you don't have enough money even while working and carefully controlling your spending, you may still need a student loan or larger changes in your lifestyle to get by. That's OK—there are ways to deal with that. But if you unrealistically set your sights so high about spending less and saving a lot, you may become depressed or discouraged if you don't meet your goals.

Before you can make an effective budget, you need to look at what you're spending money on now and consider what's essential and what's optional. Essential costs are the big things:

- Room and board or rent/mortgage, utilities, and groceries
- College tuition, fees, textbooks, supplies
- Transportation
- Insurance (health insurance, car insurance, etc.)
- Dependent care if needed
- Essential personal items (*some* clothing, hygiene items, etc.)

These things are sometimes called fixed costs, but that term can be misleading. If you have the option to move to a less expensive apartment that is smaller or a few blocks farther away, you can partly control that cost, so it's not really "fixed." Still, for most people, the real savings come from spending less on optional things.

Look back at the amounts you wrote in the earlier exercise "Where Does the Money Go?" These things are "optional" expenses—you can spend more or less on them as you choose. Most people spend by habit, not really thinking about where their money goes or how quickly their spending adds up. If you knew you were spending more than a thousand dollars a year on coffee you buy every day between classes, would that make you think twice? Or another thousand on fast food lunches rather than taking a couple minutes in the morning to make your lunch? When people actually start paying attention to where their money goes, most are shocked to see how the totals grow. If you can save a few thousand dollars a year by cutting back on just the little things, how far would that go to making you feel much better about your finances?

Following are some general principles for learning to spend less. The "Tips for Success" then lists specific ways you can try to follow these principles in your daily life. **Remember, spending money doesn't define who you are!**

- **Be aware of what you're spending.** Carry a small notebook and write down everything—*everything*—you spend for a month. You'll see your habits and be able to make a better budget to take control.
- **Look for alternatives.** If you buy a lot of bottled water, for example, you may feel healthier than people who drink soft drinks or coffee, but you may be spending hundreds of dollars a year on something that is virtually free! Carry your own refillable water bottle and save the money.
- **Plan ahead to avoid impulse spending.** If you have a healthy snack in your backpack, it's much easier to not put a dollar in a vending machine when you're hungry on the way to class. Make a list before going grocery shopping and stick to it. Shopping without a list usually results in buying all sorts of unneeded (and expensive) things that catch your eye in the store.
- **Be smart.** Shop around, compare prices, and buy in bulk. Stopping to think a minute before spending is often all it takes.

Tips for Success: Spending Less

- Make your own lunches and snacks.
- Read newspapers and magazines online or in the library.
- Cancel cable television and watch programs online for free.
- Use free campus and local Wi-Fi spots and cancel your home high-speed Internet connection.
- Buy generic products instead of name brands.

- Shop at thrift stores and yard sales.
- Pay with cash instead of a credit card.
- Cancel your health club membership and use a free facility on campus.
- Compare prices online.
- Avoid ATM fees by finding a machine on your card's network (or change banks); avoid checking account monthly fees by finding a bank with free checking.
- Get cash from an ATM in small amounts so you never feel "rich."
- With larger purchases, postpone buying for a couple days (you may find you don't "need" it after all).
- Look for free fun instead of movies and concerts—most colleges have frequent free events.
- If you pay your own utility bills, make it a habit to conserve: don't leave lights burning or your computer on all night.
- Use good study skills to avoid failing a class—paying to retake a course is one of the quickest ways to get in financial trouble!

Figure 12.7



Paying with cash rather than a credit card helps you stay aware of your spending habits.

thinkpanama – ATM Machines in Panama – CC BY-NC 2.0.

Managing a Budget

Budgeting involves analyzing your income and expenses so you can see where your money is going and making adjustments when needed to avoid debt. At first budgeting can seem complex or time consuming, but once you've gone through the basics, you'll find it easy and a very valuable tool for controlling your personal finances.

Why create and manage a budget? Going to college changes your financial situation. There are many new expenses, and you likely don't know yet how your spending needs and habits will work out over the long term. Without a budget, it's just human nature to spend more than you have coming in, as evidenced by the fact that most Americans today are in debt. Debt is a major reason many students drop out of college. So it's worth it to go to the trouble to create and manage a budget.

Managing a budget involves three steps:

1. Listing all your sources of income on a monthly basis.
2. Calculating all your expenditures on a monthly basis.
3. Making adjustments in your budget (and lifestyle if needed) to ensure the money isn't going out faster than it's coming in.

Tracking Income

Many college students receive money or financial assistance from a number of sources. To track income in a monthly budget, consider all your sources of funds and convert them to a monthly number. For example, you may receive a student loan once during the year or you may work more in the summer and save up money then. To calculate your monthly projected income, add up your income sources and divide that number by the number of months you will be using the income. For example, if you have saved $4,800 that you can spend over two years of college, divide the $4,800 by twenty-four months to arrive at a monthly income of $200 from those savings. Do the same with scholarship grants, student loans, monetary gifts, and so on.

If some of your college costs are being paid directly by parents or others, do not include that money in your budget as either income or an expense. Base your monthly budget on just those funds and expenses that involve you directly.

Use Table 11.1 “Monthly Income and Funds” to record and total all your income on a monthly basis. If you must estimate some sources, estimate low rather than high; it’s a bad trap to assume you’ll have more money coming in than you actually do—that’s a real budget buster.

Table 11.1 Monthly Income and Funds

income

Source of Income/Funds	Amount in Dollars
Job income/salary (take-home amount)	
Funds from parents/family/others	
Monthly draw from savings	
Monthly draw from financial aid	
Monthly draw from student/other loans	
Other income source: _____	
Other income source: _____	
Other income source: _____	
Total Monthly Incoming:	

Tracking Expenses

Tracking expenditures is more difficult than tracking income. Some fixed expenses (tuition, rent, etc.) you should already know, but until you’ve actually written down everything you spend in a typical month, it’s hard to estimate how much you’re really spending on cups of coffee or smoothies between class, groceries, entertainment, and the like. The best way to itemize this side of your budget is to write down everything you spend—*everything*, every bottle of water and cookie, coins into parking meters, and so forth—for a full month. Then you can total up the different categories of expenses more realistically. We urge you to immediately start writing everything down in a small notebook you carry with you. You may be astonished how small purchases add up.

While you’re writing this down for a month, go ahead and work through the expenditure half of your budget, using Table 11.2 “Monthly Expenditures”. Set aside an hour or two to look through your past financial records, checkbook register and debit card transactions, past utility bills, credit card statements, and so on to get the numbers to put in your expenses budget. Make estimates when you have to, but be honest with yourself and don’t underestimate your usual spending. There will be plenty of time down the road to adjust your budget—but don’t start out with an unrealistic plan. Write “est” (for estimated”) next to numbers in your budget that you’re guessing at.

Once you have listed your routine expenditures using Table 11.2 “Monthly Expenditures”, write out your own budget categories that fit how *you* actually spend money. Everyone is unique, and you want your budget to be easy to use for your own life and habits.

As noted previously with income, if some of your expenses are paid directly by others, do not include them here. Base your monthly budget on just those funds and expenses that involve you directly.

Table 11.2 Monthly Expenditures

Expenditures	Amount in Dollars
Tuition and fees (1/12 of annual)	
Textbooks and supplies (1/12 of annual)	
Housing: monthly mortgage, rent, or room and board	
Home repairs	

Expenditures	Amount in Dollars
Renter’s insurance	
Property tax	
Average monthly utilities (electricity, water, gas, oil)	
Optional utilities (cell phone, Internet service, cable television)	
Dependent care, babysitting	
Child support, alimony	
Groceries	
Meals and snacks out (including coffee, water, etc.)	
Personal expenses (toiletries, cosmetics, haircuts, etc.)	
Auto expenses (payments, gas, tolls) plus 1/12 of annual insurance premium—or public transportation costs	
Loan repayments, credit card pay-off payments	
Health insurance (1/12 of annual)	
Prescriptions, medical expenses	
Entertainment (movies, concerts, nightlife, sporting events, purchases of CDs, DVDs, video games, etc.)	
Bank account fees, ATM withdrawal fees, credit card finance charges	
Newspapers, magazines, subscriptions	
Travel, day trips	
Cigarettes, smokeless tobacco	
Beer, wine, liquor	
Gifts	
Hobbies	
Major purchases (computer, home furnishings) (1/12 of annual)	
Clothing, dry cleaning	
Memberships (health clubs, etc.)	
Pet food, veterinary bills, and so on	
Other expenditure:	
Other expenditure:	
Other expenditure:	
Other expenditure:	
Other expenditure:	
Total Monthly Outgoing:	

Balancing Your Budget

Now comes the moment of truth: compare your total monthly incoming with your total monthly outgoing. How balanced is your budget at this point? Remember that you estimated some of your expenditures. You can't know for sure until you actually track your expenses for at least a month and have real numbers to work with.

What if your spending total is higher than your income total? The first step is to make your budget work on paper. Go back through your expenditure list and see where you can cut. Remember, college students shouldn't try to live like working professionals. Maybe you are used to a nice haircut every month or two—but maybe you can go to a cheaper place or cut it yourself. There are dozens of ways to spend less, as suggested earlier. **The essential first step is to make your budget balance on paper**.

Then your job is to live within the budget. It's normal to have to make adjustments at first. Just be sure to keep the overall budget balanced as you make adjustments. For example, if you find you must spend more for textbooks, you may decide you can spend less on eating out—and subtract the amount from that category that you add to the textbook category. Get in the habit of thinking this way instead of reaching for a credit card when you don't have enough in your budget for something you want or need.

Don't be surprised if it takes several months to make the budget process work. Be flexible, but stay committed to the process and don't give up because it feels like to too much work to keep track of your money. Without a budget, you may have difficulty reaching your larger goal: taking control of your life while in college.

Budgeting on Your Computer

If you are good at Excel or another spreadsheet program, you can create your own budget in a spreadsheet that allows you to monitor your income and expenditures month to month, with the calculations done for you. Other budget calculators can be found online. Figure 12.8 "Simple Online Budget Calculator" shows a simple online budget calculator. The categories are general, but you can add up your numbers from Table 11.2 "Monthly Expenditures" in these categories and enter them in the online budget form, which then does the calculations for you.

Figure 12.8 Simple Online Budget Calculator

Budget Calculator

Expenses		Resources/Incomes	
Education: $	0.00	Family Contribution: $	0.00
Housing: $	0.00	Financial Assistance: $	0.00
Food: $	0.00	Non-Taxable Income: $	0.00
Transportation: $	0.00	Financial Aid Grants: $	0.00
Health: $	0.00	Federal Direct Loans: $	0.00
Personal/Misc.: $	0.00	Loans: $	0.00
Entertainment: $	0.00	Scholarships: $	0.00
In-School Interest: $	0.00	Employment: $	0.00
Dependent Care: $	0.00	Other Inc./Resources: $	0.00
Emergencies: $	0.00		
Other Expenses: $	0.00		
Total Expenses: $		**Total Income:** $	

Calculate Reset

Your balance (income - expense) is: $

Most college students can do well with a simple budget that helps you track monthly income and expenditures so that you can make adjustments as needed. If your financial life is more complicated or you would enjoy full financial tracking and control using your computer, a software program like Quicken has all the power you need and can download your banking and credit

card records to easily track categories of expenses over time. A free online budget and tracking system is available at Mint.com.

What If Your Budget Doesn't Work?

Your budget may be unbalanced by a small amount that you can correct by reducing spending, or it may have a serious imbalance. If your best efforts fail to cut your expenditures to match your income, you may have a more serious problem, unless you plan in advance to manage this with student loans or other funds.

First, think about how this situation occurred. When you decided to go to college, how did you plan to finance it? Were you off in your calculations of what it would cost, or did you just hope for the best? Are you still committed to finding a way to continue in college?

If you are motivated to reach your college goal, good! Now look closely at your budget to determine what's needed. If you can't solve the budget shortfall by cutting back on "optional" expenses, then you need more dramatic changes. Are you paying a high rent because your apartment is spacious or near campus? Can you move a little farther away and get by temporarily in a smaller place, if the difference in rent makes a big difference in your overall finances? If you're spending a lot on your car, can you sell it and get by with public transportation for a year or two? Play with the numbers for such items in your budget and see how you can cut expenses to stay in college without getting deeply in debt. If you worry you won't be as happy if you change your lifestyle, remember that money problems are a key source of stress for many college students and that stress affects your happiness as well as how well you do in college. It's worth the effort to work on your budget and prevent this stress.

If all else fails, see a financial aid counselor at your college. Don't wait until you're in real financial trouble before talking to someone who may be able to offer help.

Why People Spend Too Much, Even on a Budget

- **Old habits die hard.** Keep monitoring your spending habits and watch for things you're spending money on without really thinking about it.
- **Credit cards.** Never use them if at all possible. They make it easy to spend too much or not see how much you're spending. Save them for emergencies.
- **Easy access to cash.** Just put your card in an ATM and get some cash! It's so easy to do, and an automatic habit for so many, that it's easy to bust your budget with small amounts daily.
- **Temptations are everywhere.** Even when we're careful, we're often easily influenced by friends to go out or spend in other ways. Remember why you made your budget in the first place and keep your priorities in mind. The guilt you'll feel tomorrow about spending a whole week's food budget on one expensive dinner out probably isn't worth the pleasure of it!
- **We buy things to feel good.** If that's been a longtime habit for you, it will be hard to break. Often it's better to find small things that make you feel good rather than trying to go without everything. Rewarding yourself with an ice cream treat for a week's budgeting success won't break your budget.

What If You Get in Financial Trouble?

People often don't admit to themselves that they have a problem until it becomes unmanageable. We human beings are very good at rationalizing and making excuses to ourselves! Here are some warning signs of sliding into financial trouble:

- For two or three months in a row, your budget is unbalanced because you're spending more than you are bringing in.
- You've begun using your savings for routine expenses you should be able to handle with your regular budget.
- You've missed a deadline for a bill or are taking credit card cash advances or overdrawing your checking account.
- You have a big balance on your credit card and have paid only the required minimum payment for the last two months.
- You have nothing in the bank in case of an emergency need.
- You don't even know how much total debt you have.
- You're trying to cut expenses by eliminating something important, such as dropping health insurance or not buying required textbooks.

If you are experiencing any of these warning signs, first acknowledge the problem. It's not going to solve itself—you need to take active steps before it gets worse and affects your college career.

Second, if you just cannot budget your balance, admit that you need help. There's no shame in that. Start with your college counselor or the financial aid office; if they can't help you directly, they can refer you to someone who can. Take your budget and other financial records with you so that they can see what's really involved. Remember that they're there to help—their goal is to ensure you succeed in college.

Balance Your Checkbook!

Lots of people don't balance their checkbook every month, thinking it's just too much trouble. But it's important to keep your checkbook balanced for several reasons:

- Banks sometimes make errors, and you can't catch one without checking your record against your monthly bank statement.
- If you make a math error or forget to record a check or ATM withdrawal, you may have to pay overdraft fees.
- If you balance your checkbook only every few months, it can take many hours to examine records and find a problem.

If you're not sure how exactly to balance your checkbook, ask a teller at your bank or get instructions online. This takes only a few minutes each month and is well worth it to avoid the stress and lost hours caused by an inevitable problem.

Saving for the Future

If you're having problems just getting by on your budget, it may seem pointless to even think about saving for the future. Still, if you can possibly put aside some money every month into a savings plan, it's worth the effort:

- An emergency or unexpected situation may occur suddenly. Having the savings to cope with it is much less stressful than having to find a loan or run up your credit cards.
- Saving is a good habit to develop. Saving for the future will prepare you well for the increasing financial complexities of life after graduation.
- You may need your savings to help launch your career after graduation. If you're broke when you graduate, you may feel you have to take the first job that comes along, but with some savings you may have time to find the job that's perfect for you.
- You may change your mind about future plans. Maybe you now think that you'll go to work at a good job right after graduation, so you're not concerned about saving—but maybe in a couple years you'll decide to go to graduate school, law school, or business school—or to start your own business, or to join a volunteer program. Your savings may allow you to pursue a new goal.

Start by saving in a savings account at your bank or credit union. You can have a certain amount transferred from your checking account every month into a savings account—that makes it easier and more routine. A savings account allows withdrawal anytime but pays lower interest than other accounts. Ask at your bank about money market accounts and certificates of deposit (CDs), which generally pay higher interest but have restrictions on minimum balances and withdrawals. Savings bonds are another option. All of these options are federally insured, so your money stays safe. Risky investments like the stock market are generally not appropriate for college students on a budget.

Key Takeaways

- Financial success while in college depends on understanding and controlling your expenditures.
- There are many ways you can spend less on optional expenses, and even essentials, and still have a full life and enjoy your college experience.
- A detailed monthly budget that lists all income sources and expenditures makes it easier to track expenses and avoid sliding into financial trouble.
- Spending too much can quickly lead to financial problems. If you see the signs that you're starting to have money problems, take steps quickly to prevent trouble before it snowballs out of control.
- While it may seem difficult just to make ends meet, make it a goal also to attempt to save something for future needs.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. List the top three optional expenditures you usually make every week.

_____

_____

_____

2. List three tips for spending less that you feel you will be able to use routinely to avoid running out of money while in college.

_____

_____

_____

3. For each of the following statements, circle T for true or F for false:

T	F	It's OK to miss a deadline for paying your phone bill as long as you pay on time at least half of the time.
T	F	There's really nothing wrong with not having any money in the bank as long as you have a credit card for emergencies and major purchases.
T	F	You should balance your checkbook every month when you receive your bank statement.
T	F	A good way to save money is to try to get by without buying expensive textbooks.
T	F	You only need to write up a budget if you've gotten deeply into debt and need to see a financial advisor to get out of debt.

References

Federal Student Aid, "Budget Calculator," Federal Student Aid Direct Loans, www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/Dire...lc/budget.html (accessed July 13, 2010).

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12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds

Questions to consider:

- How do I plan appropriately for a financial emergency?
- What do I need to keep in mind when it comes to the banking system?

Emergency Funds

> ***"Time and unexpected events [affect us] all."***
>
> *—King Solomon*

Plan on the unplanned happening to you. It happens to all of us: a car repair, a broken computer, an unplanned visit to the doctor, a friend or relative in desperate need, etc. How will you pay for it? A recent study found that over 60 percent of households could not pay cash for a $400 unexpected expense.[8] Could you?

What Is an Emergency Fund?

An emergency fund is a cash reserve that's specifically set aside for unplanned expenses or financial emergencies[9]. Some common examples include car repairs, home repairs, medical bills, and a loss of income. In general, emergency savings can be used for large or small unplanned bills or payments that are not part of your routine monthly expenses and spending.

Why Do I Need an Emergency Fund?

Without savings, even a minor financial shock could set you back, and if it turns into debt, it can potentially have a lasting impact.

Research suggests that individuals who struggle to recover from a financial shock have less savings to help protect against a future emergency. They may rely on credit cards or loans, which can lead to debt that's generally harder to pay off. They may also pull from other savings, such as retirement funds, to cover these costs.

How Much Money Should I Keep in My Emergency Fund?

There is no magic or "official" amount to keep in an emergency fund, but you can look at your own life to get an idea to start with. How much could you put into a bank account to have for emergencies? Some students and their parents will not have a problem paying for most emergencies, but many students are on their own. What can you save up over time? A common recommendation for graduates with full-time jobs is perhaps three to six months' worth of expenses. This may not be practical for you. A large sampling of students in financial literacy classes recommend approximately $1,000.

One thousand dollars can cover a lot of small to medium unexpected expenses, such as last-minute textbooks, computer repair or replacement, car repair, or a prescription or doctor's visit. The emergency fund is best kept separate from other money for living expenses to protect it as emergency money. While you could keep cash, an emergency fund is often best kept in a bank, in order to avoid theft or loss and still have easy access by debit card or ATM. Pizza is not an emergency!



Figure 12.9: Emergency funds can cover the cost of a broken phone. (Credit: Simon Clancy / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

How Do I Create an Emergency Fund?

Emergency funds can be created quickly if you have the money, or over time if you need to save a little from each paycheck, loan, or gift. You can use a financial planning tool similar to the one in section 10.1. Follow these steps:

- Set an emergency fund goal.
- Identify an amount to keep on hand.
- Determine how to fund it, monthly or all at once.
- Decide where you will keep your fund (e.g., a savings account), and set specific dates to deposit money in it.
- Start now!

ANALYSIS QUESTION

How do you feel when you do not have enough money for something? Will you stop spending on some wants while you build up your emergency fund?

Safety and Success: Bank on It!

The banking system in the United States is one of the safest and most regulated banking systems in the world. A host of federal and state agencies regulate financial institutions to keep them from accidentally or purposefully losing customer money.

Banks, Credit Unions, and Online Banking

In the United States, financial institutions (FIs) are divided into multiple types of companies. The banking system is generally divided into banks and credit unions, which have similar offerings and are both regulated and insured by the federal government.

Choosing a Bank or Credit Union

When choosing a bank or credit union, it is important to understand what you are looking for and what benefits each company provides. Generally, large national banks offer the most advanced technology and a large network of branches. There are also smaller community banks that serve specific groups of people and may offer products to meet the specific needs of the community. For example, a community bank that serves Latino customers might make it easier to send money to family in South American countries, while a bank that focuses on small businesses will promote products specifically needed by business owners.

Credit unions differ from banks in that they don't have a profit motive. Instead, they are not-for-profit organizations that are owned by the people who bank with them. Each member of a credit union gets one vote for the board of directors, which runs the credit union. This means that whether you have $5 in your account or $5 million, you get the same vote. Credit unions tend to offer better rates and lower fees, on average, than banks.

There is no single best answer for what bank or credit union you should choose. The most vital question to ask and answer about a financial institution is whether it meets both your current and your future needs. Compare different options and determine the best one for you.

Many banks and credit unions do not publish the interest rates paid on deposit accounts or charged on loans. While some colleges have their own bank or credit union right on campus, you should consider visiting at least one other bank or one credit union to compare. You may also explore at least one online bank, which will publish interest rates on their website. Consider interest rates, access to automated teller machines (ATMs), online transfers, automatic paycheck deposits, branch locations if you will use one, and other services important to you. Since you will select a bank or credit union that is insured, do not feel pressure to use any specific institution.

Table 12.2

Comparison Chart for Choosing a Bank/Credit Union			
Item	**Local Bank**	**Credit Union**	**Online Only Bank**
	Yes/No/Amount	Yes/No/Amount	Yes/No/Amount
Checking Accounts			
• Monthly Fees			
• Methods to Avoid Fees			
Savings Accounts			
• Interest Percentage			
• Monthly Fees			
• Methods to Avoid Fees			
Loans			
• Auto Loans			
• Home Loans			
• Credit Cards			
Nearest Branch Location*			
• Near Home?			
• Near School or Work?			
• Convenient ATMs?			
Online Banking Services*			
• Transfer Funds between Accounts			
• Open New Accounts			
• Pay Bills			
• Fees			
• Budgeting/Daily Transaction Access			
Additional Services or Fees			
* Branch locations are less important if you use online banking for most banking activity.			

Banking Products and Services

Banks and credit unions offer a similar set of financial products or services, called account types. The difference between the account types lies primarily in how easy it is to put money into or take money out of an account. Regulations set maximum numbers of transactions (deposits or withdrawals) for each type of account at a bank or credit union.

How you use these accounts is less about the rules and more about how long you plan to keep the money in the account. The main reason to use a bank is to keep your money safe and available. Banks may offer other services that benefit you, such as certificates of deposit (which allow you to earn higher interest over a longer time), retirement accounts, and car and home loans.

Checking

Checking accounts allow you to deposit money and take money out anytime you want. There are no government limits on the number of transactions, although a bank or credit union might begin to charge you if you make too many transactions. Checking accounts often don't pay any interest or pay an extremely low rate of interest. They are used to keep money safe and pay bills conveniently.

Checking accounts are ideal for depositing paychecks, cashing paper checks, buying everyday items, and paying your bills. The money you have in your checking account should be money you plan to spend by the end of the month. Any money you don't plan to spend within a month should be transferred from your checking account to a savings account. Your savings account should be the *first* bill that you pay each month. You can still add extra at the end of the month!

Savings Accounts

Savings accounts allow you a specific number of transactions each month or each quarter. If you go over the maximum number of transactions, the bank won't let you take any more money out or put any more money into the account until the next month. Savings accounts pay a small amount of interest on your money, but usually not enough to keep up with inflation or overcome banking fees (see below).

This actually causes your savings to go backwards. If you earn 2 percent on a savings account but inflation is 3 percent per year, you are losing 1 percent of purchasing power each year. For this reason, money in a savings account should be money you plan to spend within the next 12–48 months. The only exception to this is money you have saved for an emergency, called an emergency fund. Since you never know when an emergency (such as losing your job) is going to happen, you want the money to be available to you in a savings account.



Figure 12.10: Banks and credit unions can be accessed in many forms, both physical and online. (Credit David Hilowitz / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Debit Cards

When you get a checking account, you'll also get a debit card, or check card. This card allows you to access the money in your checking account (and savings account at an ATM) using a plastic card similar to a credit card. But it is not a credit card.

A debit card only uses money available in your account. Paying with a debit card is like paying with a paper check, but more immediate and convenient. You will have the option of selecting overdraft protection, which means the bank or credit union will allow you to buy stuff even if you don't have enough money in your account; they'll just charge you a fee, perhaps $25, for each

event. This can be compared to a high-interest loan. Depending on how many things you buy in a week, overdraft protection could add many fees to your statement and use up your cash so it will not be available for your planned expenses. Consider opting out of overdraft protection and carefully keeping track of your account balance. This way you can only spend the money that you have.

Be aware that by using your debit card at an ATM associated with a different bank, you can incur fees—sometimes from both banks!

Debit cards offer a lot of security benefits over carrying around cash, including the ability to cancel a lost or stolen debit card. While the legal protections on debit cards are not as great as the legal protections on credit cards, you can't go into debt using a debit card. This inability to go into significant debt is a major advantage for those who struggle with debt.

Banking Fees

Banks and credit unions charge fees to operate. Many charge fees for a checking or savings account, overdrafts, and other services. You should seek to avoid fees for which you receive no extra services or when you can get similar services elsewhere for free. Two areas that are most subject to fees are services and "triggered" events. Triggered events are primarily caused by actions such as overdrawing your account (an overdraft). Overdraft fees are avoidable. The best way to avoid an overdraft fee is to continually monitor your bank balance and only spend money that you have.

Standard bank fees can often be avoided by taking one or more measures as specified by the bank, such as maintaining a minimum balance or using direct deposit. Avoid getting paid on a payroll or prepaid card unless you know all related costs or have a reason to want to be paid in that manner. Payroll cards often lead to ATM and banking fees, so federal law requires employers to offer you an alternative.[10] Ask at your financial institution for assistance in setting up an account or accounts that are best for you.

Online and Mobile Banking

There are other important banking tools you should also consider. Online and mobile banking are among the most important activities in banking. You should list all the things you might want to do regularly with your bank accounts and make sure you can do them through the bank's website and app. This might include making payments on loans, transferring money between your checking and savings accounts, paying bills through automated bill pay, and creating new savings accounts.

Learn the rules of your account, and keep track of how you use it. This can help you keep costs down and develop a positive banking relationship.

Earning Interest and Compound Interest

Interest refers to money paid for the privilege of borrowing money. When banks use our money for their investments, they pay us interest. (Remember, our bank accounts are insured, so you can't lose your money even when the banks use it.) When you take out a loan using the bank's money, you pay the bank interest.

Compound interest means that you earn interest on the money that you deposit, called the principal, first. After that, you earn money on your money *plus* all the interest that has been paid to your account. Your earnings are reinvested. Interest on interest! You are being paid on the basis of other people's money—the interest that they paid you. Over time, this compound interest results in more and more money in your account. The same principle holds true for investing. Banks sometimes have investment services that pay higher interest but include risk to your money, which you typically access after completing your degree or certificate and obtaining full-time work. If you are employed full time and have access to investment, perhaps in a company-sponsored retirement account, see a brief section below on Investing and Buying Power.

Consider the example below, and notice that the amount of interest paid each year is larger than the year before. That is compound interest. The only money deposited by the account owner was the first $2,000.

Table 12.3

Year	Starting Deposit or Beginning Amount from End of Last Year	Annual Interest Rate	Interest Paid over Period (1 year) (Interest x Beginning Amount)	Total at End of Year / Beginning Amount for Next Year
1	$2,000.00	6%	$120	$2,120.00
2	$2,120.00	6%	$127.20	$2,247.20

Year	Starting Deposit or Beginning Amount from End of Last Year	Annual Interest Rate	Interest Paid over Period (1 year) (Interest x Beginning Amount)	Total at End of Year / Beginning Amount for Next Year
3	$2,247.20	6%	$134.83	$2,382.03
4	$2,382.03	6%	$142.92	$2,524.95

In this example, at the end of four years, the account owner has put in $2,000 and has added $524.95 of other people's money in earned interest! You can use online financial calculators to try scenarios for saving, buying a car or home, and even building a retirement account. One source is bankrate.com(opens in new window). Look under Calculators. Do not pursue marketing efforts on the sites suggested or used for examples in this chapter. Stick to the tools used.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

What happens to the amount of compound interest when you save for a longer time? When should you start saving?

Footnotes

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12.6: Credit Cards and Other Debt

Questions to consider:

- What do I need to know about student loans?
- How dangerous is debt?
- What should I think about when getting and using a credit card?

Yes, taking on too much debt can (and does) have disastrous effects on people's personal finances, but if used appropriately, debt can be a tool to help you build wealth. Debt is like fire. You can use it to keep yourself warm, cook food, and ward off animals—but if you don't know how to control it, it'll burn your house down.

The Danger of Debt

When you take out a loan, you take on an obligation to pay the money back, with interest, through a monthly payment. You will take this debt with you when you apply for auto loans or home loans, when you enter into a marriage, and so on. Effectively, you have committed your future income to the loan. While this can be a good idea with student loans, take on too many loans and your future self will be poor, no matter how much money you make. Worse, you'll be transferring more and more of your money to the bank through interest payments.

Compounding Interest

While compounding works to make you money when you are earning interest on savings or investments, it works against you when you are paying the interest on loans. To avoid compounding interest on loans, make sure your payments are at least enough to cover the interest charged each month. The good news is that the interest you are charged will be listed each month on the loan account statements you are sent by the bank or credit union, and fully amortized loans will always cover the interest costs plus enough principal to pay off what you owe by the end of the loan term.

The two most common loans on which people get stuck paying compounding interest are credit cards and student loans. Paying the minimum payment each month on a credit card will just barely cover the interest charged that month, while anything you buy with the credit card will begin to accrue interest on the day you make the purchase. Since credit cards charge interest daily, you'll begin paying interest on the interest immediately, starting the compound interest snowball working against you. When you get a credit card, always pay the credit card balance down to $0 each month to avoid the compound interest trap.

Student loans are another way you can be caught in the compound interest trap. When you have an unsubsidized student loan or put your loans into deferment, the interest continues to rack up on the loans. Again, you'll be charged interest on the interest, not just on the original loan amount, forcing you to pay compound interest on the loan.

Sacrificing Your Future Fun

When you graduate college, you are most likely to graduate with student loan debt and credit card debt.[11] Many students use credit cards and student loans to allow them to pay for fun today, such as trips, clothing, and expensive meals.

Getting into debt while in college forces you to sacrifice your future fun. Say you take out $100,000 in student loans instead of the $50,000 you need, doubling your monthly payment. You are not just making an extra $338 payment; you are also sacrificing anything else you can do with that money. You sacrifice that extra $338 a month, every month, for the next twenty-five years. You can't use it to go to the movies, pay down other debt, save for a home, take a vacation, or throw a party. When you sign those papers, you sacrifice all those opportunities every month for decades. As a result, when you take out a loan, you should make sure it's a good loan.

How Much Good Debt to Take On

A drink of water is refreshing on a hot day and is required to stay alive. Too much water, however, and you will drown.

During college and for the first few years after graduation, most students should only have two loans: student loans and possibly a car loan. We've already discussed your student loans, which should be equal to or less than your first year's expected salary after graduation.

When you get a car, you should keep your car payment to between 10 and 20 percent of your monthly take-home pay. This means if your paycheck is $200 per week, your car payment should be no more than $80–$160 each month.

In total, you want your debt payments (plus rent if you are renting) to be no more than 44 percent of your take-home pay. If you are planning to build wealth, however, you want to cap it at 30 percent of take-home pay.

Signs You Have Too Much Debt

You can consider yourself in too much debt if you have any of the following situations:

- You cannot make your minimum credit card payments.
- Your money is gone before your next paycheck.
- Bill collectors are contacting you.
- You are unable to get a loan.
- Your paycheck is being garnished by creditor.
- You are considering a debt consolidation loan with extra fees added.
- Your items are repossessed.
- You do not know your debt or financial situation.

Getting and Using a Credit Card

One of the most controversial aspects of personal finance is the use of credit cards. While credit cards can be an incredibly useful tool, their high interest rates, combined with the how easily credit cards can bury you in debt, make them extremely dangerous if not managed correctly.

Reflect on Elan from the chapter introduction and how he felt. How would you (or did you) feel to hold a new credit card with a $2,000 spending limit?

Benefits of a Credit Card

There are three main benefits of getting a credit card. The first is that credit cards offer a secure and convenient method of making purchases, similar to using a debit card. When you carry cash, you have the potential of having the money lost or stolen. A credit card or debit card, on the other hand, can be canceled and replaced at no cost to you.

Additionally, credit cards offer greater consumer protections than debit cards do. These consumer protections are written into law, and with credit cards you have a maximum liability of $50. With a debit card, you are responsible for transfers made up until the point you report the card stolen. In order to have the same protections as with credit cards, you need to report the card lost or stolen within 48 hours. The longer you wait to report the loss of the card, or the longer it takes you to realize you lost your card, the more money you may be responsible for, up to an unlimited amount.[12]

The final benefit is that a credit card will allow you to build your credit score, which is helpful in many aspects of life. While most people associate a credit score with getting better rates on loans, credit scores are also important to getting a job, lowering car insurance rates, and finding an apartment.[13]

What Is a Good Credit Score?

Most credit scores have a 300–850 score range. The higher the score, the lower the risk to lenders. A “good” credit score is considered to be in the 670–739 score range.

Table 12.4

Credit Score Ranges	Rating	Description
< 580	Poor	This credit score is well below the average score of US consumers and demonstrates to lenders that the borrower may be a risk.
580-669	Fair	This credit score is below the average score of US consumers, though many lenders will approve loans with this score.
670-739	Good	This credit score is near or slightly above the average of US consumers, and most lenders consider this a good score.

Credit Score Ranges	Rating	Description
740-799	Very Good	This credit score is above the average of US consumers and demonstrates to lenders that the borrower is very dependable.
800+	Exceptional	This credit score is well above the average score of US consumers and clearly demonstrates to lenders that the borrower is an exceptionally low risk.

Components of a Credit Score and How to Improve Your Credit

Credit scores contain a total of five components. These components are credit payment history (35 percent), credit utilization (30 percent), length of credit history (15 percent), new credit (10 percent), and credit mix (10 percent). The main action you can take to improve your credit score is to stop charging and pay all bills on time. Even if you cannot pay the full amount of the credit card balance, which is the best practice, pay the minimum on time. Paying more is better for your debt load but does not improve your score. Carrying a balance on a credit card does not improve your score. Your score will go down if you pay bills late and owe more than 30 percent of your credit available. Your credit score is a reflection of your willingness and ability to do what you say you will do—pay your debts on time.

How to Use a Credit Card

All the benefits of credit cards are destroyed if you carry credit card debt. Credit cards should be used as a method of paying for things you can afford, meaning you should only use a credit card if the money is already sitting in your bank account and is budgeted for the item you are buying. If you use credit cards as a loan, you are losing the game.

Every month, you should pay your credit card off in full, meaning you will be bringing the loan amount down to $0. If your statement says you charged $432.56 that month, make sure you can pay off all $432.56. If you do this, you won't pay any interest on the credit card.

But what happens if you don't pay it off in full? If you are even one cent short on the payment, meaning you pay $432.55 instead, you must pay daily interest on the entire amount from the date you made the purchases. Your credit card company, of course, will be perfectly happy for you to make smaller payments—that's how they make money. It is not uncommon for people to pay twice as much as the amount purchased and take years to pay off a credit card when they only pay the minimum payment each month.

What to Look for in Your Initial Credit Card

1. Find a Low-Rate Credit Card

   Even though you plan to never pay interest, mistakes will happen, and you don't want to be paying high interest while you fix a misstep. Start by narrowing the hundreds of card options to the few with the lowest APR (annual percentage rate).

2. Avoid Cards with Annual Fees or Minimum Usage Requirements

   Your first credit card should ideally be one you can keep forever, but that's expensive to do if they charge you an annual fee or have other requirements just for having the card. There are many options that won't require you to spend a minimum amount each month and won't charge you an annual fee.

3. Keep the Credit Limit Equal to Two Weeks' Take-Home Pay

   Even though you want to pay your credit card off in full, most people will max out their credit cards once or twice while they are building their good financial habits. If this happens to you, having a small credit limit makes that mistake a small mistake instead of a $5,000 mistake.

4. Avoid Rewards Cards

   Everyone loves to talk about rewards cards, but credit card companies wouldn't offer rewards if they didn't earn them a profit. Rewards systems with credit cards are designed by experts to get you to spend more money and pay more interest than you otherwise would. Until you build a strong habit of paying off your card in full each month, don't step into their trap.

Footnotes

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12.7: Paying for College

Laura Haygood and RaeAnna Jeffers

Paying for college

As you progress through your college experience, the cost of college can add up rapidly. Worse, your anxiety about the cost of college may rise faster as you hear about the rising costs of college and horror stories regarding the "student loan crisis." It is important to remember that *you* are in control of your choices and the cost of your college experience, and you do not have to be a sad statistic.

Education Choices

Education is vital to living. Education starts at the beginning of our life, and as we grow, we learn language, sharing, and to look both ways before crossing the street. We also generally pursue a secular or public education that often ends at high school graduation. After that, we have many choices, including getting a job and stopping our education, working at a trade or business started by our parents and bypassing additional schooling, earning a certificate from a community college or four-year college or university, earning a two-year or associate degree from one of the same schools, and completing a bachelor's or advanced degree at a college or university. We can choose to attend a public or private school. We can live at home or on a campus.

Each of these choices impacts our debt, happiness, and earning power. The average income goes up with an increase in education, but that is not an absolute rule. The New York Federal Reserve Bank reported in 2017 that approximately 34 percent of college graduates worked in a job that did not require a college degree,[14] and in 2013, CNN Money reported on a study from Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce showing that nearly 30 percent of Americans with two-year degrees are now earning more than graduates with bachelor's degrees.[15] Of course, many well-paying occupations do require a bachelor's or master's degree. You have started on a path that may be perfect for you, but you may also choose to make adjustments.

College success from a financial perspective means that you must:

- Know the total cost of the education
- Consider job market trends
- Work hard at school during the education
- Pursue ways to reduce costs

Most importantly: Buy only the amount of education that returns more than you invest.

According to *US News & World Report*, the average cost of college (including university) tuition and fees varies widely. In-state colleges average $9,716 while out-of-state students pay $21,629 for the same state college. Private colleges average $35,676. The local community college averages approximately $3,726. On-campus housing and meals, if available, can add approximately $10,000 per year.[16] See the table below, and create your own chart after you research.

Table 12.5

Sample College Costs			
Type of School	**Annual Tuition without Housing**	**Tuition If Living on Campus**	**Total Cost at Planned Completion**
Community College (2 yr.)	$3,726	Live at Home	$7,452
Public University, In State (4 yr.)	$9,716	Live at Home	$38,864
Public University, In State (4 yr.)		$19,716	$78,864
Public University, Out of State (4 yr.)	$21,629	$31,629	$126,516
Private College (4 yr.)	$35,676	$45,676	$182,704

You may need to adjust your college plan as circumstances change for you and in the job market. You can modify plans based on funding opportunities available to you (see next sections) and your location. You may prefer a community-college-only education, or you may complete two years at a community college and then transfer to a university to complete a bachelor's degree. Living at home for the first two years or all of your college education will save a lot of money if your circumstances allow. Be creative!

Key to Success: Matching Student Debt to Postgraduation Income

Students and parents often ask, "How much debt should I have?" The problem is that the correct answer depends on your personal situation. A big-firm attorney in a major city might make $120,000 in their first year as a lawyer. Having $100,00 or even $200,000 in student debt in this situation may be reasonable. But a high school teacher making $40,000 in their first year would never be able to pay off the debt.

The amount of debt you take on should be tied to the income you expect.

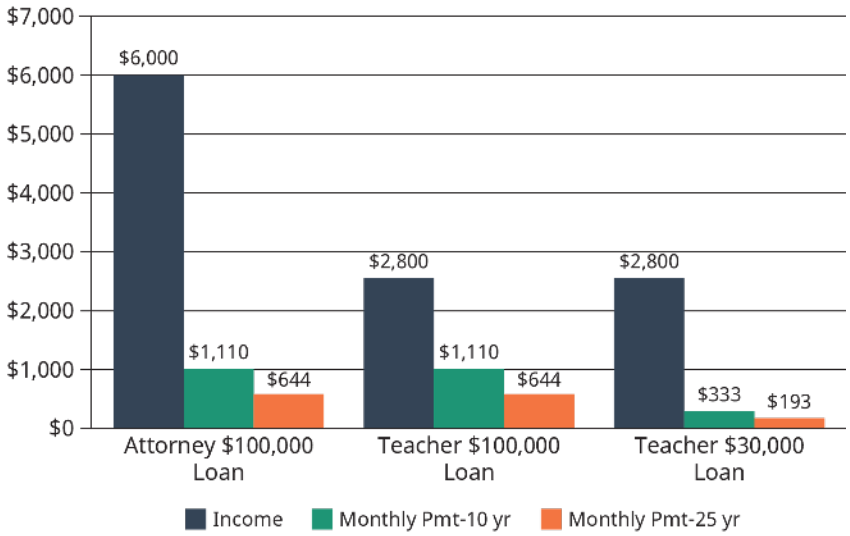


Figure 12.11: Each field of employment brings with it an average income and assumed debt. This graph shows the impact of an attorney's income versus debt, and then compares a teacher who took a $100,000 loan with one who took a $30,000 loan. Note the teacher's income is the same in both cases. (Credit: Based on information from National Association of Colleges and Employers and US Bureau of Labor Statistics.)

Research Your Starting Salary

Begin by researching your expected starting salary when you graduate. Most students expect to make significantly more than they will actually make.[17] As a result, your salary expectations are likely much higher than reality. Ask professors at your college what is typical for a recent graduate in your field, or do informational interviews with human resource managers at local companies. Explore the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook*(opens in new window). PayScale(opens in new window) also has a handy tool for getting general information based on your personal experience and location. Search websites and talk to employees of companies that interest you for future employment to identify real starting salaries.

Undergraduate Degree: 1 x Annual Salary

For students working toward a bachelor's or associate degree, both forms of undergraduate degrees, you should try to keep your student loans equal to or less than your expected first year's salary. So if, based on research, you expect to make $40,000 in your first year out of college, then $33,000 in student loans would be a reasonable amount for you to pay out of a monthly budget with some sacrifice.

Advanced Degrees: 1–2 x Annual Salary

Once you've graduated with your bachelor's degree, you may want to get an advanced degree such as a master's degree, a law degree, a medical degree, or a doctorate. While these degrees can greatly increase your income, you still need to match your student debt to your expected income. Advanced degrees can often double your expected annual salary, meaning your total debt for all your degrees should be equal to or less than twice your expected first job income. A lower number for the debt portion of your education would be more manageable.

Your goal should be to pay for college using multiple methods so your student loan debt can be as small as possible, rather than just making low monthly payments on a large loan that will lead to a higher overall cost.

Scholarships

Thinking about applying for scholarships can seem like an overwhelming prospect, and students have many excuses for not applying. There are so many scholarships available for college that knowing where to start is the first obstacle to the process. Remember, scholarships are the gift of money for college. A gift does not have to be paid back like a loan does.

Scholarships are offered to students who meet a specific requirement established by the sponsor, who may be an individual or an organization. Scholarships can be offered through local, state, or national sponsors. Each scholarship will have its own requirements based on the purpose of the scholarship. Scholarships are a good way to help pay for college without increasing student debt. Students may apply for multiple scholarships. Receiving a scholarship will affect the student's overall financial aid award because all the student aid added together cannot be more than the cost of attending college. However, it is important to realize that scholarships are gifts and do not have to be repaid, so trying to include a scholarship in your overall financial aid package is a good idea.

Common Excuses For Not Applying For Scholarships

- Scholarships are only for people with good grades or athletic skills.
- There aren't scholarships for someone like me.
- You have to be a good essay writer to win a scholarship.
- There is too much competition to even try.
- Finding scholarships to apply for is hard and takes too much time.
- Scholarship awards are for small amounts of money, so it's not worth it.
- Scholarships are only for recent high school graduates.
- GED graduates can't get scholarships.

Finding scholarships requires research and effort on the part of the student, but the effort can have a financially rewarding outcome. Searching for scholarships today is much easier than in the past. Students used to have to comb through books in counselors' offices and photocopy applications to be put in the mail, snail mail!

The Internet has changed the search process. In today's scholarship search process, a student can use several websites to help find the treasure. *Never* pay for help to search for scholarships. Websites that charge fees to find scholarships may be scams. The Scholarship Fraud Prevention Act of 2000 was passed to help increase the penalties for people convicted of scholarship fraud. Before this Act was passed, the Federal Trade Commission was limited to closing operations defrauding consumers. Now the government has the power to incarcerate or fine perpetrators of scholarship fraud.

Free help can be found through the college you have selected to attend as well as through several great websites. Check with student support services at your college to see what services are offered. *Scholarship Junkies*, *Unigo, Fastweb*, and *Fin Aid* are examples of online resources for finding scholarships to apply for. *Unigo* even has a section for scholarships that don't require an essay.

Lists of Nursing Scholarships

- Nurse.org
- Johnson & Johnson
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing

Mistakes to avoid when applying for college scholarships

Scholarship committees want to give their money away to deserving students. It's your job to properly sell yourself so they know why you are the right choice. Build a profile that can't be ignored, one that showcases your originality, your character, and your drive to be successful. Avoid these common mistakes students make. Get your application done right!

- Deadlines – don't miss them! Note the date, time, and time zone of the deadline.
- Fill out the application carefully – don't be careless!
- Fill out the application completely – incomplete applications are often rejected.
- Double-check eligibility – if you aren't eligible, move on to another scholarship.
- Proofread – both your application as well as the essay or personal statement.

Your attention to detail during the scholarship application process can save you time and money later.

Financial Aid

Financial Aid Basics

Most students will need some form of financial aid to help pay for college. Before accepting an offer of assistance, it is important for a student to understand what each possible offer means and what the student's responsibility will be after accepting the offer. The Office of the US Department of Education offers financial assistance to students in the form of grants, loans, and work-study programs. Filling out the FAFSA application is the first start towards receiving financial aid for college.

Understanding interest rates and how they impact student loans is essential. Many students shy away from doing the math to understand what their responsibility will be in repaying a loan. It is also essential that students understand the difference between a ***subsidized*** and ***unsubsidized*** loan. Both types of loans may be offered to a student in an award letter for financial aid. Many of the horror stories about the burden of college debt on students when they graduate from college could be avoided if students better understood options for financing their college education and examined their college selection process in greater detail.

There is a difference between a flat/annual interest rate and a compound interest rate. Compound interest can make you very happy as an investor, but it works against you as a borrower. ***Subsidized*** loans ***do not*** add interest while a student is attending college. The interest is not compounded while the student is attending college. ***Unsubsidized*** loans begin charging interest as soon as you take out the loan as a car loan would.

The key difference between unsubsidized and subsidized loans is the amount of debt a student will leave college owing. Unsubsidized loans charge students interest while they are attending college, so the interest is growing on the loan during that time. A student might think they are borrowing $4,000.00 or $6,000.00, but unsubsidized loans add interest to the amount borrowed that adds up over time. Subsidized loans do not add interest while the student is attending college, so $4000.00 really is $4,000.00, no extras added.

Another important thing to remember when borrowing money for college is that if you add the cost of books and supplies or other needs onto the loan you have taken on for tuition, and you have unsubsidized loans, that extra money also grows over time with interest.

Loan Calculator

Students need to remember that they are consumers when it comes to taking on loans for college. Not thinking about what the debt means after college only compounds the issues. It is important to think about how much could you afford to pay monthly on a student loan once you have completed college. It's easy to do the math on loan costs. *The Smart Student's Guide to Financial Aid* has a free loan calculator that will do the work for you. All you have to do is plug in the numbers. The loan calculator will also give you an estimate of what your annual salary will need to be able to repay the loan. Of course, the loan calculator will not know your other financial commitments, so be sure to look at the monthly payment and decide if you can afford that additional expense. College debt is considered a partial economic hardship if it requires you to use more than 15% of your discretionary income.

Repayment

It is also important to realize that even if you don't finish college, you will have to repay a loan taken out for college. According to an article titled *The Feds Don't Care If You Dropped Out of College. They Want Their Money*, students who dropped out of college and ultimately didn't obtain a degree or certificate, generally don't earn higher wages after leaving school. Statistics show that students who start college but don't finish struggle with student debt.

The US government backs loans that are taken out through FAFSA/Federal Student Aid. Repayment is expected. The government has the authority to garnish wages and withhold tax returns as part of the repayment of loans that are not paid. Government-backed debt cannot be forgiven in bankruptcy, except under rare circumstances.

The cost of going to college seems to be constantly increasing. Understanding the opportunity cost both now and in the future needs to be an important part of a student's decision process when selecting a college and a major. Do the math! There are plenty of resources to help you. Follow your dreams, but be informed.

Financial aid vocabulary is a specialized language that students participating in the process must understand.

Common Financial Aid Vocabulary Definitions

Nursing School Success

Terminology	*Definition*
Award package	The way colleges and universities deliver their news about student eligibility for financial aid or grants. The most common packages include Pell Grants, Stafford Loans, and Work-Study.
Borrower	A person or group that obtains funds from a lender for a particular period of time. A borrower signs a “promissory note” as evidence of indebtedness.
Campus-Based Financial Aid Programs	The three major aid programs are funded by the federal government, but the disposition of the funds is handled by colleges’ financial aid offices. The aid programs are the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, the Federal Perkins Loan, and Federal Work-Study (FWS).
Cost of education	This includes tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and miscellaneous expenses. A student’s financial aid eligibility is the difference between the cost of education and the Expected Family Contribution as computed by the federal government using the FAFSA.
Default	A failure to meet a financial obligation, especially a failure to make a payment on a loan. Defaults are recorded on permanent credit records and may result in prosecution and/or loss of future borrowing possibilities.
Dependent Student	A student claimed as a dependent member of the household for federal income tax purposes.
Expected Family Contribution (EFC)	The amount of financial support a family is expected to contribute toward a child’s college education. This amount is part of the formula used by the federal government to determine financial aid eligibility using the FAFSA form.
Federal Direct Loan	A group of federal loan programs for which the lender is the federal government. Included in these programs are government-subsidized loans for students and unsubsidized loans for both students and parents.
Federal Pell Grant Program	This is a federally sponsored and administered program that provides grants based on needs to undergraduate students. Congress annually sets the appropriation; amounts range from approximately $400 to $3,000 annually. This is “free” money because it does not need to be repaid.
Federal PLUS Loan	A nonsubsidized loan program for parents of undergraduate students under the Federal Education Loan Program umbrella
Federal Perkins Loan Program	A federally run program based on need and administered by a college’s financial aid office. This program offers low-interest loans for undergraduate study. Repayment does not begin until a student graduates.

Terminology	*Definition*
Federal Stafford Loan	A federal program based on need allows a student to borrow money for educational expenses directly from banks and other lending institutions (sometimes from the colleges themselves). These loans may be either subsidized or unsubsidized. Repayment begins six months after a student's course load drops to less than halftime. Currently, the interest rate is 0 percent while in school and then is variable up to 8.25 percent. The loan is typically repaid within ten years. Be sure to know the interest rate at the time of borrowing.
Federal Work-Study Program (FSW)	A federally financed program that arranges for students to combine employment and college study; the employment may be an integral part of the academic program (as in cooperative education or internships) or simply a means of paying for college.
Financial Aid Award Letter	Written notification to an applicant from a college that details how much and which types of financial aid are being offered if the applicant enrolls.
Financial Aid Package	The total amount of financial aid a student receives for a year of study.
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)	This is the federal government's instrument for calculating need-based aid. It is available from high school guidance departments, college financial aid offices, and the Internet (www.fafsa.ed.gov). The form should be completed and mailed as soon after January 2 as possible.
Gap	The difference between the amount of a financial aid package and the cost of attending a college or university. The student and his/her family are expected to fill the gap.
Gift Aid	Grant and scholarship money are given as financial aid that does not have to be repaid.
Grants/scholarships	These are financial awards that are usually dispensed by the financial aid offices of colleges and universities. The awards may be need- or merit-based. Most are need-based. Merit-based awards may be awarded on the basis of excellence in academics, leadership, volunteerism, athletic ability, or special talent.
Lender	One who provides money on the condition that the money is returned, usually with an interest charge.
Merit awards, merit-based scholarships	More "free" money, these awards are based on excellence in academics, leadership, volunteerism, athletic ability, and other areas determined by the granting organization, which can be a college or university, an organization, or an individual. They are not based on financial needs.
PIN	Personal identification number.
Student Aid Report (SAR)	Report of the government's review of a student's FAFSA. The SAR is sent to the student and released electronically to the schools that the student listed. The SAR does not supply a real money figure for aid but indicates whether the student is eligible.

Terminology	*Definition*
Subsidized Student Loan	The government is paying the interest on the loan while the student is in college at least part-time (six credits).
Tuition	Amount of money charged to students for instructional services. Tuition may be charged per term, per course, or per credit.
Unsubsidized Student Loan	The interest is accruing while the student is in college. The government is not paying the interest on the loan.

Activity: Voices of debt: the student loan crisis

Voices of Debt: The Student Loan Crisis

Watch the following video, and write a one-minute paper with your reflections and thoughts related to student debt.

Video: *Voices of Debt: The Student Loan Crisis – Don't Major in Debt*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: Nursing School Success [uta.pressbooks.pub]

> ***"An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."***
>
> *—Benjamin Franklin, The Way to Wealth: Ben Franklin on Money and Success*



Figure 12.12: Employers in certain fields, such as healthcare, may offer their own grants and scholarships. (Credit: Ano Lobb / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Additional Federal Support

The federal government offers a handful of additional options for college students to find financial support.

Education Tax Credits

The IRS gives out free money to students and their parents through two tax credits, although you will have to choose between them. The American opportunity tax credit (AOTC) will refund up to $2,500 of qualifying education expenses per eligible student, while the lifetime learning credit (LLC) refunds up to $2,000 per year regardless of the number of qualifying students.

While the AOTC may be a better tax credit to choose for some, it can only be claimed for four years for each student, and it has other limitations. The LLC has fewer limitations, and there is no limit on the number of years you can claim it. Lifetime learners and nontraditional students may consider the LLC a better choice. Calculate the benefits for your situation.

The IRS warns taxpayers to be careful when claiming the credits. There are potential penalties for incorrectly claiming the credits, and you or your family should consult a tax professional or financial adviser when claiming these credits.

Federal Work-Study Program

The Federal Work-Study Program provides part-time jobs through colleges and universities to students who are enrolled in the school. The program offers students the opportunity to work in their field, for their school, or for a nonprofit or civic organization to help pay for the cost of college. If your school participates in the program, it will be offered through your school's financial aid office.

Student Loans

Federal student loans are offered through the US Department of Education and are designed to give easy and inexpensive access to loans for school. You don't have to make payments on the loans while you are in school, and the interest on the loans is tax deductible for most people. Direct Loans, also called Federal Stafford Loans, have a competitive fixed interest rate and don't require a credit check or cosigner.

Direct Subsidized Loans

Direct Subsidized Loans are federal student loans on which the government pays the interest while you are in school. Direct Subsidized Loans are made based on financial need as calculated from the information you provide in your application. Qualifying students can get up to $3,500 in subsidized loans in their first year, $4,500 in their second year, and $5,500 in later years of their college education.

Direct Unsubsidized Loans

Direct Unsubsidized Loans are federal loans on which you are charged interest while you are in school. If you don't make interest payments while in school, the interest will be added to the loan amount each year and will result in a larger student loan balance when you graduate. The amount you can borrow each year depends on numerous factors, with a maximum of $12,500 annually for undergraduates and $20,500 annually for professional or graduate students.

There are also aggregate loan limits that apply to put a maximum cap on the total amount you can borrow for student loans.

Direct PLUS Loans

Direct PLUS Loans are additional loans a parent, grandparent, or graduate student can take out to help pay for additional costs of college. PLUS loans require a credit check and have higher interest rates, but the interest is still tax deductible. The maximum PLUS loan you can receive is the remaining cost of attending the school.

Parents and other family members should be careful when taking out PLUS loans on behalf of a child. Whoever is on the loan is responsible for the loan forever, and the loan generally cannot be forgiven in bankruptcy. The government can also take Social Security benefits should the loan not be repaid.

Private Loans

Private loans are also available for students who need them from banks, credit unions, private investors, and even predatory lenders. But with *all* the other resources for paying for college, a private loan is generally unnecessary and unwise. Private loans will require a credit check and potentially a cosigner, they will likely have higher interest rates, and the interest is not tax deductible. As a general rule, you should be wary of private student loans or avoid them altogether.

Repayment Strategies

Payments on student loans will begin shortly after you graduate. While many websites, financial "gurus," and talking heads in the media will encourage you to pay off your student loans as quickly as possible, you should give careful consideration to your repayment options and how they may impact your financial plans. Quickly paying off your student loans or refinancing your student loans into a private loan may be the worst option available to you.

Payment Plans

The federal government has eight separate loan repayment programs, each with their own way of calculating the payment you owe. Five of the programs tie loan payments to your income, which can make it easier to afford your student loans when you are just starting off in your career. The programs are described briefly below, but you should seek the help of a licensed fiduciary financial adviser familiar with student loans when making decisions related to student loan payment plans.

The standard repayment plan sets a consistent monthly payment to pay off your loan within 10 years (or up to 30 years for consolidated loans). You can also choose a graduated repayment plan, which will begin with lower payments and then increase the

payment every two years. The graduated plan is also designed to pay off your student loans in 10 years (or up to 30 years for consolidated loans). A third option is the extended repayment plan, which provides a fixed or graduated payment for up to 25 years. However, none of these programs are ideal for individuals planning to seek loan forgiveness options, which are discussed below.

Beyond the "normal" repayment options, the government offers five income-based repayment options: (1) the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) repayment plan, (2) the Revised Pay As You Earn (REPAYE) repayment plan, (3) the Income-Based Repayment (IBR) plan, (4) the Income-Contingent Repayment (ICR) plan, and (5) the Income-Sensitive Repayment (ISR) plan. Each program has its method of calculating payments, along with specific requirements for eligibility and rules for staying eligible in the program. Many income-based repayment plans are also eligible for loan forgiveness after a set period of time, assuming you follow all the rules and remain eligible.

Loan Forgiveness Programs

Many income-based repayment options also have a loan forgiveness feature built into the repayment plan. If you make 100 percent of your payments on time and follow all the other plan rules, any remaining loan balance at the end of the plan repayment term (typically 20 to 30 years) will be forgiven. This means you will not have to pay the remainder on your student loans.

This loan forgiveness, however, comes with a catch: taxes. Any forgiven balance will be counted and taxed as income during that year. So if you have a $100,000 loan forgiven, you could be looking at an additional $20,000 tax bill that year (assuming you were in the 20 percent marginal tax rate).

Another option is the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program for students who go on to work for a nonprofit or government organization. If eligible, you can have your loans forgiven after working for 10 years in a qualifying public service job and making 120 on-time payments on your loans. A major advantage of PSLF is that the loan forgiveness may not be taxed as income in the year the loan is forgiven.

Consider Professional Advice

The complexity of the payment and forgiveness programs makes it difficult for nonexperts to choose the best strategy to minimize costs. Additionally, the strict rules and potential tax implications create a minefield of potential financial problems. In 2017, the first year graduates were eligible for the PSLF program, 99 percent of applicants were denied due to misunderstanding the programs or having broken one of the many requirements for eligibility.[20]

Your Rights as a Loan Recipient

As a recipient of a federal student loan, you have the same rights and protections as you would for any other loan. This includes the right to know the terms and conditions for any loan before signing the paperwork. You also have the right to know information on your credit report and to dispute any loan or information on your credit file.

If you end up in collections, you also have several rights, even though you have missed loan payments. Debt collectors can only call you between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. They also cannot harass you, threaten you, or call you at work once you've told them to stop. The United States doesn't have debtors' prisons, so anyone threatening you with arrest or jail time is automatically breaking the law.

Federal student loans also come with many other rights, including the right to put your loan in deferment or forbearance (pushing pause on making payments) under qualifying circumstances. Deferment or forbearance can be granted if you lose your job, go back to school, or have an economic hardship. If you have a life event that makes it difficult to make your payments, immediately contact the student loan servicing company on your loan statements to see if you can pause your student loan payments.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has created a series of sample letters(opens in new window) you can use to respond to a debt collector. You can also file a complaint(opens in new window) with the CFPB if you believe your rights have been violated.

Applying for Financial Aid, FAFSA, and Everything Else

Take this first step—you will need to do it. The federal government offers a standard form called the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which qualifies you for federal financial aid and also opens the door for nearly all other financial aid. Most grants and scholarships require you to fill out the FAFSA, and they base their decisions on the information in the application.

The FAFSA only requests financial aid for the specific year you file your application. This means you will need to file a FAFSA for each year you are in college. Since your financial needs will change over time, you may qualify for financial aid even if you did not

qualify before.

You can apply for the FAFSA through your college's financial aid office or at studentaid.gov if you don't have access to a financial aid office. Once you file a FAFSA, any college can gain access to the information (with your approval), so you can shop around for financial aid offers from colleges.

Maintaining Financial Aid

To maintain your financial aid throughout your college, you need to make sure you meet the eligibility requirements for each year you are in school, not just the year of your initial application. The basic requirements include being a US citizen or eligible noncitizen, having a valid Social Security number, and registering for selective service if required. Undocumented residents may receive financial aid as well and should check with their school's financial aid office.

You also must make satisfactory academic progress, including meeting a minimum grade-point average, taking and completing a minimum number of classes, and making progress toward graduation or a certificate. Your school will have a policy for satisfactory academic progress, which you can get from the financial aid office.

What to Do with Extra Financial Aid Money

One expensive mistake that students make with financial aid money is spending the money on noneducation expenses. Students often use financial aid, including student loans, to purchase clothing, take vacations, or dine out at restaurants. Nearly 3 percent spend student loan money on alcohol and drugs.[21] While this seems like fun now, these noneducation expenses are major contributors to student loan debt, which will make it harder for you to afford a home, take vacations, or save for your retirement after you graduate.

When you have extra student loan money, consider saving it for future education expenses. Just like you will need an emergency fund all your adult life, you will want an emergency fund for college when expensive books or travel abroad programs present unexpected costs. If you make it through your college years with extra money in your savings, you can use the money to help pay down debt.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

A closer look: How much student loan debt do you currently have, and how much do you think you'll have by the end of college? How could this debt impact your future?

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12.8: Defending against Attack- Securing Your Identity and Accounts

Questions to consider:

- How should you manage passwords and online security?
- What's the best way to deal with identity theft?
- How can you get help and avoid scams?

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States, and the FBI estimates that more than 10 million new victims are harmed each year.[22] Among the problems contributing to this rapid increase in identity theft are the significant amount of data stored online and the poor security practices of both individuals and companies. In 2017, Equifax announced that their security had been breached and the data of every adult in the country was likely compromised.[23]

Passwords and Security

The first line of defense to prevent identity theft is to create strong passwords and take other security measures with your online accounts. An important factor in the strength of a password is the length of the password.[24] This means a password of 12 characters or more is desirable. Consider using pass phrases, or short sentences, rather than passwords. You should vary your pass phrases for each site so a hacker that gets your password can only use it for a single site. Government agencies and security experts are recommending password management software such as LastPass to help with remembering all of these differing passwords.

Another important strategy is to implement two-factor authentication (TFA) on all your online accounts. TFA adds another method of identifying you in addition to your password. Many TFA systems use your cell phone and will text you a code to allow you to log in to your account. A criminal would then need both your password and access to your cell phone to log in. Check the settings on your email, bank website, and other accounts to see how to enable two-factor authentication.

Preventing and Dealing with Identity Theft

Setting strong passwords and enabling two-factor authentication will help keep criminals out of your online banking, email, and other important accounts. Many criminals use lower-tech methods of stealing your identity, however, including tricking or scaring you into giving out information or simply digging through your trash to find account statements.

Never Give Info to Someone Who Contacts You

Never provide a person with personal information unless you initiated the contact. If someone calls you asking for personal information, tell them you'll call them back. Then ignore the phone number or website they give you, and instead look up the phone number for the organization on their official website. A legitimate company or government agency will never require you to stay on the line with them to solve the problem.

Shred Everything

You should also purchase an inexpensive cross-cut shredder and get in the habit of shredding all paperwork and mail before you throw it away. A good rule of thumb is that if the paper has your name on it, you should shred it before throwing it out.

Order Your Credit Report Annually

At least once per year, you should get your credit report from the credit reporting agencies through annualcreditreport.com, which is the only website approved by the Federal and State governments. The three major agencies -- Transunion, Equifax, and Experian -- all provide the legally mandated free report through this website. Learn how to read a credit report from one of these agencies.

Look for incorrect information or accounts you don't recognize. If you see accounts you didn't open on your credit report, file a report with the local police and the local FBI field office. You can also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission and Internet Crime Complaint Center.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Think about your account passwords and your habits related to your identity security. Identify mistakes you have made in the past with your security. What can you start doing today to protect yourself from identity theft or financial fraud?

ACTIVITY

Credit Report Review

Using the sample credit reports below, write an analysis of the person's credit and how they are managing and using debt. Go through the factors that affect credit, and determine how this person is doing with each factor. What in the report is beneficial, and what is harmful? Carefully review each page for accuracy. Pay particular attention to the personal information, negative credit, and any notes about the person or their credit activity.

Example of a Negative Account – Missed Payments

Account Name	—
First USA bank N A	
Account #	**Address ID Number**
44171259XXXX	0963215875
Recent Balance	**Contact Information**
$1,684	1665 Center Ave Fresno, CA 93710 (800) 658-4235
Date Opened	
03/2012	
Personal Statement/Comments	
Account Type	**Recent Payment**
Credit card – revolving terms	—
Terms	**Status/Account Status**
Bank credit cards	Past due 60 days
On Record Until	**Past Due Amount**
02/2023	$50
Credit Limit/Original Amount	**Date of Status/Status Updated**
$8,850	02/2016
High Balance	**First Reported**
$2,695	04/2012
Balance	**Payment Status**
$2,695	60 days late
Balance Updated	**Responsibility**
02/2016	Individual
Monthly Payment	
—	**Payment History**

2016	
Feb.	
	60
Jan.	
	30
2015	
Dec.	
	OK
Nov.	
	OK
Oct.	
	OK
Sep.	
	OK
Aug.	
	OK
Jul.	

Figure 12.13: A sample credit report. (Credit: Based on information from Experian(opens in new window).)

Creating Strong Alliances: Getting Help and Avoiding Scams

> ***As a college student, you are a prime target for predatory practices designed to make the adviser or company rich at your expense.***

As you've read through this chapter, it may have dawned on you that this personal finance stuff is a lot more complicated than it seems. There are people who have devoted their entire educations and careers to mastering single areas of personal finance, such as taxes, investing, and estate planning. When you feel it's time to get professional help, there are many qualified professionals who can assist you. Not everyone who calls themselves a financial adviser is actually looking out for your best interest, however.

The terms *financial adviser*, *financial planner*, *wealth manager*, and many other impressive-sounding job titles are not regulated by the government. Anyone can put these job titles on their business cards. You need to be able to differentiate between a qualified professional and those who are untrained product salespeople, predatory financial businesses, or outright scams.

Predatory Practices Aimed at College Students

As a college student, you are a prime target for predatory practices designed to make the adviser or company rich at your expense.

Annuities and Life Insurance

Annuities and life insurance products are often aggressively sold to college students. They are generally inappropriate for college students and even most college graduates because they have high fees and lower returns than many other investment options, and the benefits are rarely needed by young people.[25]

Investment Schemes

Regulators identify specialized investments, such as promissory notes, real estate, oil and gas, and gold, as a major threat to investors. Investing systems, including stock picking and buying or selling strategies, are also a concern. Academic research has continually disproven these strategies.[26]

If someone is pitching you on their special system or secret strategy, be extremely skeptical. Legitimate investments are regulated by government agencies and are therefore never a secret.

Table 12.6

Scam or Scheme	Characteristics or Promises	Issues and Reasons to Avoid
"Cash Value" Life Insurance Often sold as "7702 Plans"	Cash value life insurance and similar programs promise that a certain amount of the insurance premiums are set aside as a fund that can be used for expenditures such as college.	If they are ever paid out, the consumer must pay taxes and may also pay fees up to 50 percent, losing much of the built-up value.
Investment Schemes	These highly optimistic "sure thing" / "can't miss" opportunities are specifically geared toward quick rewards or paying for college. They are often specialized investments such as real estate, gold, or oil.	Sellers often rely on students' lack of resources and experience to prevent them from thoroughly investigating the opportunity or properly evaluating the contract terms.
Advertising, Sales, or Data Entry Opportunities "I make $40 an hour working from home. . . ."	Offers of high pay for what seems like little work are likely too good to be true. "Car wrap" opportunities (driving around with ads on your car), data entry, and online sales opportunities are typical examples.	The advertised salaries are often very difficult to achieve and come with significant conditions. Some "pay first" programs utilize fake checks to mislead students.
Financial Aid Services or Debt Consolidation	These services offer to find advantageous financial aid packages for a fee.[27]	The offers usually do not return as beneficial a package as they promise, and most financial aid can be discovered without paying for it.
Phone Scams "The IRS has detected tax fraud. . . ." "This will be an attempt to avoid an initial appearance before a grand jury for a criminal offense. . . ."	Phone scammers use threatening, official-sounding messages to scare recipients. They often demand immediate return calls or request account or identifying information. These scams are not unique to college students.	As official as they sound, these are scams. The perpetrators will use any account information you provide to invade your privacy or steal your money.
Too-Good-to-Be-True Credit Cards	Credit cards with very low introductory interest rates, a promise of points, or other impressive-sounding benefits may be offered to students on college campuses, especially during events.	Low rates can explode into high rates or incur fees after a brief period or a single late payment. This is not technically fraudulent, but be very careful when reading the terms.

Scam or Scheme	Characteristics or Promises	Issues and Reasons to Avoid
Freebie or Social Media Survey Scams	Many legitimate companies will offer free products or ask students to complete surveys, but high-risk offerings will ask for personal information or account information.	Free products or compensation may not arrive, and even if they do, they may not offset the risk of giving up account information.
Fake Universities or Degree Programs (Diploma Mills)	Offers may sound very legitimate and similar to real colleges. They often promise significant financial aid or degrees in just weeks or months.[28]	A certificate from a school with no accreditation or a poor reputation is a waste of time and money. Be certain that any college or certificate program is formally accredited; review the credentials of current faculty, and determine the job placement of alumni.

Sources of Good Information and Help

With all the high-cost, predatory, and scam financial advice out there, it is important to know where to turn for help.

Personal Finance Classes

One option is to look for a personal finance class, which will take the concepts found in this chapter and expand on them for an entire semester. Your college may have a financial literacy, personal finance, or money management class available.

Be wary of personal finance or investing classes offered through other sources, however, as many include hidden sales agendas and aggressive pitches to buy a company's financial products. Never make an investment decision, buy a product, or sign a contract at a class, and always seek advice from others on any opportunity.

Websites and Government Resources

There are a ridiculous number of websites available to the public to help with your personal finances. When choosing a website for help, lean toward sites run by a legitimate government agencies or nonprofit organizations.

The first place you should look for help with finances is the official website of related government agencies. If you have a question about insurance, look to your state's insurance commissioner website. If you are having problems with your apartment, contact your city's housing authority.

Government agencies not only have the authoritative word on any legal matter, but are also generally unbiased. The downside to government websites is that they can be hard to understand, with legal wording taken directly from the law. Some government agencies are also prohibited from giving advice to the public, leaving it up to you to apply the information they provide.

There are also many nonprofit organizations that have been established to assist the public with finances. Nonprofit organizations may have information that is easier to understand, and they may also be able to offer personal advice.

Official Government Websites

- Personal Finance: Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, consumerfinance.gov
- Taxes: Internal Revenue Service, irs.gov
- Retirement: Social Security Administration, ssa.gov
- Investing: Securities Exchange Commission, sec.gov
- Investing: North American Securities Administrators Association, nasaa.org (state and provincial investment regulators)

Nonprofit Organization Websites

- National Endowment for Financial Education, nefe.org
- National Foundation for Credit Counseling, nfcc.org
- Consumer Reports, consumerreports.org (national consumer advocacy organization)
- Purposeful Finance, purposefulfinance.org (a nonprofit organization run by this chapter's author)

Your College's Financial Aid Office

The financial aid or student aid office of your college may also be a good place to look for financial help, especially surrounding student loans. It is important to realize, however, that a conflict of interest exists between you and the financial aid adviser. Your college's financial aid office is charged with helping you find the money to go to college, but it isn't charged with making sure you don't take on too much student debt. It is possible to get good advice on getting money to pay for college that is also bad advice for your future finances.

College financial aid counselors are also generally not trained in other areas of finance and should not be relied on for advice on investing, taxes, noncollege debt, or other financial matters. To get help with these areas, consult a qualified professional who can guide you with fewer conflicts of interest, such as the professionals listed below.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Talk with your parents or other family members about their experience with finances, including financial advisers, taxes, legal issues, and investing. When could they have used professional advice in their past? Did they have bad experiences with getting advice that wasn't best for them? How has a lack of *good* advisers harmed your family financially (even if just because they could have had more money)?

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12.9: Summary

There are a lot of benefits to good financial management. Primarily, it generally allows you to do more of what you want with your life. When you have poor financial habits, too much of your money goes into other people's pockets. But when you have good financial management habits, you can afford to do more because you have worked hard, separated needs from wants, saved and invested, and avoided credit card and debt pitfalls.

Career Connection

Search the articles at PurposefulFinance.org and find one you deem interesting.

Why do you find it interesting, and how can you apply it to your life? How does the article relate to the concepts in this chapter?

Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter, and consider one concept or practice you learned in this chapter that might change your answer to one of them.

1. I actively and regularly plan and/or monitor my finances.
2. I understand the benefits and risks of credit.
3. I have a plan to repay my student loans.
4. I regularly take steps to protect my identity and assets.

Where do you go from here?

Financial literacy is a topic that many college students struggle with, but good financial planning habits will benefit you long after your college days are behind you. What would you like to learn more about? Choose a topic from the list below, and create an annotated bibliography that would direct further research.

- Marrying personal finance goals with financial planning
- Creating a saving and spending plan
- Best practices concerning credit cards
- Financing a college education

Chapter Takeaways

- Controlling your finances while in college is important both for your future well-being and for eliminating stress that can impede your academic success.
- Meeting your financial goals while in college may require some financial sacrifice but need not result in hardship.
- The best student jobs offer benefits beyond just the money.
- There are many ways to reduce expenditures while in college. Tracking your spending with an effective budget is the first step toward taking control of your finances.
- Understanding your own spending habits and practicing a few simple principles for spending less help prevent unnecessary debt. Make and use a budget to take control of your financial life.
- Credit card spending is the leading cause of out-of-control debt in America today. Use credit cards minimally and wisely.
- Protect your financial identity by maintaining good records and preventing criminals from obtaining your personal or financial information.
- Look into all forms of financial aid and apply for all aid for which you may be qualified. Do not take more in student loans than you really need.

Chapter Review

1. Why is it necessary to track all your expenditures if your goal is to spend less to avoid financial problems while in college?

   _____

   _____

2. Imagine several situations in which a friend asks you to join some activity that would break your budget. Write down positive, upbeat things you can say in these situations instead of glumly saying "I can't afford it."

   _____

_____

3. List as many ways as you can think of to locate job openings for which you might apply.

_____

_____

4. Who should you talk to if you are having difficulty paying for college or meeting your expenses?

_____

_____

Outside the Book

1. Save the last four credit card offers you have been offered. Compare the interest rates. What did you learn from the cost of each card? Is there an annual fee? If you charged a total of $3500 and you paid each month in full versus paying the minimum amount due, what would the annual cost be?
2. Choose a friend you enjoy spending time with and see if he or she will help you with an "experiment." Together, make a list of fun free things to do over the next two weeks. For example, look for free concerts and other campus activities. Make it your goal to spend as little as possible for two weeks, cooking meals together if practical, taking lunches and snacks to classes, and finding new ways to enjoy your free time inexpensively. At the end of this experiment, compare what you spent with your past habits. How successful were you? Think about how you can continue saving in the future.
3. Make a budget as described in this chapter, based on realistic estimates of your daily and monthly expenditures. Choose two or three categories of expenses and pay special attention to these for a month. For every $10 less that you spend in these categories during the month, put $3 in a new category to reward yourself. Then at the end of the month, use this new fund to celebrate your success with something special.
4. It's never too early to think about summer jobs. Go online to check out summer jobs and internships you might find interesting. Check out the application process and deadlines and write these on your calendar for the winter or spring to remind yourself to apply early.
5. Go to the following Web site and take the "Finance Quiz To Test Knowledge Of College Students"—then check other resources on this site for more financial information you may need:

   familyresource.com(opens in new window) [www.familyresource.com]

Make an Action List

Spending

I spend too much money every week on

_____

_____

My action plan to spend less includes the following:

_____

_____

Lifestyle

The area of my lifestyle where I know I spend more than most other college students is

_____

_____

I can make these adjustments in my lifestyle to reduce this expenditure:

_____

_____

Job in College

Ideally, I'd like to work no more than _____ hours a week.

What I'd most enjoy doing is

_____

_____

I can learn more about possible jobs close to my ideal by

_____

_____

Saving Money

I believe I can realistically save this amount of money a month if I watch my spending:

_____

_____

This is where I will put my savings:

_____

_____

I will allow myself to spend this money only for something major like:

_____

_____

Budgeting and Tracking Spending

Here's how I have kept track of what I spent in the past:

_____

_____

So that I can maintain a budget now and in the future, I know I need to record every expenditure. I will do this by

_____

_____

Credit Card Use

In the past, I usually used my credit card to buy things like

_____

_____

If you have not always been able to pay off your balance every month: I will try to avoid using my credit card as much by taking these steps:

_____

_____

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Engaging in a Healthy Lifestyle

13.1: Prelude to Engaging in a Healthy Lifestyle
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
13.3: The Basics of Self-Care-Sleep
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
13.6: Maintaining Healthy Relationships
13.7: Self Awareness and Self Compassion
13.8: Your Safety
13.9: Summary

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13.1: Prelude to Engaging in a Healthy Lifestyle

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the principles of physical health and their impact on overall well-being.
2. Analyze the components of self-care related to sleep and their role in maintaining health.
3. Evaluate strategies for managing emotional and mental health to promote a balanced lifestyle.
4. Identify practices for maintaining healthy relationships and their benefits to personal well-being.
5. Examine the concepts of self-awareness and self-compassion and their importance in personal health and safety.



Figure 13.1: Movement, in all its forms, is an important element of health and wellness. Movement contributes to balance, cardiovascular health, strength, and flexibility; it can also help clear your mind in the midst of study and stress. (Credit: Steven Pisano / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Student Survey

How do you feel about health and wellness? These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As we are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to help you identify opportunities for improved health. Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1–4, 1 meaning "least like me" and 4 meaning "most like me."

1. I eat enough fruits and vegetables every day.
2. I get enough sleep.
3. I have, for the most part, healthy relationships with friends and family.
4. I feel like I know how to manage stress.

You can also take the Chapter 13 survey(opens in new window) anonymously online.

STUDENT PROFILE

"My freshman year of college, I started at a pretty big university. I had what some call "social anxiety" and even cried before getting out the car on my first day. That year was a struggle for me, and I constantly had to fight with myself to step out of my comfort zone in order to succeed. I knew that if I made positive changes to my life then I would easily succeed in school. I joined a group of students who were a support system for me during my first year of college. Together we studied together and even worked out together. It helped me be more involved on my campus and less worried. Being connected with other students has taught me a lot of ways to cope with common problems many students face.

> "My first advice would be first and foremost, always make sure you are being kind to yourself. It's not advisable to work 40 hours a week and also try to be a full time student. You need to set up a realistic home and school life so that way you are balanced with your assignments and other responsibilities. You need to give your body and your brain time to rest so you can absorb as much as you want to without restrictions. I found it useful to start working out to make sure that I'm dedicating the time I should be to myself and not working myself until exhaustion. Little things like exercise, yoga and meditation can do amazing things for your body as well as your mind. If you take care of your body, your body will take care of you."
>
> **–Felicia Santiago**, Delgado Community College

About this Chapter

This chapter explores the many ways your health is impacted by your lifestyle choices. The goal of this material is to help you do the following:

- - Describe actions you can take to improve your physical health.
- - Identify ways to maintain and enhance your emotional health.
- - Understand mental health risks and warning signs.
- - Articulate reasons and ways to maintain healthy relationships.
- - Outline steps you can take to be more safety conscious.

Recent headlines were buzzing with news about a 17-year-old boy who lost his eyesight because of a poor diet. While the boy ate enough food and his weight was considered normal, when doctors investigated, they discovered he didn't eat enough ***nutrient-rich*** food. A self-described picky eater, the teen's daily diet consisted of sausage, deli ham, white bread, Pringles, and french fries. His food choices led to numerous nutritional deficiencies of several essential vitamins and minerals, causing nutritional optic neuropathy.[1]

Have you heard the saying "you are what you eat"? If so, likely a parent or someone who loves you said it while coaxing you to eat your vegetables. Are we really what we eat, and what does this phrase actually mean? While the example of the boy who lost his vision may be extreme, the food we eat does impact our physical and mental health. What's at the end of our fork can keep us healthy or eventually make us sick. Every 27 days, our skin replaces itself and our body makes new cells from the food we eat.[2] And according to Dr. Libby Weaver, every three months we completely rebuild and replace our blood supply. What you eat becomes you.

It's not only what you eat that impacts your health but also how much you exercise, how effectively you deal with stress, how well you sleep, your work habits, and even your relationships—these things all have an impact on your well-being.

There are two primary reasons we become unhealthy. First, we do not deliver enough nutrients for our cells to operate properly, and second, our cells are bombarded with too many toxins. Keeping it simple, good health is proper nutrients in, toxins out. Toxins come from a host of sources—certain foods, the environment, stressful relationships, smoking, vaping, and alcohol and drug use. And if we don't sleep and exercise enough, toxins can hang around long enough to cause us harm.

As a first-year college student you will make many choices without parental oversight, including the food you eat and the way you take care of your body and brain. Some choices put you on a path to health, and other choices can lead you down a path toward illness. There is a strong connection between success in college and your ability to stay healthy.

Health is more than a strong body that doesn't get sick. Health also includes your overall sense of well-being (mental, emotional) and healthy relationships. Good health is about making positive choices in all of these areas, and avoiding destructive choices. It's about learning to be smart, to set boundaries, to watch out for your safety, and to take care of the one body that will carry you through life.

While health and wellness are often interchanged, it is important to differentiate the two concepts.**Health is** a state of physical, mental, and social well-being, while **wellness** is a process through which people become aware of and make choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life.

Footnotes

1. Harrison, Warburton, Lux, and Atan. Blindness caused by a junk food diet. *Annals of Intern Med*. September 3, 2019.
2. webmed.com [www.webmd.com]

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13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health

Questions to consider:

- What is healthy eating?
- Why is it important to stay hydrated?
- How important is exercise to a healthy body?
- Are you getting enough sleep to be healthy?
- What are toxins, and how can they affect your health?

You have one body. Treat it well so as to maximize its ability to serve you throughout your life. Often physical health gets moved to the bottom of the priority list when we are busy. Taking care of your physical health doesn't mean six-pack abs or training for a marathon. It means honoring your physical needs so your body can function properly, feeding your cells the nutrients that will keep your body working well your entire life, and minimizing exposure to toxins to reduce your risk of disease.

DIET

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 eating the right amounts of nutrient-rich 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.

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. 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. Cafeterias, all-you-can-eat dining facilities, vending machines, and easy access to food twenty-four hours a day make it tempting to choose hyper-palatable, nutrient-deficient unhealthy foods and overeat.

Ideas for healthy eating

- If personally tolerated, eat foods from all the major whole food groups
- Whole, natural foods generally are the most nutrient-dense
- Plan ahead and schedule a time to shop for groceries, prepare, and cook
- Pack your lunch and snacks to better ensure healthy eating on the go
- Drink plenty of water

There are a wide array of healthy foods and ways of eating. ***Like exercise, find the healthy foods and dietary approach that you like, that makes you feel good, and that you can naturally and easily sustain your lifestyle.***

As you find what works for you, it's important to remember 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 to develop healthy ways of coping and relaxing that don't involve reaching for food, drink, or other substances. While self-care does involve the health trinity, there are other important elements, including stress management.

ACTIVITY : PLANNING A HEALTHY DAY

Planning a Healthy Day

It's been said that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Take a few minutes and write out what a full day of healthy eating looks like for you.

- What would you eat? What would you not eat?
- How much would you eat?

- How often would eat?
- What would you drink? What would you not drink?
- How much would you drink?
- What, if anything, do you need to do to help you do this on a daily basis?

Use your findings as a way to begin to design a healthy eating meal plan for yourself.

Healthy Eating

While it's not the only thing that contributes to great health, what you eat makes a huge difference. We have 37 trillion cells in our body. The only way they function optimally is with good nutrition. As a college student, you will be surrounded by temptations to eat poorly or even to overeat. It's now up to you to make wise choices in the face of these temptations. Your dining hall is likely full of many healthy foods and just as many unhealthy foods. You may grab food on the run while racing to class or order a pizza at midnight while studying for a test. Lobby vending machines or a stash of snacks in your room should not turn into a substitute for real meals. The downside of fast food and easy access treats is that many are loaded with sugar, salt, or both.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated their Healthy Plate Guidelines in 2011. MyPlate illustrates five different food groups considered the building blocks for a healthy diet—vegetables, fruits, protein, grains, and dairy.

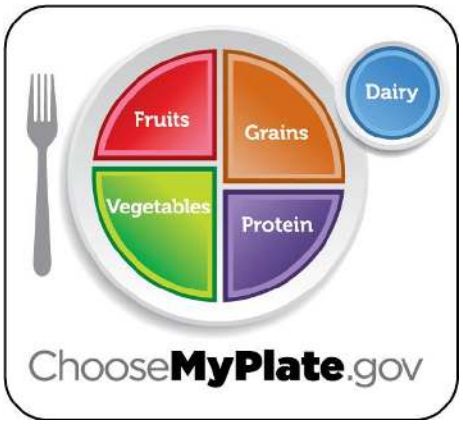


Figure 13.2: Eating healthy is a journey shaped by many factors, including our state of life, situations, preferences, access to food, culture, traditions, and the personal decisions we make over time. The USDA recommends that vegetables and fruits make up the largest portions of your diet, and dairy the smallest portion. All your food and beverage choices count. MyPlate offers ideas and tips to help you create a healthier eating style that meets your individual needs and improves your health. (Credit: USDA / Public Domain)

It's also important to know what is not a healthy plate. A healthy plate is low in refined carbohydrates (donuts, pastries, pasta, cookies), low in sugar, and low in saturated fat (although we need healthy fats like avocado and nuts). You can learn more at choosemyplate.gov [www.choosemyplate.gov].

While the USDA's MyPlate was revised to reflect some key findings at that time, nutritionists at Harvard felt it didn't offer the most complete picture when it comes to basic nutrition guidelines. They created The Healthy Eating Plate, which is based on what they consider to be the best available science. Similar to MyPlate, half the plate is vegetables and fruit. Aim for eight servings of veggies or fruits a day, more veggies than fruits. It's important to note that the Harvard version was created without the political pressure from food industry lobbyists (for example, the dairy industry). Note that grains are further defined as whole grains, protein is now healthy protein, and water is emphasized over dairy/milk. What other differences do you see?

This table(opens in new window) provides more detail on how The Healthy Eating plate compares to USDA's MyPlate.

Healthy eating also includes choosing organic fruits and vegetables when possible. By choosing organic, you help lower the amount of toxins your body encounters (since conventional fruits and vegetables are often sprayed with pesticides). Organic foods may not be readily available on your campus or in your local grocery store, so strive to choose the best options possible given availability and your budget. Many college and universities are adding organic food as a result of student demand. If healthy eating is something you are passionate about, consider organizing an effort to influence the dining options on your campus. When shopping on your own, the Dirty Dozen list provided by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) is a good guide of which produce is most important to eat organic, as these are the fruits and vegetables with the most pesticide residue. The EWG also compiles a Clean 15 list(opens in new window) of the vegetables and fruits with the least amount of pesticides.

Whole Foods vs. Processed Foods

Choose whole foods. Whole foods are any foods that have not been processed, packaged, or altered in any way. Whole foods are an essential part of a healthy diet because they contain the vitamins and minerals our bodies need.

Examples of whole foods include the following:

- **Vegetables:** Carrots, broccoli, kale, avocados, cauliflower, spinach, peppers
- **Fruits:** Apples, bananas, blueberries, strawberries, grapes, melons, peaches
- **Grains:** Brown rice, oatmeal, barley, buckwheat, quinoa, millet
- **Beans:** Black, pinto, kidney, black-eyed peas, chickpeas

Minimize **non-whole foods**. These are foods that have been processed, such as cookies, hot dogs, chips, pasta, deli meat, and ice cream. Even seemingly healthy foods like yogurt, granola, and protein bars are processed and should be checked for added sugar and other unhealthy ingredients.

The average American eats 62 percent of their daily calories from processed foods.[3] In order for your body to be as healthy as possible, it's extremely important to include lots of whole foods in your diet.

> **"When you eat junk food you think junk thoughts."**
>
> *— Michael Bernard Beckwith*

How to Read a Food Label

The U.S. government requires food manufacturers to put a label on every processed food product. This is so we, as consumers, know what we are putting into our bodies and can make good dietary choices. A quick review of the label will provide a lot of important information about what you are eating, yet most people don't take the time to read the label. This is a big mistake.

Think of the front of the package as a marketing billboard. Don't be fooled by the marketing. Every day millions of dollars are spent to persuade us to eat foods that are not healthy for us. Through visuals (like the strawberry on the bottle of dressing below) and words (like natural, healthy, or gluten free), the food industry wants us to make assumptions about the nature of a food product without looking at the facts. For example, many people eat protein bars thinking they are a healthy choice, but protein bars can have up to 30 grams of sugar! Understanding the nutrition information and ingredients will help you make healthier choices. When you take the time to read the labeled ingredients, you are no longer being marketed to—you are staring at the facts.



Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

Serving size **2/3 cup (55g)**

Amount per serving

Calories **230**

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8g	**10%**
Saturated Fat 1g	**5%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	**0%**
Sodium 160mg	**7%**
Total Carbohydrate 37g	**13%**
Dietary Fiber 4g	**14%**
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	**20%**
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 240mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Figure 13.3: This label displays the key nutritional information about a common container of fruit salad. Though fruit is generally healthy, be aware of the amount of calories and sugars, and particularly the serving size to which those amounts are tied. Note that the US government has updated food label requirements and this version of the label will soon be the only one you'll see. (Credit U.S. Food and Drug Administration / Public Domain)

Look at the label on the back of what appears to be a healthy item: fruit salad or fruit cocktail. One of the first things to look for is the amount of sugar. 12 grams equals just under 2.5 teaspoons. The serving size indicated is 2/3 cups, so if you have double that amount, it's the equivalent of spooning out 5 teaspoons of sugar. The lower the sugar the better.

It's also important to avoid high amounts of sodium, to minimize saturated fats, and to avoid all trans fats. Trans fats are unhealthy substances made through the process of solidifying liquid oils to increase the shelf life of foods. Also called partially hydrogenated oil, trans fats are often found in margarine, microwave popcorn, crackers, cookies, and frozen pizza. Saturated fat usually comes from animal products like butter and meat fat. Saturated fat tends to raise the level of cholesterol in the blood, and while some is OK, moderation is best.

Dietary fiber is a good thing; the higher the number the better. Fiber has virtually no calories, but it holds water in your stomach, makes you feel full, and helps with digestion. Vitamins are very important. Aim to get to 100 percent of your recommended daily value through the food you eat throughout the day.

Next, look at the ingredient list that can be found at the bottom of the nutrition label. A long list of ingredients likely contains fillers and preservatives you should avoid. If you can't pronounce an ingredient, you can generally assume it is not a healthy option. And it's not only what you eat, it's what you don't eat. As a rule, the fewer the ingredients, the better.

This video on how to read a food label(opens in new window) is a helpful overview on what else to look for.

You can also download the **Fooducate** app, which allows you to scan the bar code of any food item and quickly see a report card and suggestions for healthier alternatives.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Take a few minutes to write down everything you ate in the last two days. Now review your list and estimate what percent of your food intake came from whole foods. How did your meals compare to The Healthy Plate? Where is there opportunity for healthier choices? How can these changes benefit you?

What You Drink

What is your go-to drink when you are thirsty? Soda? Juice? Coffee? How about water? Most of your blood and every cell in your body is composed of water. In fact, water makes up 60 to 80 percent of our entire body mass, so when we don't consume enough water, all kinds of complications can occur. To function properly, all the cells and organs in our body need water. Proper hydration is key to overall health and well-being. By the time you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated. Dehydration is when your body does not have as much water and fluids as it needs. Researchers at Virginia Polytechnic discovered that mild dehydration (as little as losing 1 to 2 percent of body water) can impair cognitive performance.[4] Water increases energy and relieves fatigue, promotes weight loss, flushes toxins, improves skin complexion, improves digestion, and is a natural headache remedy (your brain is 76 percent water). Headaches, migraines, and back pains are commonly caused by dehydration. Your body will also let you know it needs water by messaging through muscle cramps, achy joints, constipation, dry skin, and of course a dry mouth.

Aside from feeling thirsty, the easiest way to tell if you are dehydrated is to check your urine. If it is a dark shade of yellow, your urine is over-concentrated with waste. This happens because water helps flush out waste and when you're hydrated there's a higher ratio of water to waste, turning your urine a lighter color.

One of the best habits you can develop is to drink a large glass of water first thing in the morning. Your body becomes a little dehydrated as you sleep. Drinking water first thing in the morning allows your body to rehydrate, which helps with digestion and helps move the bowels for regularity in the morning. It also helps to eliminate the toxins your liver processed while you slept.

Check out this video(opens in new window) for more benefits of drinking water.

Staying hydrated is important to keep your body healthy, energized, and running properly. As a general guideline, aim to drink eight glasses of water a day, although a more helpful guide is to drink half your body weight in ounces (for example, if you weigh 150 lb, try to drink 75 oz of water a day). One of the best ways to remind yourself to drink throughout the day is to buy a reusable bottle and bring it everywhere you go. There are two reasons to use a refillable water bottle instead of a plastic bottle:

1. **Your own health.** Most plastic water bottles have a chemical called bisphenol A (BPA), which is added to plastics to make them more durable and pliable. BPA is known to disrupt hormones and has been linked to sperm dysfunction.
2. **The health of the planet.** Do you know that every time you drink from a plastic water bottle and casually toss it in the trash, it can stay on the planet approximately 450 years?[5] Even when you recycle, the complex nature of recycling doesn't guarantee your plastic bottle will make it through the process. Americans purchase about 50 billion water bottles per year, averaging 13 bottles a month for each of us. By using a reusable water bottle, you can save an average of 156 plastic bottles annually.[6]

"But I don't like the taste of water!" It may take time, but eventually you will. Add a little more each day, and eventually your body will feel so fantastic fully hydrated that you will have water cravings. In the meantime, you can visit the dining hall in the morning and add lemon, lime, berries, watermelon, cucumbers, or whatever taste you enjoy that will add a little healthy flavor to the water.

While water is undeniably the healthiest beverage you can drink, it is unrealistic to assume that is all you will drink. Be careful to minimize your soda intake, as most sodas are loaded with sugar or artificial sweeteners (which can be even worse than sugar). And unless you are squeezing your own fruit juice, you are also likely drinking a lot of sugar. Many fruit juices sold in supermarkets contain only a small percentage of real fruit juice, and have added sugar and other unhealthy sweeteners like high-fructose corn syrup. A 12-oz glass of orange juice can contain up to 9 teaspoons of sugar, about the same as a 12-oz can of Coke! Hot or cold herbal teas are a wonderful addition to your diet.

Exercise

Many people exercise to maintain or lose weight, but weight loss is only one potential benefit of exercise. Regular exercise can improve the quality of your sleep, strengthen your bones, increase your energy levels, and reduce your risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, and even some forms of cancer.[7] Regular exercise is key to living a long, healthy life.

There are three basic types of exercise—flexibility, strength training, and cardiovascular.

1. **Flexibility** is the range in motion of the joints in your body, or the ability for your muscles to move freely. Without adequate flexibility, daily activities can become difficult to do. Stretching increases your body's flexibility, improves circulation, and sends more blood to your muscles. Just a few minutes a day of deep stretching can have a powerfully positive impact on your health. Yoga and Tai Chi are other wonderful ways to improve your flexibility.
2. **Strength** is the body's ability to produce force. Strength training helps improve muscle strength and muscle mass, which will become increasingly important as you age. Increased muscle helps your body burn calories more efficiently. Strength training

also helps maintain bone strength. In addition to lifting weights, other ways to build strength include push-ups, pull-ups, squats, lunges, and yoga.

3. **Cardiovascular** is the body's ability to use oxygen efficiently during exercise. As one's ability to use oxygen improves, daily activities can be performed with less fatigue. Great cardiovascular modes of exercise include jogging, swimming, biking, and HIIT (high intensity interval training). HIIT is short bursts of intense activity followed by a rest period. With HIIT, you can squeeze a lot of benefit into a short period of time. Click here for an example of HITT workouts(opens in new window).



Figure 13.4: Your college may offer a variety of unique and interesting exercise programs and classes, which you can take advantage of to learn new things and stay fit. (Credit: Jo Allebon / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Research indicates that regular aerobic exercise can support memory and cognition. In these studies, aerobic exercise generally increases the number of new neurons created in the brain's memory center and also reduces inflammation.[8] Inflammation in the brain may contribute to the development of dementia and other neurodegenerative conditions. It might be good timing to take a jog before you sit down to study for a test!

It's important to move throughout the day, and every day. Aim to exercise for 150 minutes a week. You don't have to be the king or queen of CrossFit; it's the daily movement that is most important. While it is best to integrate all three types of exercise, the best exercise is the one you will actually do. Find and commit to a form of exercise you will enjoy.

EXERCISE

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 and think 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. 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. Exercise is a powerful tool for stress management and improving one's mental health and memory—all 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. Studies continue to show that it's never too late to start exercising and that even small improvements in physical fitness can significantly improve overall health.

You can be successful with the inclusion of an exercise regime in your new life, but ***it is very important to find an activity that you like***. Setting a schedule is advisable for success in your program. Also, doing a variety of activities will result in less boredom, and

incorporating fun activities with family and friends can be very encouraging. The Maverick Activities Center (MAC) offers a wide range of exercise options from free-play sports, exercise equipment, swimming, indoor track, and more. Getting involved in intramural sports can also increase your activity level while meeting some social needs. Also, you will have the opportunity to walk on campus to contribute to your exercise activity, so don't be so concerned with finding the closest parking spot available.

Being Active Throughout the Day

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

- 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
- Take regular breaks from your computer and desk to stand up, stretch, and walk around

ACTIVITY : WORKOUT OR WORK IN?

Workout or Work in?

Fitness expert Paul Chek says that the best workout is the one that you will do repeatedly.

- What is your favorite exercise or exercise routine?
- How often do you like to do it?

Paul Chek also has a concept of working out vs. *working in*. A workout is a strenuous exercise session like weightlifting, sprinting, or intense cardio. *Working in*, on the other hand, is doing more gentle, energy-building movement and exercise; it's not energy depleting but energy generating. Examples of *working in* include yoga, tai-chi, qi gong, stretching, and walking.

- How much working *out* do you need?
- How much *working in*?

Footnotes

10. gallup.com [news.gallup.com]
11. Cleveland Clinic, health.cleveland.org [health.clevelandclinic.org]
12. Archer, ncbi.nlm.nih.gov [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov]
13. Matthew Walker, PhD ***Why We Sleep***
14. Governors Highway Safety Association
15. JCEM, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3047226/

Toxins

We live in an increasingly toxic world. Since the Industrial Revolution, we have released thousands of man-made chemicals into the environment. These chemical toxins are in our food (pesticides, conventional fertilizers), in food packaging, in household products, and in our personal care products. Many of these chemicals have been linked to infertility, asthma, migraines, ADHD, and cancer.

The complicated thing about these chemicals is that their effects can take years or even decades to appear. The chemicals build up over time *and they interact with each other*, which can result in problems that are not considered by "single chemical" testing (which is the majority of the limited testing that is done).

Now the good news—there are simple things you can do right now to limit the amount of toxins in your environment. First, it is best to avoid any products with "artificial colors" or "fragrance."

- **Artificial colors:** Synthetic dyes like Yellow 10, Blue 1, and Red 28 may contain carcinogens and neurotoxins and can be absorbed by your skin and go directly into your bloodstream.
- **Fragrance:** Have you ever walked down the cleaning and laundry soap aisle and been assaulted by so many fragrances you couldn't get to the next aisle fast enough? Claiming trade secrets, companies don't have to tell us what's in "fragrance," which can include highly toxic ingredients, hormone disruptors, and carcinogens. Fragranced products come in the form of soaps,

cleaners, air fresheners, hand sanitizers, laundry detergents, and personal care products. Studies have repeatedly shown that the synthetic fragrances and other toxic chemicals included in these products are causing a range of health problems.[9]

There is a long and ever-growing list of common chemicals to avoid, but it's hard to remember the names when you are shopping. That's where a handy app like Healthy Living from the EWG comes in.

Simply scan the bar code of any products you use and learn about any potential health hazards.

> ***"Many Americans are surprised to learn that the ingredients in their makeup, shampoo and body lotion are largely unregulated and, in some cases, harmful to their health. The fact is that companies can put potentially dangerous ingredients into the products they sell without ever having to prove they are safe."***
>
> *— Heather White, Environmental Working Group Executive Director*

Your skin is your largest organ, and in seconds will absorb what you put on it. It's important to be wary of conventional skin care products that could potentially leak toxins into your body. Think of your skin as one giant mouth. If you wouldn't eat the ingredients in your products, think twice before applying them to your skin.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Are your eating and sleeping habits currently affecting your ability to have a super-successful college experience? Describe the health and wellness changes a commitment to eating clean and sleeping well will bring about, and how you will benefit in the short and long term.

If You Need to Lose Weight

If you need to lose weight, don't try to starve yourself. Gradual steady weight loss is healthier and easier. Try these guidelines:

1. Check your body mass index (BMI) to see the normal weight range for your height (see "Additional Resources" below for more information).
2. Go to choosemyplate.org(opens in new window) [www.choosemyplate.gov] for help determining your ideal caloric intake for gradual weight loss.
3. Set your goals and make a plan you can live with. Start by avoiding snacks and fast foods. Try to choose foods that meet the guidelines listed earlier.
4. Stay active and try to exercise frequently.
5. Keep a daily food journal and write down what you eat. Simply writing it down helps people be more aware of their habits and motivated to eat better.
6. Visit the student health center on your campus and ask for more information about weight loss programs.
7. Remember, no one plan works for everyone. Visit the online resources listed later for a variety of approaches for weight loss.

Avoiding the Freshman Fifteen

The "freshman fifteen" refers to the weight gain many students experience in their first year of college. Even those whose weight was at an appropriate level often gained unwanted pounds because of changes in their eating habits.

Start by looking back at the boxes you checked in the Nutrition Self-Assessment. Be honest with yourself. If your first choice for a snack is cookies, ice cream, or chips, think about that. If your first choice for lunch is a burger and fries, have you considered other choices?

Tips for Success: Nutrition

- Eat a variety of foods every day.
- Take a multivitamin every day.
- Take an apple or banana with you for a snack in case you get hungry between meals.
- Avoid fried foods.
- Avoid high-sugar foods. After the rush comes a crash that can make you drowsy, and you'll have trouble paying attention in class. Watch out for sugary cereals—try other types with less sugar and more fiber.
- If you have a soft drink habit, experiment with flavored seltzer and other zero- or low-calorie drinks.
- Eat when you're hungry, not when you're bored or just because others are eating.

- If you find yourself in a fast food restaurant, try a salad.
- Watch portion sizes and never “supersize it”!

Eating Disorders

The most common eating disorders are anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating.

Anorexia is characterized by excessive weight loss and self-starvation. The individual usually feels “fat” regardless of how thin she or he becomes and may continue to eat less and less. If your BMI is lower than the bottom of the normal range, you may be developing anorexia.

Bulimia is characterized by frequent binge eating followed by an attempt to compensate for or “undo” the overeating with a behavior such as self-induced vomiting or laxative abuse.

Binge eating disorder is characterized by frequent binge eating without compensatory behavior to “undo” the overeating. Binge eating usually leads to weight gain and eventual obesity.

More than ten million Americans suffer from an eating disorder. The causes are complex, and the individual usually needs help to overcome their obsession. Eating disorders hurt one’s health in a variety of ways and can become life threatening. The signs of a possible eating disorder include the following:

- Eating secretly when others can’t see
- Having a strong fear of being overweight or gaining weight
- Only eating a limited number of foods
- Exercising obsessively
- Lacking a monthly menstrual period

Getting Help for Eating Disorders

Don’t feel ashamed if you obsess over food or your weight. If your eating habits are affecting your life, it’s time to seek help. As with any other health problem, professionals can provide help and treatment. Talk to your doctor or visit your campus student health center.

Additional Resources

BMI calculator. Find out how your weight compares with normal ranges at choosemyplate.gov(opens in new window)ewg [www.cdc.gov].

Diet planning. How much should you eat to maintain the same weight? What if you want to lose weight? Find out at choosemyplate.gov(opens in new window) [www.choosemyplate.gov].

Calorie counter, nutritional database, and personal diet log. If you’re really serious about losing weight and want to keep a daily log of your progress, try this online tool: caloriecount.com(opens in new window) [www.caloriecount.com].

Eating disorders. For information about causes and treatment of eating disorders, go to nationaleatingdisorders.org(opens in new window) [www.nationaleatingdisorders.org(opens in new window)].

Key Takeaways

- Good nutrition and an appropriate body weight are important for health and wellness. You’re also more successful academically.
- Eating well does not require counting calories or obsessing over everything you eat. Focus on whole grains, lots of fruits and vegetables, and low-fat meats and dairy products. Minimize processed snacks and foods high in saturated fats, trans fats, sodium, and sugar.
- If you need to control your weight, a variety of healthful plans are available to help you eat foods you like and still lose weight without suffering unduly.

Checkpoint Exercises

1. What health problems may result from obesity?

   _____

2. List three or more snacks that are healthier than cookies, chips, ice cream, and doughnuts.

_____

3. How many cups of fruit and vegetables should you eat every day?

_____

References

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Footnotes

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13.3: The Basics of Self-Care-Sleep

Craig Keaton

Definition of SELF-CARE

If you were asked to describe self-care, what would you say? Most often, people talk about the health trinity: *sleep, exercise, and diet*. If you think back to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, those are certainly very important components of self-care. However, self-care can be so much more – an idea that is explored in more detail later in this chapter. The most useful definition of self-care may be: ***self-care is anything that makes you better***. To explore this idea, let's first look at self-care through the lens of the health trinity.

SLEEP

Questions to consider:

- How much sleep is enough?
- What are the impacts of sleep deprivation?
- Which strategies and support can enhance sleep?

How often do you wake up filled with energy, eager to embrace the day? How often do you wake up still tired, with heavy eyes that just don't want to open? Your answer to these questions has a direct bearing on the quality of your decisions, your ability to use good judgement, the extent to which you can focus in the classroom, and ultimately your long-term health.

A great night's sleep begins the minute you wake up. The choices you make throughout the day impact how quickly you fall asleep, whether you sleep soundly, and whether your body is able to successfully complete the cycle of critical functions that only happen while you sleep.

Sleep is the foundation of amazing health, yet almost 40 percent of adults struggle to get enough sleep.[10] Lack of sleep affects mental and physical performance and can make you more irritable. The diminished energy that results from too little sleep often leads us to make poor decisions about most things, including food. Think about the last time you were really tired. Did you crave pizza, donuts, and fries—or a healthy salad? Studies have shown that people who sleep less are more likely to eat fewer vegetables and eat more fats and refined carbohydrates, like donuts.[11]

With sufficient sleep it is easier to learn, to remember what you learned, and to have the necessary energy to make the most of your college experience. Without sufficient sleep it is harder to learn, to remember what you learned, and to have the energy to make the most of your college experience. It's that simple.

What Happens When We Sleep?

Sleep is a time when our bodies are quite busy repairing and detoxifying. While we sleep we fix damaged tissue, toxins are processed and eliminated, hormones essential for growth and appetite control are released and restocked, and energy is restored. Sleep is essential for a healthy immune system. How many colds do you catch a year? How often do you get the flu? If you are often sick, you do not have a healthy immune system, and sleep deprivation may be a key culprit.

A review of hundreds of sleep studies concluded that most adults need around eight hours of sleep to maintain good health. Some people may be able to function quite well on seven and others may need closer to nine, but as a general rule, most people need a solid eight hours of sleep each night. And when it comes to sleep, both quantity and quality are important.

When sleep is cut short, the body doesn't have time to complete all the phases needed for the repair and detoxification.

A tiny lobe called the pineal gland helps us fall asleep. The pineal gland secretes melatonin to calm the brain. The pineal gland responds to darkness. If you are watching TV until the minute you go to bed and then sleep with the artificial light from smartphones and other devices, your brain is tricked into thinking it is still daylight; this makes it difficult for the pineal gland to do its job. In addition, if the TV shows you watch before bed are violent or action-packed, your body will release cortisol (the stress hormone). Anything that creates stress close to bedtime will make it more difficult to fall asleep. A bedtime practice of quiet activities like reading, journaling, listening to music, or meditation will make it much easier to fall asleep.

What Happens If You Don't Get Enough Sleep?

Lack of sleep has a big impact on your overall state of health and well-being. Studies have linked poor sleep to a variety of health problems. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified sleep deprivation as a public health epidemic.

A lack of sleep can change the way your genes express themselves. One notable study involved a group of healthy adults limited to six hours of sleep for one week. Researchers then measured the change in gene activity compared to the prior week when these same people were getting a full eight hours of sleep a night. The lack of sleep caused the activity of 711 genes to become distorted. About half of the genes were switched off by a lack of sleep, and these genes were associated with the immune system. The other half of the genes experienced increased activity from a lack of sleep, and these were genes associated with the promotion of tumors, genes associated with long-term chronic inflammation, and stress genes.[12]

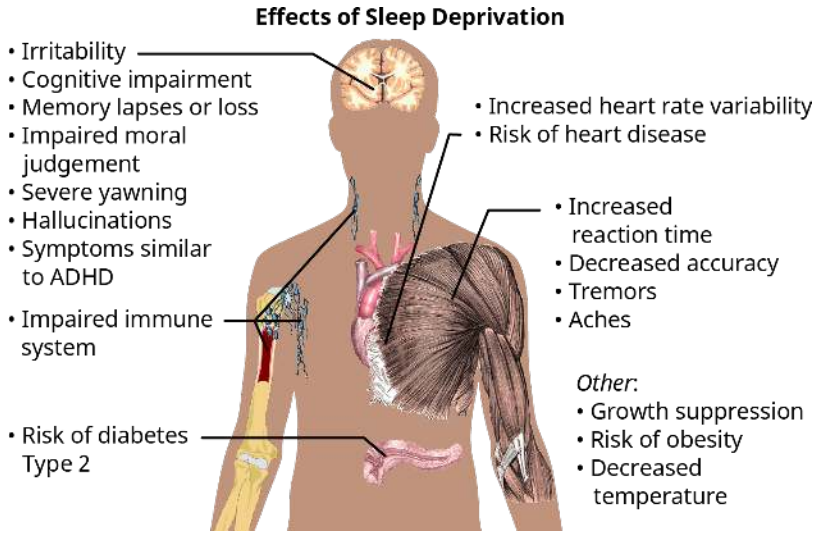


Figure 13.5: **The Effects of Sleep Deprivation** This visual depicts many of the ways we are affected by insufficient sleep. (Credit: Häggström, Mikael (2014). "Medical gallery of Mikael Häggström 2014". *WikiJournal of Medicine*. Public Domain.)

Some of the health risks of insufficient sleep include the following:

Increased risk of heart attack and stroke: In his book *Why We Sleep*, Matthew Walker, PhD, shares Japanese research showing that male workers who average six hours of sleep or less are 400 to 500 percent more likely to suffer one or more cardiac arrests than those getting more than six hours of sleep each night. Another study of women between the ages of 20 and 79 found that those who had mild sleep disturbance such as taking longer to fall asleep or waking up one or more times during the night were significantly more likely to have high blood pressure than those who fell asleep quickly and slept soundly.[13]

Impaired cognitive function: Even one night of sleeping less than six hours can impact your ability to think clearly the next day.

Increased risk of accidents: Sleep deprivation slows your reaction time, which increases your risk of accidents. You are three times more likely to be in a car crash if you are tired. According to the American Sleep Foundation, 40 percent of people admitted to falling asleep behind the wheel at least once. A Governor's Highway Safety Association report estimates there are 6,400 fatal drowsy driving crashes each year. Fifty percent of these crashes involve drivers under the age of 25.[14]

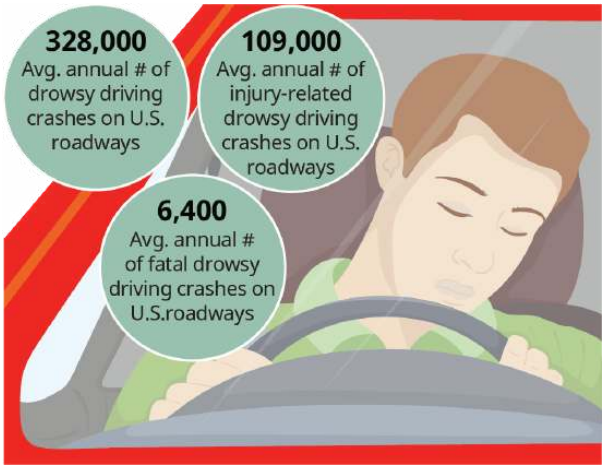


Figure 13.6: Driving while drowsy puts you, your passengers, and many others in danger. (Credit: Modification of work by Governors Highway Safety Association.)

Driving after 20 hours without sleep is the equivalent of driving with a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.08 percent—the U.S. legal limit for drunk driving.

Weight gain/increased risk for obesity: Sleep helps balance your appetite by regulating hormones that play a role in helping you feel full after a meal. Also, cortisol is released during times of anxiety, and exhaustion causes your body to produce more cortisol. This can stimulate your appetite.

Increased risk of cancer: Tumors grow up to three times faster in laboratory animals with severe sleep dysfunctions. Researchers believe this is because of disrupted melatonin production, as melatonin has both antioxidant and anticancer activity.

Increased emotional intensity: The part of the brain responsible for emotional reactions, your amygdala, can be 60 percent more reactive when you've slept poorly, resulting in increased emotional intensity.

For more information on the advantages and health risks of sleep watch this TED Talk(opens in new window) by Matt Walker, PhD, Director of the Sleep Center at U California Berkeley.

Tips to Improve the Quality of Your Sleep

Now that you are more aware of the ways insufficient sleep harms your body, let's review some of the things you can do to enhance your sleep.

Make sleep a priority.

It can be challenging in college, but try to get on a schedule where you sleep and wake at the same time every day to get your body accustomed to a routine. This will help your body get into a sleep rhythm and make it easier to fall asleep and get up in the morning.

Sleep in a cool, quiet, dark room.

Create a sleeping environment that is comfortable and conducive to sleep. If you can control the temperature in your room, keep it cool in the evening. Scientists believe a cool bedroom (around 65 degrees) may be best for sleep, since it mimics our body's natural temperature drop. Exposure to bright light suppresses our body's ability to make melatonin, so keep the room as dark as possible. A 2010 study in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* found that individuals exposed to room light "during the usual hours of sleep suppressed melatonin by greater than 50%."[15] Even the tiniest bit of light in the room (like from a clock radio LCD screen) can disrupt your internal clock and your production of melatonin, which will interfere with your sleep. A sleep mask may help eliminate light, and earplugs can help reduce noise.

Avoid eating late or drinking alcohol or caffeine close to bedtime.

It is best to finish eating at least two hours before bedtime and avoid caffeine after lunch. While not everyone is affected in the same way, caffeine hangs around a long time in most bodies. Although alcohol will make you drowsy, the effect is short-lived and you will often wake up several hours later, unable to fall back to sleep. Alcohol can also keep you from entering the deeper stages of sleep, where your body does most of the repair and healing. A 2013 *Scientific Research* study concluded that "energy drinks,

other caffeinated beverages and alcoholic beverages are risk factors of poor sleep quality." It's important to finish eating hours before bedtime so your body is able to heal and detoxify and it is not spending the first few hours of sleep digesting a heavy meal.

Start to wind down an hour before bed.

There are great apps to help with relaxation, stress release, and falling asleep. Or you can simply practice 4-7-8 breathing to calm your nervous system—breathe in to the count of 4, hold your breath for a count of 7, and release your breath slowly to the count of 8.

Consider the Insight Timer(opens in new window) app, or any of the free apps(opens in new window) listed by the American Sleep Association.

Exercise for 30 minutes a day.

One of the biggest benefits of exercise is its effect on sleep. A study from Stanford University found that 16 weeks in a moderate-intensity exercise program allowed people to fall asleep about 15 minutes faster and sleep about 45 minutes longer. Walking, yoga, swimming, strength training, jumping rope—whatever it is, find an exercise you like and make sure to move your body every day.

Improve your diet.

Low fiber and high saturated fat and sugar intake is associated with lighter, less restorative sleep with more wake time during the night. Processed food full of chemicals will make your body work extra hard during the night to remove the toxins and leave less time for healing and repair.

Sleep affects how we look, feel, and function on a daily basis and is vital to our health and quality of life. When you get the sleep your body needs, you look more vibrant, you feel more vibrant, and you have the energy to live your best life.

Now, with a better understanding of the benefits of getting the recommended hours of nightly sleep and the health risks of not getting enough sleep, what changes can you make to improve the quality and quantity of your sleep?

What If I'm Doing All These Things and I Still Have Trouble Sleeping?

People that have trouble falling asleep also often have low magnesium levels (sources suggest that over half of the adults in the United States are magnesium deficient). You can ask your doctor to check your magnesium levels, but you can also focus on eating magnesium-rich foods to help. One of the best magnesium-rich snacks is pumpkin seeds. Other great sources are almonds, sesame seeds, and walnuts.

Difficulty sleeping may be a sign that you have a clinical sleep problem, such as insomnia or sleep apnea. If you are doing all the right things and still have trouble falling or staying asleep, talk to your doctor.

These are some resources for insomnia:

- Healthy Sleep(opens in new window), Harvard Medical School Division of Sleep Medicine
- Insomnia Treatment(opens in new window), American Association of Sleep Medicine
- Sleep Medicine(opens in new window), Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Do you have a ritual to shut down your day and calm your mind? If yes, can you identify two ways to improve upon your current ritual? If no, what three things can you put in place to prepare your body and mind for a restorative night's sleep?

Why Is Sleep Important?

Sleep is an essential part of your daily routine. Sleep allows your brain to "reset" and your body to remain healthy. The sleep-wake cycle consists of roughly 8 hours of nocturnal sleep and 16 hours of daytime wakefulness. This cycle is controlled by two internal influences: sleep homeostasis and circadian rhythms. More than 25% of the U.S. population report occasionally not getting enough sleep. Nearly 10% have chronic insomnia (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2009). These can be serious problems for a college student.

Sleep loss results in a "sleep debt." Sleep debt is the accumulated loss of sleep that is lost due to poor sleep habits. Like any other debt, sleep debt must eventually get repaid, or there will be consequences to personal health and well-being. For example, staying

awake all night results in a sleep debt of 7 to 9 hours. Our bodies will demand that this debt be repaid by napping or sleeping longer in later cycles. Even loss of one hour of sleep over several days can have a negative effect.

Insufficient sleep is associated with a number of chronic diseases and conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and depression. As well, daytime sleepiness can affect mood, performance, and memory. One research study found that ***students who stayed up all night simulating "pulling an all-nighter" studying scored 40% lower on a general test*** compared to students who got the recommended amount of sleep (Walker, 2019). That means that getting a good night's sleep can be the difference between making an A and a D on an important test.

How Much Sleep Do I Need?

NOTES FOR NURSING SUCCESS! Sleep deprivation is one of the most significant burnout risks for nurses, due to the long shift hours required to work. Starting to work on your sleep health now can help you prepare for your clinical schedules and beyond!

The National Sleep Foundation recommends:

- young adults aged 18–25 years sleep 8.5 to 9.5 hours every night
- adults should sleep 7–9 hours every night (National Sleep Foundation, 2009).

The National Sleep Foundation has many resources including sleep facts and tips for restful sleep: www.sleepfoundation.org

Sleep Hygiene Tips

1. Avoid caffeinated drinks after lunch.
2. Go to bed at the same time each night and rise at the same time each morning.
3. Avoid bright light in the evening. Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark, and relaxing.
4. Avoid arousing activities around bedtimes such as heavy study, text messaging, prolonged conversations, and heavy exercise.
5. Avoid large meals before bedtime.
6. Avoid pulling an "all-nighter" to study.
7. Sleeping in on weekends is okay. However, it should not be more than 2 to 3 hours past your usual wake time to avoid disrupting your circadian rhythm.

National Sleep Foundation, (2009)

Activity: SLEEP ACTIVITY

Sleep Activity: What's your Chronotype?

All of our bodies follow a 24-hour sleep-wake circadian rhythm. However, not everyone's rhythm is the same. Some are more alert earlier in the day, while others come to life a bit later. This variation is known as your chronotype.

A simple way to classify chronotypes are: morning lark, day dove, and night owl. Morning larks are, naturally, early to bed and early to rise. Night owls, by contrast, get going and may have an alert and productive period later in the day. Day doves seem to fall somewhere in the middle.

- Which chronotype fits you?
- What's your best sleep/wake schedule?
- What might that mean for your most productive time of day?

Based on your answers, This might be a good time to do more important and challenging work, like writing a paper or doing more focused studying.

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13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health

Questions to consider:

- What are some of the ways to tell if you are holding onto stress?
- How do mindfulness and gratitude encourage emotional health?

Identifying and Managing Stress

If you're a college student, it may feel like stress is a persistent fact of life. In fact, a wide range of research from the last two decades finds that one of the top challenges to academic performance is college student stress. Scott (2009) notes that academic stress is caused by the different workload in college, challenging classes, and an independent learning structure. Freshmen face social stresses such as a new social network, less parental support, being away from home, living with a roommate, part-time jobs, and the dynamics of relationships. Other stresses include day-to-day chores, time management, and the developmental tasks of young adulthood. If not managed, stress can result in feelings of being overwhelmed, which can result in unhealthy habits like heavy drinking, weight issues, and the possibility of dropping out of college.

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. While everyone experiences stress at times, a prolonged bout of it can affect your health and ability to cope with life. 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:

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

The potential health problems associated with stress reflect why it's so important to learn healthy ways of coping with the stressors in your life. The best strategy for managing stress include taking care of yourself in the following ways:

- ***Carefully use drugs and alcohol*** -They may seem to be a helpful way 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*** – Misra and McKean (2000) found that time management behaviors had a greater buffering effect on academic stress than engaging in leisure activities.
- ***Slow down and disconnect technologically*** – Try a short or extended digital fast. Take a break from your phone, tv, email, and social media from time to time.
- ***Connect socially*** – Make time to enjoy being with classmates, friends, and family, and try to schedule study breaks that you can take with other people.
- ***Find support*** – Seek help from a friend, family member, partner, counselor, doctor, or clergy person. Having a sympathetic listening ear and talking about your stress really can lighten the burden.
- ***Take care of your health*** – Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. Exercise regularly. Get plenty of sleep. And build and maintain a normal routine… Sound familiar?

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 Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) are both good resources.

ACTIVITY : Stress Management

Stress Management: What Works for You?

How might you use the stress management techniques mentioned above? For example:

- How is your relationship with alcohol and drugs? Is there a change you feel would be good to make? If yes, how do you do it?
- How can you better manage your time? Are there aspects of your day that are most important to work on? If yes, what are they? And how do you make that change?

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According to a 2018 report from the American College Health Association, in a 12-month period 42 percent of college students reported that they have felt so depressed it was difficult to function, and 63 percent reported feeling overwhelming anxiety.[16] Your ability to manage stress, maintain loving relationships, and rise to the demands of school and work all impact your emotional health.

Stress is not always bad. In fact, some stress is helpful. Good stress is stress in amounts small enough to help you meet daily challenges. It's also a warning system that produces the fight-or-flight response, which increases blood pressure and your heart rate so you can avoid a potentially life-threatening situation. Feeling stressed can be perfectly normal, especially during exam time. It can motivate you to focus on your work, but it can also become so overwhelming you can't concentrate. It's when stress is chronic (meaning you always feel stressed) that it starts to damage your body.

What Chronic Stress Does to Your Body

Do you find it difficult to concentrate or complete your work? Are you frequently sick? Do you have regular headaches? Are you more anxious, angry, or irritable than usual? Do you have trouble falling asleep or staying awake? If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, you may be holding on to too much stress.

Stress that hangs around for weeks or months affects your ability to concentrate, makes you more accident-prone, increases your risk for heart disease, can weaken your immune system, disrupts your sleep, and can cause fatigue, depression, and anxiety.[17] To learn more about what stress does to your body, click here: apa.org/helpcenter/stress.

Some people refer to the time we are living in as the age of overload. It's easy to get worn down by social media and the constant news cycle, and to be overwhelmed by too many choices. We live in a fast-paced, always-on world with a lot of pressures. The military created the VUCA acronym for the world we currently live in. VUCA stands for volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, and as a result of living in this VUCA world, many of us are in a constant state of overdrive.

You will have stress. Stress is inevitable. It's how you deal with it that can make all the difference. One of the most important things you can do is to keep perspective on your stressors. When feeling stressed, ask yourself, on a scale of 1 to 100, how stressful a situation is this? Will I even remember this three years from now? When facing potential stressors, the way you view what you're experiencing can intensify your stress or minimize it.

There are many ways to manage stress. Take a look at some of the ideas in the stress toolkit below. Which ones have you tried? Which ones do you want to try? It's helpful to have different tools for different situations—for example, a calming yoga pose in your dorm room and deep breathing in the classroom.

Mindfulness and Gratitude

Deep breathing, mindfulness, and a practice of gratitude are some of the most effective ways to manage stress and take care of your emotional health.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness means being present with your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. Mindfulness is also without judgement—meaning there is no right or wrong way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we're sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.[18]

Anything that keeps you present in the moment and gives your prefrontal cortex (the reasoning and thinking part of your brain) a break is practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness can be a slow walk; looking intently at the grass, trees, flowers, or buildings; and

being aware of what you are sensing and feeling. Mindfulness can be sitting quietly—even sitting still in a quiet place for as little as a few minutes can reduce heart rate and blood pressure.[19]

Developing a practice of mindfulness is easier than you may think:

- **Slow down.** From brushing your teeth, to washing your face, to shampooing your hair—can you take the speed out of getting ready in the morning? Focus on the activity, pay attention to what you are doing, stay present (this means don't think about what happened last night or what's in store for the day, just stay focused on the activity), and take your time.
- **Focus on your breath.** How fast are you breathing? Is your breath coming from your chest or your belly? Can you feel the air come through your nose on the inhale? Can you slow down the exhale? Can you feel your body relax when you slow the exhale?
- **Connect to your environment.** Walk for a few minutes, focused on the world around you—look at the leaves on the trees or the light at the corner, listen to the sounds around you, stay with your surroundings, and observe what you see and hear around you.

> ***"We can't change the world, at least not quickly, but we can change our brains. By practicing mindfulness all of us have the capacity to develop a deeper sense of calm."***
>
> *— Rick Hanson, author, Resilient*

Deep Breathing

When people hear mindfulness they often think meditation. While meditation is one method of mindfulness, there are many others that may be simpler and easier for you to practice. Deep breathing helps lower stress and reduce anxiety, and it is simple yet very powerful. A daily mindful breathing practice has been shown to reduce test anxiety in college students.[20] A 2-4-6-8 breathing pattern is a very useful tool that can be used to help bring a sense of calm and to help mild to moderate anxiety. It takes almost no time, requires no equipment, and can be done anywhere:

- - Start by quickly exhaling any air in your lungs (to the count of 2).
- - Breathing through your nose, inhale to the count of 4.
- - Hold your breath for a count of 6.
- - Slowly exhale through your mouth to the count of 8.

This is one round. Do not repeat the quick exhale again. Instead start round two with an inhale through your nose to the count of 4, hold for 6, and exhale to 8. Repeat for three more rounds to relax your body and mind.

With practice, 2-4-6-8 breathing will become a useful tool for times when you experience tension or stress.

Meditation

Dan Harris, a news reporter at ABC, fell into drug use and suffered a major panic attack on national television. Following this embarrassing period in his life, he learned to meditate and found that it made him calmer and more resilient. He's now on a mission to make meditation approachable to everyone. Dan used to be a skeptic about meditation but now says that if he learned to meditate, anyone can learn to meditate! Dan reminds us that we ARE going to get lost, and our mind IS going to stray, and that's ok. Simply notice when you're lost and start over. Every time your mind strays and your start over, it is like a bicep curl for your brain. Start with 3 minutes and slowly work your way up to 15 or 20. To hear more about Dan's journey, watch this video(opens in new window), and for a simple meditation to get started, you can try one of the videos on the meditation Youtube channel(opens in new window).

Some great meditation apps include Insight Timer, CALM, and Headspace.

Gratitude

Too often people think it is the external factors that bring us joy and happiness, when really it's all related to internal work. According to UCLA's Mindfulness Awareness Research Center, "Having an attitude of gratitude changes the molecular structure of the brain, and makes us healthier and happier. When you feel happiness, the central nervous system is affected. You are more peaceful, less reactive and less resistant."[21]

Numerous studies show that people who count their blessings tend to be happier and less depressed. In a UC Berkeley study, researchers recruited 300 people who were experiencing emotional or mental health challenges and randomly divided them into three groups. All three groups received counseling services. The first group also wrote a letter of gratitude every week for three

weeks. The second group wrote about their thoughts and feelings with negative experiences. The third group received only counseling. The people in the group who wrote gratitude letters reported significantly better mental health for up to 12 weeks after the writing exercise ended.

This would suggest that a healthy emotional self-care practice is to take note of good experiences or when you see something that makes you smile. Think about why the experience feels so good. According to Rick Hanson, author of *Resilient*, "Each day is strewn with little jewels. The idea is to see them and pick them up. When you notice something positive, stay with the feeling for 30 seconds. Feel the emotions in your whole body. Maybe your heart feels lighter or you're smiling. The more you can deepen and lengthen positive experiences the longer those positivity neurons in your brain are firing—and the longer they fire the stronger the underlying neural networks become. Repeat that process a half dozen times a day and you'll feel stronger, more stable and calmer within a few weeks."

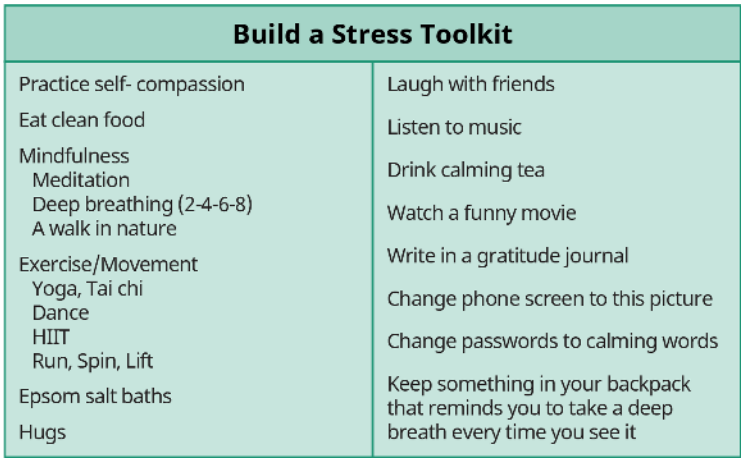


Figure 13.7: Do you have a stress toolkit filled with a variety of stress-coping tools to help you navigate any stressful situation? (Credit: Modification of work by Robin Benzrihem)

ACTIVITY

Take a look at some of the suggested tools for your stress toolkit. Which ones have you tried? Have they been effective in helping you manage stress? Ask two friends or family members about their favorite stress-management strategies. What has worked for you and others that is not on this list? Identify two new tools you would like to explore and articulate how you will determine if they work for you, and then you can confidently add them to your stress toolkit.

Footnotes

16. American College Health Association 2018 report acha.org [www.acha.org]
17. *The University of Maryland Medical Center UMMC*, umms.org [www.umms.org]
18. Moran, Joan; University of California at Los Angeles, newsroom.ucla.edu [newsroom.ucla.edu]
19. The Greater Good Science Center, UC Berkeley ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/
20. Levitin, Time Special Edition 2018, The New Mindfulness
21. 2016 Study Journal of PLoS One, PLOS One [journals.plos.org]

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13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health

Question to consider:

- What is mental health?
- How can I take care of it?

The World Health Organization ranks mental health conditions as the leading cause of disability in the United States. One in four adults experience a diagnosable mental health disorder in any given year, yet more than half will not seek treatment. The primary reason people don't seek the help they need is shame and fear of judgment from friends, family, and coworkers. It is important to remove any stigma associated with mental health and encourage those who need help to seek support.

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

1. In your opinion, which of the following is the most significant health issue facing college students?
    a. stress and/or exhaustion
    b. drinking and/or substance abuse
    c. unhealthy eating
    d. unhealthy relationships
    e. safety
2. Which of the following best describes your experience or outlook regarding healthy eating while in college?
    a. I'm generally able to eat healthy food most of the time.
    b. I have difficulty eating healthy food because of lack of choices on campus.
    c. I don't have enough money to eat healthy food.
    d. I don't have enough time to focus on eating healthy food.
    e. I need to learn more about healthy eating.
    f. It's not something I'm very concerned about.
3. When you are facing an issue regarding your emotions, stress, mental health, or relationships, what do you typically do?
    a. Wait for it to pass or work through it.
    b. Talk to a health professional.
    c. Talk to friends or family.
    d. Talk to another trusted person such as a teacher, RA, or religious person.
    e. Use a method such as meditation, exercise, or something similar.

You can also take the anonymous What Students Say(opens in new window) surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

In your opinion, which of the following is the most significant health issue facing college students?

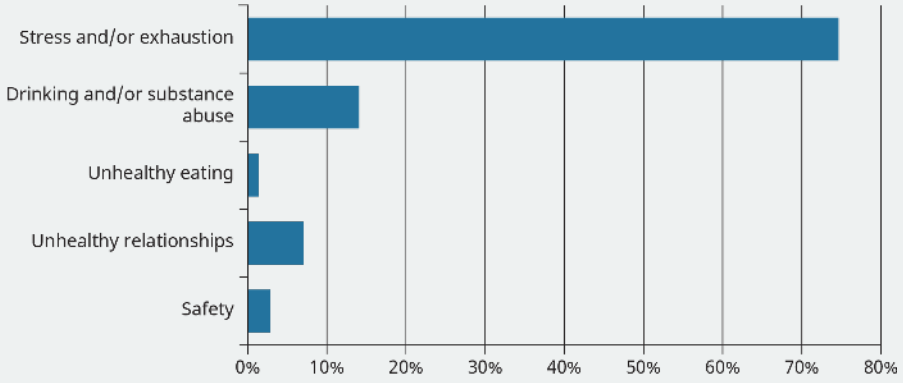


Figure 13.8

Which of the following best describes your experience or outlook regarding healthy eating while in college?

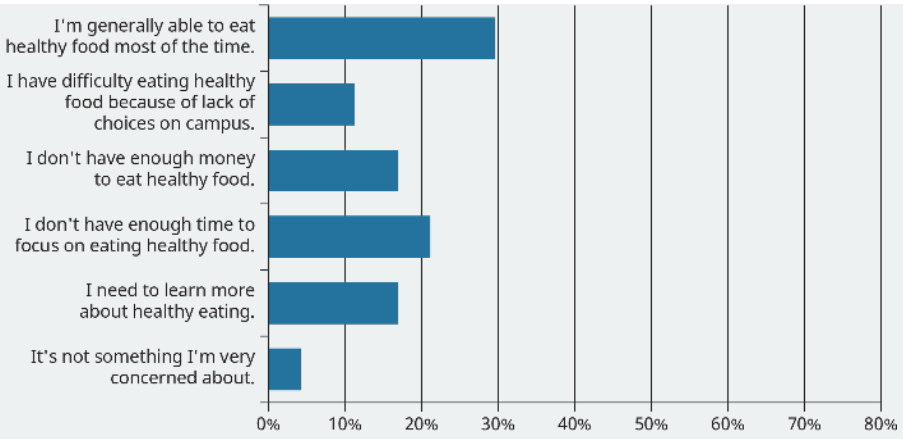


Figure 13.9

When you are facing an issue regarding your emotions, stress, mental health, or relationships, what do you typically do?

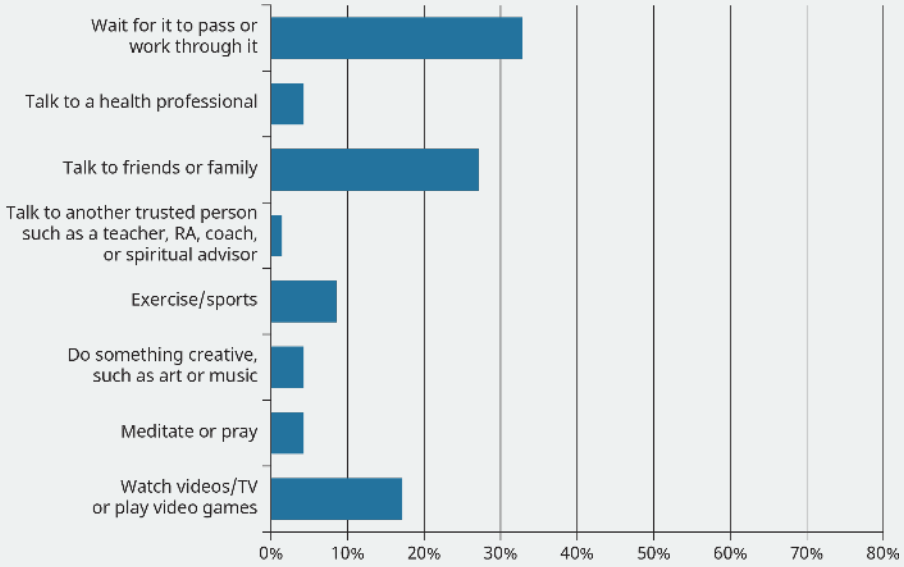


Figure 13.10

What Is Mental Health?

Mental health is “the level of psychological well-being or an absence of mental illness. It is the state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioral adjustment.”[22]

According to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), a mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, or mood. The condition may affect a person’s ability to relate to others and function throughout the day.

A mental health condition isn’t the result of one event; it is most often the result of multiple overlapping causes. Environment, lifestyle, and genetic predisposition can all be factors in whether someone develops a mental health condition. Traumatic life events or stressful experiences may make some people more susceptible, and brain biochemistry may play a role as well. Mental health conditions show up in many ways. Anxiety, depression, and eating disorders are some of the most common.

Anxiety Disorders

We all experience the occasional feeling of anxiety, which is quite normal. New situations, meeting new people, driving in traffic, and public speaking are just a few of the common activities that can cause people to feel anxious. It is important to seek help when these feelings become overwhelming, cause fear, or keep us from doing everyday activities. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health concern in the United States, and while there are many types of anxiety disorders, they all have one thing in common: “persistent, excessive fear or worry in situations that are not threatening.”[23] Physically, your heart may race, and you may

experience shortness of breath, nausea, or intense fatigue. Talk with a mental health care professional if you experience a level of anxiety that keeps you from your regular daily activities.

Eating Disorders

Eating disorders are not uncommon among students. Stress or anxiety may create a desire for some students to overeat, while others may develop a concern about body shape or weight and significantly reduce their food intake.

Anorexia nervosa is a potentially fatal illness marked by self-starvation. People with anorexia usually have an irrational concern about body shape or weight and eat a very restricted diet. They may also feel the need to exercise all the time, even when they are sick or exhausted.

Binge eating is frequent consumption of large amounts of food in a short period of time. People who binge regularly (more than once a week) and feel a lack of control over their eating may have binge eating disorder (BED). It is important to seek treatment if you suspect there is an issue with binge eating. Treatment can address any underlying psychological issues that will help control urges to binge eat.

Bulimia involves cycles of excessive eating followed by eliminating food through vomiting or with laxatives. Eating disorders can lead to many complications, some of them very serious, like heart conditions and kidney failure. It is crucial for anyone with an eating disorder to stabilize their health, then continuing medical care and counseling to reach full recovery. Eating disorders can be treated successfully with medical care, psychotherapy, counseling, or coaching.

If you think you might have an eating disorder, visit a doctor or your campus health center. The National Eating Disorders Association(opens in new window) also offers information, help, and support.

Depression

Most people feel sad at times. This is a normal reaction to loss or struggles we face. Being sad is not the same as having depression. When intense sadness lasts for several days or even weeks and you are no longer interested in activities you once enjoyed, it may be depression. Depression can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease a person's ability to function at work and at home.

Depression does not have a single cause. It can follow a life crisis or physical illness, but it can also occur spontaneously. Several factors including trauma, a significant life change, brain injury, and drug and alcohol misuse may contribute to depression. Depression is a treatable medical condition. Talk with a mental health care professional if you experience an ongoing level of sadness that keeps you from your regular daily activities.

Suicidal Behavior

Suicide is when people direct violence at themselves with the intent to end their lives, and they die because of their actions.[24]

People who contemplate suicide often experience a deep feeling of hopelessness. They often don't feel they can cope with challenging life events and are not able to see solutions to problems. In the moment, they are unable to see that the challenges are really only temporary. Most survivors of suicide attempts go on to live wonderful, full lives.

Depression is a key risk factor for suicide, along with substance abuse, chronic debilitating pain, mental health disorders, and a family history of suicide.

These are some of the warning signs to help you determine if a friend or loved one is at risk for suicide, especially if the behavior is new, has increased, or seems related to a painful event:

- talking about wanting to die or to kill themselves
- looking for a way to kill themselves, like searching online or buying a gun
- talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- talking about being a burden to others
- increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- sleeping too little or too much
- withdrawing or isolating themselves
- showing rage or talking about seeking revenge

- extreme mood swings[25]

Help is available all day, every day, for anyone who might be in crisis. By offering immediate counseling to everyone that may need it, crisis centers provide invaluable support at the most critical times. If you or someone you know has warning signs of suicide, get help as soon as possible. Family and friends are often the first to recognize any warning signs and can help take the first step in finding treatment.

If someone is telling you that they are going to kill themselves, do not leave them alone. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A Crisis Text Line is also available 24/7 by texting HOME to 741741, 85258, or 686868. There are also near-term plans to implement a 988 suicide hotline number that will work similarly to 911.

Additional Resources

Because entering college is such a big transition, it is important to know what health services are available on your campus. Some help may be beyond the scope of a college counseling program, and if this is the case, your college health center can refer you to off-campus resources to support you.

Regardless of where you attend college, OK2TALK and NAMI offer online, text, and phone support.

- OK2TALK(opens in new window) is a community for young adults struggling with mental health problems. It offers a safe place to talk.
- Call the NAMI helpline at 800-950-6264, or txt NAMI to 741741.

Your brain requires a constant supply of energy to function. What you eat and are exposed to have a direct impact on its processes, your mood, and your ability to make good decisions. A majority of college students feel anxious, lonely, or depressed at some point during the year. We all have bad days, and sometimes bad days string into weeks. It's OK to feel bad. What's important is to acknowledge and work through your feelings, and find a friend or a counselor to talk to.

Footnotes

22. Wikipedia, wikipedia [en.Wikipedia.org]
23. NAMI, NAMI [www.nami.org]
24. NIMH, National Institute of Mental Health [www.nimh.nih.gov]
25. Suicide Prevention Lifeline [suicidepreventionlifeline.or...event-suicide];

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13.6: Maintaining Healthy Relationships

Questions to consider:

- How does self-care benefit relationships?
- Why is community so important to healthy relationships?
- What is sexual health?

Relationships are key to happy and healthy lives. According to Dr. Robert Waldinger, director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, people with the best health outcomes were people who “leaned into relationships, with family, with friends, with community.”



Figure 13.11: Healthy relationships involve trust, respect, and support. (Credit: Garry Knight / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

The quality of our relationships is important, however. What makes a relationship healthy? Relationships come in many forms: lovers, family, friends, coworkers, team members, and neighbors. Think of a relationship where you have mutual respect and trust, supporting each other in tough times, celebrating the good times, and communicating with ease and honesty. This is a healthy relationship. Do you have someone in mind? On the other hand, if communication is often tense or strained, confidences are broken, or you don’t feel listened to, appreciated, or valued, these are signs of an unhealthy relationship. Unhealthy relationships can have both immediate and longer-term health impacts. If you are unhappy in a relationship, try to improve the relationship, or end it. Do not stay in a relationship for the wrong reasons, such as fear of being alone or guilt.

If a partner tries to force you to do something sexually, harms you physically, or is verbally abusive, you are in an unhealthy relationship. Even if you believe the person loves you, it does not make up for the harm they are doing to you. End the relationship.

Take a moment to assess the health of your relationships. Who are the people who make you smile, who boost your confidence, who truly listen when you need to talk, and who want only the best for you? Investing in these relationships is likely to make you happier and healthier. Relationships are two-way streets. How committed are you to your relationships? How much effort do you put into nurturing your relationships?

Self-Care

Healthy relationships start with healthy individuals. Self-care is learning to take good care of yourself and to prioritize your own needs. Self-care involves any activity that nurtures and refuels you, such as taking a walk in the woods, going to a yoga class, attending a sporting event, reading a good book, or spending time with friends. When you are feeling calm and nourished, you are going to look forward to your day, and despite how busy it is, you will prioritize time with friends and family. If you don’t take care of and learn to love yourself, you will never be able to bring your best self to any relationship.

An important dynamic you bring to any relationship is how you feel about yourself. Self-esteem is about loving yourself and being happy for who you are. Building healthy self-esteem impacts how you see yourself, which can drastically improve your relationships. While low self-esteem won’t keep us from romantic love, it can act as a barrier to a healthy relationship. If you do not believe you are good enough, how can you expect your partner to think so?

When you feel secure in yourself, this allows you and your partner to feel more secure about the relationship. If you have insecurities, it may show in your relationship as jealousy, defensiveness, or tension that leads to unnecessary arguments. Healthy self-esteem goes hand in hand with self-confidence, and feeling confident about yourself will translate into a stronger and more

satisfying relationship. If you are experiencing low self-esteem, you may give your partner too much credit or stay in a relationship that is not healthy for you. If you find yourself changing your personality for someone else, that is never a sign of a healthy relationship.

You can reverse negative self-talk and build your self-esteem. If you catch yourself thinking you are unlovable, unattractive, or not good enough, it's important to start talking to yourself in a positive way and to celebrate all that is uniquely you.

Self-care includes self-forgiveness. We all make mistakes. A misstep isn't the end of the world. Pick yourself up, put things in perspective, acknowledge any lessons to be learned, focus on all that makes you special, and move forward. Be kind to yourself.

The Importance of Community

The Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica is home to some of the highest number of centenarians (people who are 100 years old or older) in the world. Costa Ricans in general report a high level of life satisfaction. Dan Buettner, author of the Blue Zones study of the longest living populations in the world, explains that Costa Rica "is a place where religion, family, and social interaction are the main values, unlike trying to get ahead, or financial security, or status. Their cities are set up so they're bumping into each other all day long. They walk to the markets, where they have conversations with people."[26]

In Costa Rica, multiple generations live together under the same roof or nearby where they can be involved in each other's lives. Neighbors are like extended family, and people often stop in for a visit and go out of their way to help one another.

While this isn't the way many of us live in the United States, the lessons from the Blue Zone study underscore the importance of community and the health benefits of connecting to and staying close to a community. What communities do you belong to? Is your dorm a community? A sports team? A club or people you volunteer with? When you start seeing the social circles you connect to as communities and prioritize your time to develop more closeness with those communities, you will experience many physical, mental, and emotional health benefits.



Figure 13.12: Joining clubs in college can be an outstanding way to join and build communities. (Credit: SupportPDX, Cerritos College / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

According to an analysis of research on college students (Joe Cuseo, *The Most Potent, Research-Based Principles of College Success*), college students who have a higher sense of belonging and are more involved in their college community are more successful. Additionally, college students who are involved in extracurricular, volunteer, and part-time work experiences outside the classroom (less than 20 hours per week) earn higher grades than students who do not get involved in any out-of-class activities at all.

APPLICATION

Make a list of the communities you belong to. Your list should include formal communities—for example, sports teams, fraternities or sororities, and membership in clubs and other organizations. Your list should also include informal communities—for example, your neighbors or the people you always see at your favorite exercise class.

Next to each community, write how being a member of this community benefits you and how your involvement benefits the community. Now, make a new list of your personal interests and passions. How well do these align with the communities you already belong to? Are there new communities that would be a good fit for you?

> If you are struggling to identify communities you already belong to, think about your passions, causes you care about, and ways you love to spend your time. Find a group or club that aligns with your interests. If you can't find one that already exists, start a new club!

Research has shown that friends provide a sense of meaning or purpose in our lives, and that having a healthy social life is important to staying physically healthy. In a meta-analysis of the research results from 148 studies of over 300,000 participants, researchers found that social relationships are important in improving our lifespan. Social support has been linked to lower blood pressure and better immune system functioning. The meta-analysis also showed that social support operates on a continuum: the greater the extent of the relationships, the lower the health risks.[27]

According to a 2018 report from the American College Health Association, in a 12-month period, 63 percent of college students have felt very lonely. If you are feeling lonely or having a hard time making friends, know that the majority of people around you have also felt this way. Joining a group or a club of people who share your interests and passions is one of the best ways to make great friends and stay connected.

Sexual Health

Affection, love, and sexual intimacy all play an important role in healthy relationships, and a responsible approach to intimacy is essential for sexual health. Whether you are already sexually active or become sexually active in the future, your choices can affect your safety as well as the health and safety of your sexual partners. It's important to understand what you can do to protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Table 13.1 STI data, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment information courtesy of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC [www.cdc.gov]

Common Sexually Transmitted Infections		
Infection	**Symptoms**	**Diagnosis and Treatment**
Human papillomavirus (HPV)	• HPV can be passed even when an infected person has no signs or symptoms. • Most people with HPV do not know they are infected. • Symptoms can include genital warts, abnormal Pap test results, and cancer.	• There is no test for HPV. • There is a vaccine to prevent it. • There is no treatment for HPV, although there are treatments for the health problems it can cause. • Routine Pap tests can identify problems.
Chlamydia	• Symptoms include a burning sensation when urinating and/or discharge from the penis or vagina; however, most people who have chlamydia have no symptoms. • In women, it can cause damage to the reproductive system.	• Testing usually involves a urine sample or vaginal swab. • It can be cured with the right treatment.
Genital herpes	• Genital herpes is caused by two types of viruses, herpes simplex type 1 and herpes simplex type 2. • The virus can be released through sores or through the skin even when sores are not visible. • Get examined by your doctor if you notice an unusual sore, a smelly discharge, or burning when urinating.	• It can be diagnosed through the symptoms, testing a sample from the sore(s), or a blood test. • There is no cure for herpes; however, there are medicines that can prevent or shorten outbreaks.

Common Sexually Transmitted Infections		
Gonorrhea	• Symptoms can include a burning sensation when urinating, abnormal discharge from the penis or vagina, and bleeding between periods. • Rectal infection symptoms include itching, burning, and bleeding.	• Get examined by your doctor if you or your sexual partner notice any of these symptoms. • Testing is usually a urine sample and possibly a throat or rectum swab. • It can be cured with the right treatment. • Medication will stop the infection, but it will not undo any permanent damage caused by the disease.
Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)	• HIV damages the body's immune system cells. • The most advanced stage of HIV infection is commonly referred to as AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). • It most often spreads through fluid exchange via unprotected sex or by sharing drug needles with an infected person. • Women can pass HIV to their babies during pregnancy or childbirth.	• Medications such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) can reduce risk when taken consistently and with other prevention measures. • People can live with the disease for many years, especially if they are diagnosed and treated early. • Early diagnosis is also important to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others.

How You Can Protect Yourself against STIs

The surest way to protect yourself against STIs is to practice abstinence. This means not having any vaginal, anal, or oral sex. There are many things to consider before having sex, and it's okay to say no if you are not ready. If you do decide to have sex, you and your partner should both get tested beforehand and make sure you always use a condom. It's not safe to stop using condoms unless you've both been tested, know your status, have another form of birth control, and are in a mutually monogamous relationship. *Mutual monogamy* means that you and your partner both agree to only have sexual contact with each other. This can help protect against STIs as long as you've both been tested and know you're STI-free. Visit this website to find a confidential STI testing location near you(opens in new window).

Before you have sex, talk with your partner about how you will prevent STIs and pregnancy. If you think you're ready to have sex, you need to be ready to protect your body and your future. You should also talk to your partner ahead of time about what you will and will not do sexually. Your partner should always respect your right to say no to anything that doesn't feel right. Sex should always be consensual and respectful.

It's important to discuss treatment with your doctor and begin treatment as soon as possible if you find out you have an STI. If you are living with an STI, it's important to tell your partner before you have sex. Although it may be uncomfortable to talk about your STI, open and honest conversation can help your partner make informed decisions to protect his or her health.

Footnotes

26. Blue Zones [www.bluezones.com]
27. Holt-Lunstad, *PLoS Medicine*, PLOS One [journals.plos.org]

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13.7: Self Awareness and Self Compassion

Craig Keaton

self-awareness

It's been said that in order to grow yourself – grow towards your ideal self – you must know yourself. That's self-awareness. Self-awareness is being consciously aware of yourself, your feelings (physical and emotional), your thoughts, motivations and drives, and your behaviors. Developing self-awareness may go by many names and take many forms.

Greater awareness of self can be accomplished through self-reflection, introspection, mindfulness, or meditation, to name a few. This is the more *internally-focused* form of self-awareness. Self-awareness can also be gained through feedback from other, trusted people in your life. This is a more *externally-focused* form of self-awareness. Both forms of knowledge about self are useful and can lead to an array of improvements in your life. To embark on a well-balanced journey of self-awareness consider the following actions:

- ***Search yourself*** – Experiment with different mindfulness, meditation, and self-reflective practices.
- ***Share yourself*** – Share with those you trust the many parts of yourself, including your ideas, thoughts, feelings, concerns and worries, motivations, and passions.
- ***Look outside yourself*** – Seek feedback from those you trust and who see you in action in a range of different contexts.
- ***Challenge yourself*** – As you begin to know more about yourself, your limits, your challenges, and your desires, challenge yourself to step beyond your comfort zone and experience new things. You will discover new things about yourself and grow at the same time.

As you explore self-awareness, you may notice that you can be tough on yourself, overly negative or critical, and begin feeling insecure. Pastor Steven Furtick said, "the reason we struggle with insecurity is because we compare our behind-the-scenes with everyone else's highlight reel." Not only can taking seriously the feedback of others be helpful, adopting a self-compassionate perspective can help, too.

NOTES FOR NURSING SUCCESS! Self-awareness is a critical component of therapeutic use of self, where a nurse is aware of their own thoughts, feelings, and actions, and how these might affect their interactions with patients. content here.

ACTIVITY : JOURNALING

Journaling

A great way to begin to explore and know yourself is journaling. While there are many ways to do this, the most important aspect is simply to do it. You can write on paper, type it out, or even dictate notes on your phone. You can do it in the morning to prepare for your day. Journal throughout the day as a way of checking in with yourself. Or you can journal at night to clear your head, release the stress or the day and day upcoming, and more fully relax and rest! You can write for a long time or you can simply make notes or bullets about things you want to get out of your head and onto paper.

Try journaling for a day or two. Come back to class and report how the experience was, how you did it, what worked, what didn't, what you learned, and learn from others.

SELF-COMPASSION

While you may be familiar with self-awareness, self-compassion may be newer to you. Kristen Neff, a leading self-compassion researcher, explains that compassion for yourself is no different for the compassion and patience you have for others. According to Neff (n.d.), compassion has three parts: (1) noticing suffering, (2) being moved by and responding to that suffering, and (3) recognizing that suffering and imperfection is something we all share in common. Therefore, self-compassion is responding to your own struggles and imperfection the way you would a good friend or loved one: with kindness.

To begin your practice in self-compassion, consider the following questions:

- What is one healthy thing I can do to support myself when I'm sad or stressed out?
- When I am hurting – physically or emotionally – the kindest thing I can do for myself is?
- What is one story I tell myself that doesn't support me which I can reinterpret?
- What would I say to someone I deeply care about who was struggling with the same issue I am?
- If I loved myself fully, how would I treat myself every day?
- What's one small way I can start doing that today?

(Tartakovsky, 2018)

To learn more about self-compassion and for exercises to develop it, visit Self-compassion.org(opens in new window)

Ultimately, Neff explains that "self-criticism asks: are you good enough? [while] self-compassion asks: what's good for you?" Self-compassion seen through this lens aligns perfectly with the best self-care: self-care done your own way and always with a conscious aim to make yourself better!

ACTIVITY : REFLECT AND SHARE

Reflect and Share

Take a few minutes in class to answer the self-compassion questions above and discuss your findings with a partner, small group, or as a class.

SELF-CARE SUMMARY

Nursing and school can be stressful. The healthier and more vital you are, the better your work and academic performance will be. Better yet, you can only give what you have. The healthier and more vital you are, the more health and vitality you will have to help, support, and give to others. Self-care is not selfish. Self-care is an essential foundation to most authentically helping others. As nurse theorist and professor, Jean Watson, so beautifully shares, self-care is the most important aspect of healing work. Healing, health, and vital life for all starts with you!

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13.8: Your Safety

Questions to consider:

- What makes a person safety conscious?
- How can you improve your personal safety?

Safety Consciousness

To be safety conscious means you have an awareness of potential hazards and an alertness to danger. Simply, you are conscious of being safe. This includes being smart about your physical surroundings and careful with drug and alcohol use.

A drug is a chemical substance that can change how your body and mind work and how you feel. Some drugs are illegal (like cocaine or heroin), and while others may be legal, they can still harm your body and brain. Even prescription medicines can be abused when taken to get high or to a point of dependency.

Substance is the word health professionals use for most things you might take into your body besides food. When people talk about substances, they often mean drugs—but alcohol and nicotine are also drugs and are considered substances.

Substances—any kind of drug—have effects on the body and mind. People use these substances for their effects. But many substances have negative effects, including being physically or psychologically addictive. What is important with any substance is to be aware of its effects on your health and on your life as a student, and to make smart choices. Use of any substance to the extent that it has negative effects is generally considered abuse.Why do people abuse drugs? The answer varies for different people, but most want to feel good and escape any bad feelings they are experiencing. Or they want to improve in an area of their life—for example, to get better grades. This may lead them to start taking drugs for more energy, to stay awake longer, or to stay focused while studying. This short-term boost is not worth the health risks and the potential for addiction.

Alcohol

The statistics are sobering. Thirty-two percent of college students who drank alcohol reported doing something they later regretted, 27 percent forgot where they were or what they did, and 11 percent physically hurt themselves.[28] Many people consume alcohol to relax, socialize, or celebrate, but there are serious health effects attributed to too much alcohol consumption.

Of all the issues that can affect a student's health and success in college, drinking causes more problems than anything else. Everyone knows what happens when you drink too much. Your judgment is impaired and you may behave in risky ways. Your health may be affected. Your studies likely are affected.

Most college students report drinking at least some alcohol at some time—and even those who do not drink are often affected by others who do. Here are a few facts about alcohol use among college students from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism:

- **Death.** Each year, 1,700 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, and 599,000 students are injured.
- **Assault.** More than 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking.
- **Sexual abuse.** More than 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.
- **Academic problems.** About 25 percent of college students report academic consequences of their drinking, including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.
- **Health problems.** More than 150,000 students develop an alcohol-related health problem.
- **Alcohol abuse and dependence.** In the past twelve months, 31 percent of college students met criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol abuse and 6 percent for a diagnosis of alcohol dependence.

So why is drinking so popular if it causes so many problems? You probably already know the answer to that: most college students say they have more fun when drinking. They're not going to stop drinking just because someone lectures them about it.

Like everything else that affects your health and happiness—eating, exercise, use of other substances—drinking is a matter of personal choice. Like most decisions we all face, there are trade-offs. The most that anyone can reasonably ask of you is to be smart in your decisions. That means understanding the effects of alcohol and deciding to take control.

You do not need to be an alcoholic for alcohol to interfere with your health and life, and the potential to become addicted to alcohol is a serious problem that can affect anyone.

Alcohol is classified as a drug and is a known depressant, making it the most widely used drug in the world. Alcohol interferes with the brain's communication pathways and can affect the way the brain looks and works. These disruptions can change your mood and behavior and make it harder to think clearly and move with coordination. This is why it is critical to never drive a vehicle if you have been drinking. Drinking can weaken your immune system and damage your heart, increasing your risk for stroke and high blood pressure. Heavy drinking also harms the liver and pancreas.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism offers the following guidelines:

- **Moderate alcohol consumption:** up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men
- **Binge drinking:** typically occurs after four drinks for women and five drinks for men in a two-hour period that brings blood alcohol concentration levels to 0.08 g/dL
- **Heavy drinking:** drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion on each of five or more days in the past 30 days

Alcohol is a part of the social scene on many college campuses. If you choose to drink, you can avoid the devastating consequences of alcohol addiction by drinking responsibly and in moderation. The quality of your schoolwork can suffer dramatically if you drink beyond moderation. Too much alcohol can result in missing classes, performing poorly on exams, and falling behind in assignments. Have you ever decided to drink instead of study even though you had a big test the next day? Have you missed a class because you were too hungover to get out of bed? Did you hand in a project or paper late or not at all due to a series of nights spent drinking? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are at risk of negatively impacting your success in college because of alcohol.

Tobacco and Vaping

Cigarettes and other forms of tobacco are also drugs. Tobacco contains nicotine, which excites the parts of the brain that make you feel good. Nicotine gives you a mild rush of pleasure and energy but soon wears off, which makes you want more. The more frequently you smoke, the faster your body and brain get addicted.

Everyone knows smoking is harmful to one's health. Smoking causes cancer and lung and heart disease. Most adult smokers continue smoking not because they really think it won't harm them but because it's very difficult to stop.

If you have never smoked or used smokeless tobacco, feel good about your choices. But read this section anyway because you may have friends now or in the future who smoke, and it's important to understand this behavior. If you do smoke, even only rarely as a "social smoker," be honest with yourself—wouldn't you like to stop if you thought you could without suffering? Simply by being in college now, you've shown that you care about your future and your life. You likely care about your health, too.

Many young smokers think there is plenty of time to quit later. Social smokers, who may have a cigarette only occasionally with a friend, usually think they won't develop a habit. But smokers are fooling themselves. Nicotine is one of the most addictive drugs in our society today. Admitting this to yourself is the first step toward becoming smoke free.

Tobacco is not healthy. Cigarette smoke causes lung cancer and emphysema. If you live with someone who smokes, you are also susceptible to these diseases, even if you are a nonsmoker. This is called secondhand smoke. Smokers are more likely to suffer heart attacks. Chewing tobacco can lead to cancer of the mouth. If you currently smoke, there are medicines and various treatments, as well as hotlines, to help you quit.

Electronic cigarettes are marketed as a way to help people stop smoking. Unfortunately, while they do contain less nicotine, they have many health risks.

E-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that people use to inhale an aerosol containing nicotine, flavors, and other chemicals. When you smoke an e-cigarette (also called vaping), the nicotine is absorbed from the lungs into the bloodstream, where it stimulates the adrenal glands to release the hormone epinephrine. Epinephrine (also known as adrenaline) stimulates the central nervous system and increases blood pressure, breathing, and heart rate. Like other addictive substances, nicotine activates the brain's reward circuits and increases dopamine. This pleasure causes some people to use nicotine with increased frequency, despite risks to their health and well-being.

The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has alerted the public to reports of serious lung illnesses and several deaths associated with vaping. While the manufacturers of e-cigarettes would like us to believe they are less harmful than cigarettes, nicotine is a

highly addictive drug. It is best to stay away from it in any form. E-cigarettes are not an FDA-approved smoking cessation aid, and there is no conclusive scientific evidence on the effectiveness of e-cigarettes to help stop smoking.

Smoking e-cigarettes also exposes the lungs to chemicals. A study of some e-cigarette products found that the vapor contains known carcinogens and toxic chemicals, and the device itself can contain toxic metals.

If you are still in your teens or early adulthood, these years are critical for brain development. If you use nicotine in any form, or for that matter any substances, you are putting yourself at risk for long-lasting effects.

Marijuana

Marijuana comes from the cannabis plant. It can be rolled up and smoked like a cigarette, called a joint. It can also be smoked in a pipe, and edibles are becoming increasingly common. Marijuana can make you feel relaxed, silly, or for some people, nervous.

Marijuana makes it harder to pay attention and to remember things that just happened a few minutes ago. If you smoke before class, it is going to make it more challenging to learn. A recent study showed that if you begin regular marijuana use as a teen, you can lose an average of eight IQ points, and you do not get them back, even if you stop using.[29]

Using marijuana makes the heart beat fast and raises your risk of having a heart attack. Marijuana smoke can hurt your lungs. One of the biggest risks is drugged driving, which is driving when you are high. Marijuana makes it harder to pay attention on the road, and your reactions to traffic signs and sounds are slowed. It is dangerous to smoke and drive.

Prescription Pain Medicine

Pain medicines help relieve pain from surgery or injuries. Prescription pain medicines are legal and helpful to use when ordered by a doctor to treat a specific medical problem within a specific time frame. It is vitally important to take any prescriptions according to your doctor's instructions, and to carefully read all risks and food/medicine counteractions.

Unfortunately, people sometimes take pills without a doctor's prescription to get high, believing they are safer than street drugs. Make no mistake, prescription pain pill abuse can be just as dangerous as heroin or cocaine. Drug dealers sell these pills just like they sell heroin or cocaine. The abuse of oxycodone has become well documented—sometimes it goes by the brand names OxyContin or Percocet. Hydrocodone is also often abused and is best known under the brand name Vicodin.

Prescription pain pill abuse can lead to many problems. Pain medicine abuse can slow down or even stop your breathing. Signs of a pain medicine overdose are cold and sweaty skin, confusion, shaking, extreme sleepiness, and trouble breathing. More people overdose from pain medicines every year than from heroin and cocaine combined. If your doctor prescribes any pain relief pills for you, it is important to ask a lot of questions and understand why your doctor is prescribing them. If after consideration you decide to take pain-relief pills, stop taking them as soon as you possibly can. The longer you take them, the higher the possibility of getting addicted.

Cocaine and Heroin

Cocaine and heroin are both powders, often snorted up the nose, smoked, or mixed with water and injected with a needle. It is easy to become addicted to both drugs, and many people who seek treatment find it hard to stay off the drug. It is not uncommon to feel strong cravings for heroin or cocaine years after seeking treatment. People who inject the drug using a shared needle put themselves at further risk of contracting blood-borne viruses, such as hepatitis or HIV.

Cocaine can make people feel full of energy for a period of time, but it can also bring about feelings of restlessness and anger. Cocaine raises blood pressure and makes the heart beat faster, which could lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Heroin brings a rush of good feelings after it's taken. The feeling then wears off, and users often feel a strong urge to take more. The reason so many people overdose on heroin is because they can't tell how strong it is until they take it. Heroin can slow or stop your breathing. It can kill you. Signs of a heroin overdose are slow breathing; blue lips and fingernails; cold, clammy skin; and shaking.

There are medicines that can help people recover from addiction, but the best course is to not start. Avoid any temptation to try heroin or cocaine. Experimentation can be deadly.

Methamphetamine (Meth)

Meth is a white powder that is sometimes made into a pill or rock. Meth powder can be eaten or snorted up the nose. Like cocaine and heroin, it can also be mixed with liquid and injected into your body with a needle. Crystal meth is smoked in a small glass pipe.

Meth at first causes a rush of good feelings, but then users feel edgy, overly excited, angry, or afraid. Meth causes many problems. It can make your body temperature so hot that you pass out and could die. If you look at pictures of meth users, you will notice how quickly the drug ages them. Teeth become stained, break, and rot. As the teeth go bad the mouth looks sunken. Meth users burn a lot of energy and don't eat well, which leads to weight loss and a sickly appearance. The skin turns dull, and sores and pimples that won't heal are common. Meth use can quickly lead to addiction and cause cognitive or emotional problems that don't go away or that come back again even after you quit using. For instance, some users feel, hear, or see things that aren't there and think that people are out to get them.

This is a dangerous drug that should be avoided at all costs.

Other Drugs

There are many other drugs of abuse, including Ecstasy, K2 (or Spice), LSD, PCP, and roofies. It's best to avoid all of them.

If your use of drugs or alcohol is interfering with your life and negatively impacting your health, school, relationships, or finances—it's time to quit and find help.

The first semester is an especially critical and vulnerable time for most first-year students. It is often a time of heavy drinking and partying. The transition to college is often difficult, and while partying may feel like it is helping to ease the transition, the health risks are real: about one-third of first-year students fail to enroll for their second year.

If you are concerned about your drug or alcohol use, or you need help quitting, visit the student health center or talk with your college counselor. If you need additional resources, the following can help:

- Drug Information Online(opens in new window)
- Drug and Alcohol Treatment Hotline: 1-800-662-HELP

Personal Safety

For many students, their first year in college is also the first time they have lived away from home, or for commuting students, often the most time they have spent away from home. This new freedom can feel really exciting. College should be a time for fun, experimentation (in healthy ways), and growth. It's important to be smart about your safety and conscious that you don't put yourself in any high-risk situations. It's also important to know what to do if any problems arise. Here are some ways to remain safe while enjoying your college experience:

1. If you are worried about a friend's well-being, ask them if they are OK. If you see inappropriate behavior, let someone know. Get an RA or other authority involved if someone looks like they are in trouble or an activity looks like it is leading to trouble. In general, speak up if you notice something going on that concerns you.
2. Many colleges and universities have blue-light phones with direct access to campus security. If your campus has blue-light phones, take the time to find out where they are. If you are not familiar with the emergency system on your campus, visit your public safety department (or website) to understand how you can call for help in an emergency. Add campus security to your phone contacts.
3. A risk at bars and at college campus parties is the use of date-rape drugs to assist sexual assaults. Date-rape drugs often have no color, smell, or taste, so you can't tell if you are being drugged. The drugs can make you weak and confused so you are unable to refuse sex or defend yourself.

   It is easy for anyone to slip a date-rape drug in your drink. Never leave your drink unattended, and never accept a drink from someone you do not trust.
4. Always be aware of the people in your surrounding area. Notice anyone who looks out of place, and avoid dark and unpopulated areas. Make sure to charge your cell phone before you go out for the evening.
5. Going out with a group is the best way to make sure everyone gets home safely. In the event you find yourself alone at the end of the night, know ahead of time what escort services your school offers. Or use services like Uber and Lyft, and MAKE SURE you get in the car that matches the license plate on the app.

   It's also wise to install safety apps. These apps can automatically alert police and your emergency contacts in the event of an emergency. Always let your roommates and friends know your plans for the evening and when you expect to return.



Figure 13.13: Emergency phones and related systems are present on many campuses. Learn your system and note the locations of these devices as you travel. If you commute via public transportation, such as a train or bus, learn the safety procedures and devices available for those systems. (Credit: KOMO News / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

GET CONNECTED

Luckily, there are tech opportunities to keep yourself safe. Three good apps for the job are:

Noonlight(opens in new window) is an app that connects all your devices to trigger an alarm with a live, 24/7 staff in case of any emergency: heart attack, car wreck, assault, or any other event that requires emergency attention.

Kitestring(opens in new window) is an app you alert when you are headed out to a potentially risky situation, like a first date or meeting someone for the first time. The app texts you to check in, and if you don't respond, it alerts your emergency contacts to the situation.

Circle of 6(opens in new window) makes it easy for you to alert the six people in your circle any time you need help.

If You Are a Victim of a Crime

Most college students report feeling safe on campus. College administrators are fully committed to making your campus experience as safe as possible. If you are attacked, it is important to know what to do:

- **If possible, get to a safe place.** Move to a well-lit area to call for help.
- **Call 911** or have someone call 911 for you.
- **Follow the operator's instructions.** 911 operators will instruct you until police or paramedics arrive.
- **Contact a trusted friend or family member.** You will want emotional support and also somewhere to go after all the official procedures are complete.
- **Take time to heal.** If you are a victim of crime or assault, it can be traumatic. The healing process will take time. Check with your campus mental health services about how they can help in your recovery.

If You Are a Victim of Sexual Assault or Rape

Sexual assault is any type of sexual activity you don't agree to. This can include inappropriate touching, sexual intercourse, attempted rape, and rape. Most people are surprised to learn that 80 percent of rapes are committed by someone the victim knows.

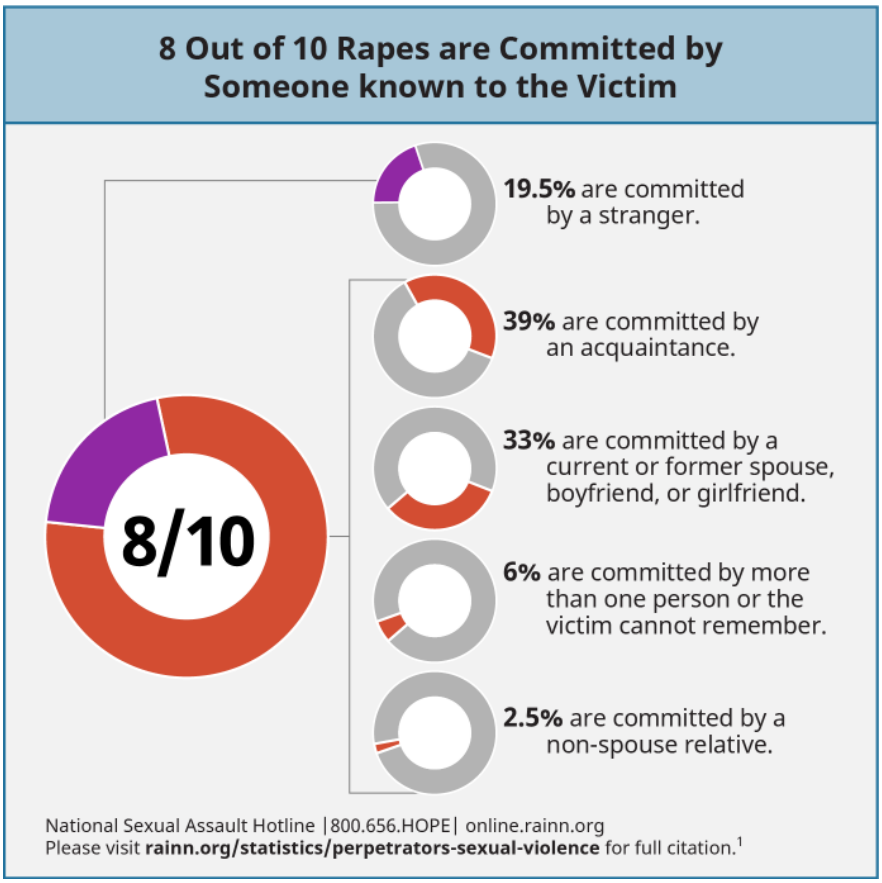


Figure 13.14: The majority of rapes are committed by people known to the victim, which can have a significant effect on prevention and reporting. (Credit: Modification of work by RAINN(opens in new window))

Take the following steps if you or someone you know has been raped:

- Get medical care. Go to the nearest rape crisis center, hospital, or student health service center. Do not go to the bathroom, shower, brush your teeth, wash your hands, or change clothes before you go. It's important to preserve any evidence.
- Ask the hospital or center to take a urine sample to test for date-rape drugs.
- Call the police from the hospital. Tell the police exactly what you remember. File a report.
- Arrange for follow-up counseling. A counselor can help you work through the many emotions you may feel following a sexual assault, which is important to the healing process. You can get help from the **National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-HOPE**.

Under Title IX legislation, sexual harassment and sexual violence are forms of gender discrimination and are prohibited. This includes off-campus incidents or incidents that involve people who are not students. If you experience a hostile environment, sexual harassment, or sexual assault, schools have a responsibility to stop the discrimination, prevent its recurrence, and address its effects. Schools also have a responsibility to protect people who report sexual harassment or assault from retaliation from other students, school administrators, or faculty.

The Clery Act, a federal law that intersects with Title IX, requires colleges and universities to do the following for survivors of campus sexual assault:

- Notify survivors of counseling resources.
- Notify survivors of the option to report a case to the school and law enforcement.
- Provide requested accommodations, such as changing dorms or classes.
- Notify survivors of the final outcome of a disciplinary proceeding.

Resources for Help

If you have questions or concerns related to drug use, your doctor or student health center can help. Check these Web sites for additional information:

- Drug Information Online: Drugs.com(opens in new window) [www.drugs.com]
- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information: store.samhsa.gov/home
- Drug and Alcohol Treatment Hotline: 1-800-662-HELP

Footnotes

28. American College Health Association, 2018 American College Health Association [www.acha.org]
29. NIDA's DrugFacts: Electronic Cigarettes (e-Cigarettes)

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13.9: Summary

In this chapter you have been introduced to the wide range of factors that impact your health. Health is much more than keeping your physical body in good shape. Good health also includes your mental and emotional health, quality relationships, and prioritizing your personal safety.

The contributors to physical health include eating clean, non-processed food; staying hydrated; moving your body daily; and getting sufficient sleep. You now understand why it is necessary to prioritize sleep, and that quality sleep is also dependent on the way you eat and exercise. You have identified ways to improve what you eat and how you sleep. With these changes you should be able to fall asleep with ease, stay asleep all night, and wake up feeling energized. Your mind will be clear and sharp. and you'll get more done in less time, massively increasing your productivity and your success in college.

You now understand that a certain level of stress is to be expected. Chronic stress, however, is damaging to the body, so it's important to have a variety of tools to manage stress. Practicing mindfulness, deep breathing, and gratitude can have a powerful impact on your emotional, mental, and physical health.

At the beginning of this chapter, you were introduced to a simple way of thinking about your health—nutrients in, toxins out. This means eating plenty of fruits and vegetables and avoiding junk food, soda, and other sugary beverages. If you move often throughout the day, drink plenty of clean water, and prioritize your sleep, you will help your body detoxify. Reduce your exposure to toxins by paying attention to what you put in and on your body. If you wouldn't eat it, don't put it on your skin or hair. A helpful way to remember to take care of your health is to follow the rule of eights: aim each day for eight hours of sleep, eight servings of fruits and vegetables, eight glasses of water, eight minutes of mindfulness, and eight meaningful connections, and incorporate any one of these eight ways to move—walking, aerobic exercise, strength training, yoga, Tai Chi, stretching, HIIT, or dancing.

Career Connection

Your Best Self

Returning to our definition of self-care – self-care is anything that makes you better– there is an addition that may help direct you in further developing your approach. Humanist Psychologist Carl Rogers described the healthy and vital individual as a fully functioning person. According to Rogers, this person strives to and may act in congruence with what they envisioned as their ideal, best self. This was the process that Rogers referred to as self-actualization, and as a precondition to authentically helping others. Based on this understanding, a revised definition of self-care could be: ***self-care is anything that makes you better and helps you live more like your best self***.

Previously mentioned was the idea that self-care says, "you can't pour from an empty cup." If self-care is, in part, about realizing our best selves, it matters what you fill your cup with. There may be times when getting food-to-go and watching Netflix is the best thing for your mind, body, and soul. Other times, those same things could just be more junk that isn't serving you or your development towards your best self. Therefore, when you think about your self-care needs, it may be crucial to ask:

- "What does my best self want?"
- "What does my best self need?"
- "What can I do now that my current self and future self will both thank me for?"

To help guide you in recognizing and acting in alignment with your ideal self, self-awareness and self-compassion may be essential. The next section covers these in more detail.

ACTIVITY : MY BEST SELF

My Best Self

Describe your best self. At your best, according to you:

- What is your best physical self? What can you do with your physical body? How do you feel?
- What is your best mental self? What do you think? What is your mindset? How do you care for a healthy mind?
- What is your best emotional self? What do you to support positive emotional states? How do care for yourself in negative emotional states? How do you develop greater emotional intelligence?
- What is your best social self? What are your social networks? Who are your most important relationships? How do you nurture them?

> Find a time to give yourself 20 minutes or more of uninterrupted writing.

Key Takeaways

- Getting enough sleep is very important for wellness and success in college. It's easy to determine if you're getting enough sleep.
- Don't fall for popular myths about sleep. It's worthwhile to get enough sleep, which gives you an improved ability to focus and apply yourself more efficiently in your studies and work.
- Excessive drinking or substance abuse is a common—but unhealthy—response to the stresses of college life. While the decisions are yours, it's important to understand the effects of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs and how they impact your life.
- Quitting smoking is hard, but it's clearly worth it—and lots of help is available. If you're a smoker, make this the year you become proud of yourself for quitting.
- If you like to drink, be honest with yourself. How much does drinking enrich your life, and how much do the effects of drinking interfere with your life? Make smart decisions so that you live your life to its fullest without regrets about losing control.
- Avoiding drugs can be a complicated issue, certainly not as simple as simply deciding to say no. But you've already made the decision to attend college, and that's a smart decision. Make smart choices in other areas of your life as well.
- Sexual health is an important dimension of wellness and something we should all think about to affirm our values and make responsible decisions.
- Your time in college and your overall health and well-being would be seriously impacted if you were to acquire a sexually transmitted infection or experience an unwanted pregnancy. You owe it to yourself—and anyone with whom you are in a relationship—to have the facts and know how to protect yourself.
- The huge number of sexual assaults that occur every year is one of our society's "dirty little secrets." This problem is as rampant on college campuses as in society in general. You need to know what's involved—and what to do to protect yourself from the pain of becoming a victim.

- Good health helps you be more successful in college.
- For good nutrition, eat a varied diet with lots of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains and minimize fats, sugar, and salt.
- Regular exercise is not only important for good health but is a great way to reduce stress in your life.
- Sleep is one of the first areas where college students cut back when they find themselves too busy with classes, work, and other activities. Taking the time to get enough sleep, however, makes you so much more efficient when studying that it can actually save you time.
- Substance use and abuse not only takes its toll on the body but also contributes to problems in college, at work, and in the future. You may need to make a smart decision between short-term pleasures and long-term success.
- Since many stressors are unavoidable in life, we all need to find good ways to minimize their effects. The best stress-reducers over time become good habits that will increase our wellness and help us succeed in college and careers.
- If you are having an emotional or relationship problem that persists and affects your life, don't hesitate to seek help. Most colleges have counselors and health professionals trained to help you get through any crisis.
- Sexual health is your own business—except that sexuality usually affects and is affected by others. Smart choices focus on protecting yourself from potential problems, regardless of your choices about sexual activity.

Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter, and consider one option you learned in this chapter that might make you rethink how you answered each one. Has this chapter prompted you to consider changing any of your habits?

Rank the following questions on a scale of 1–4. 1 = "least like me" and 4 = "most like me."

1. I eat enough fruits and vegetables every day.
2. I get enough sleep.
3. I have, for the most part, healthy relationships with friends and family.
4. I feel like I know how to manage stress.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

14: Nursing school Specific ..... most applies to other healthcare specialties too

14: Nursing school Specific ..... most applies to other healthcare specialties too

14.1: Prelude to Nursing Program Specific Requirements

14.2: Extra degrees- Being a Lifelong Learner

14.3: Testing and question types

14.4: Summary

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14.1: Prelude to Nursing Program Specific Requirements

Learning Objectives

1. Analyze the key components of nursing coursework, including theoretical foundations, case studies, and evidence-based practice, and develop a personalized academic plan that aligns with your future career goals in healthcare.
2. Evaluate different clinical skill sets (e.g., patient assessment, medication administration, wound care) and propose strategies for improving competency in each area through practice and ongoing education.
3. Synthesize the role of clinical experiences in bridging classroom learning and real-world practice by creating a reflective journal or portfolio documenting how clinical encounters contribute to professional growth and patient care.
4. Assess the physical and mental demands of the nursing profession and formulate a personal plan for maintaining physical fitness, emotional resilience, and work-life balance throughout your nursing career.
5. Compare various advanced nursing degrees and certifications (e.g., NP, CNS, CRNA) and design a long-term career roadmap, identifying the educational and certification pathways necessary to achieve specialization in a chosen field.



Figure 14.1 College student athletes from University of Alabama Huntsville retrieved from UAH.edu [www.uah.edu] used with permission.

Meet David, a former collegiate swimmer with a passion for healthcare. Throughout high school and college, David demonstrated exceptional time management and dedication, balancing a rigorous training schedule with academic commitments. After completing high school, David enrolled in a local community college's nursing program. Despite early morning swim practices and weekend meets, David maintained a high GPA, excelling in both the classroom and clinical settings. David's time in the pool taught discipline and resilience, qualities that translated seamlessly into nursing. Graduating with an ADN, David passed the NCLEX-RN on the first attempt. With an RN license in hand, David secured a position in the ICU of a nearby hospital, where the fast-paced environment mirrored the intensity of competitive swimming.

Determined to further their education, David enrolled in an online RN-to-BSN program. Juggling full-time work and online classes, David utilized early mornings and late nights to study, mirroring the dedication once reserved for swim practice. With a BSN and several years of ICU experience, David set sights on becoming a CRNA. The application process was competitive, but David's

unique background as a disciplined athlete and experienced ICU nurse stood out. Accepted into a prestigious nurse anesthesia program, David once again embraced a demanding schedule, balancing rigorous coursework with clinical rotations. After graduating from the nurse anesthesia program, David passed the National Certification Exam (NCE), achieving the goal of becoming a CRNA. The journey from community college RN to CRNA was challenging, but David's athletic background provided the foundation needed to manage a busy schedule and achieve educational and professional goals.

David's story is a testament to the power of perseverance, time management, and dedication, proving that with the right mindset, balancing a demanding schedule and achieving lofty goals is possible.

Nursing Coursework

Now that you have made it through this course/text, look at the specific program you want to complete. Are you able to complete your educational goals at the college you are currently enrolled? Do you need to transfer to another college, university or trade school? Are there any requirements or courses you must complete prior to being eligible to apply to your program of choice? Nursing coursework is renowned for its intensity and demands a level of commitment and diligence that often exceeds that of other academic disciplines. The multifaceted nature of nursing education combines theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and clinical experience, creating a comprehensive and challenging curriculum designed to prepare students for the complexities of patient care.

Nursing students must master a vast array of scientific subjects, including:

- **Anatomy and Physiology:** Understanding the structure and function of the human body is fundamental to nursing practice. These courses require memorization and comprehension of detailed biological systems and their interactions.
- **Microbiology:** This subject delves into the study of microorganisms and their impact on human health, requiring students to understand intricate concepts related to infection and immunity.
- **Pharmacology:** Nurses must have an in-depth understanding of medications, including their mechanisms of action, side effects, and interactions. This knowledge is critical for safe and effective patient care.

The theoretical aspect of nursing education is rigorous, with students often required to retain and apply extensive information across multiple subjects. Unlike other disciplines where the focus may be more singular, nursing students must integrate knowledge from various fields to develop a holistic understanding of health and disease.

Practical Skills

In addition to theoretical knowledge, nursing coursework places a significant emphasis on the development of practical skills:

- **Clinical Skills Labs:** Students participate in simulated clinical environments where they practice essential nursing procedures, such as administering injections, inserting catheters, and performing wound care. These labs are designed to build competence and confidence in a controlled setting.
- **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** Nurses must make quick, informed decisions in high-pressure situations. Coursework often includes case studies and scenario-based learning to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

The practical component of nursing education requires precision and proficiency, as mistakes can have serious consequences in real-world healthcare settings. This aspect of the curriculum is demanding, as students must repeatedly practice and refine their skills to achieve competence.

Clinical Experience

Clinical rotations are a cornerstone of nursing education, providing students with hands-on experience in various healthcare settings:

- **Diverse Clinical Settings:** Nursing students rotate through different departments, including medical-surgical units, pediatrics, obstetrics, and mental health. This exposure ensures that students gain a well-rounded understanding of nursing practice.
- **Direct Patient Care:** During clinical rotations, students apply their theoretical knowledge and practical skills to care for real patients under the supervision of experienced nurses. This experience is invaluable in developing clinical judgment and professional behavior.

Clinical experience is arguably the most demanding part of nursing education. Students must adapt to the fast-paced and often unpredictable nature of healthcare environments, balancing their academic responsibilities with the emotional and physical demands of patient care.

Comparison with Other Disciplines

While many academic disciplines require critical thinking, theoretical knowledge, and practical application, nursing education uniquely combines all these elements in a highly integrated and demanding manner:

- **Interdisciplinary Integration:** Unlike disciplines that may focus on a single area of study, nursing requires the integration of knowledge from various scientific and humanistic fields, necessitating a broader and more interconnected approach to learning.
- **High-Stakes Environment:** The stakes in nursing are exceptionally high, as students are preparing for a profession where their actions directly impact patient lives. This reality adds an extra layer of pressure and responsibility to their education.
- **Continuous Learning and Adaptation:** Nursing is an ever-evolving field, with new research and technologies continuously emerging. Nursing students must be adaptable and committed to lifelong learning to stay current with best practices and advancements in healthcare.

In conclusion, the rigor of nursing coursework is unparalleled, requiring students to excel in theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and clinical experience. This comprehensive and demanding education prepares future nurses to deliver safe, effective, and compassionate care in a dynamic and challenging healthcare environment.

Nursing School Requirements: Preparing for a Successful Journey

Embarking on a nursing education requires more than academic readiness. Aspiring nursing students must meet several critical requirements to ensure they are prepared for the rigorous demands of nursing school and patient care. These prerequisites include background checks, immunizations, and physical capabilities necessary for the profession.

Background Checks

Before enrolling in a nursing program, students must undergo thorough background checks. This process is essential to ensure the safety and well-being of patients, as well as to comply with state and federal regulations.

- **Criminal History:** Nursing schools typically require a criminal background check to screen for any history of offenses that could disqualify a candidate from providing patient care.
- **Drug Screening:** Many programs mandate drug screenings to ensure students are not under the influence of substances that could impair their ability to care for patients.
- **Fingerprinting:** Some states and institutions may require fingerprinting as part of the background check process.

These checks are crucial not only for admission but also for clinical placements, as healthcare facilities require assurance of the students' integrity and trustworthiness.

Immunizations

To protect both students and patients, nursing programs have stringent immunization requirements. These vaccinations help prevent the spread of infectious diseases within healthcare settings.

- **Hepatitis B:** A series of vaccinations is required to protect against this bloodborne virus.
- **Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR):** Proof of immunity through vaccination or titers is necessary to prevent outbreaks of these contagious diseases.
- **Varicella (Chickenpox):** Immunization or evidence of immunity through past infection is required.
- **Influenza:** Annual flu vaccines are mandatory to protect vulnerable patient populations from seasonal influenza.
- **Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis (Tdap):** Up-to-date immunization against these diseases is required.
- **COVID-19:** Many nursing programs now require vaccination against COVID-19 to reduce the risk of transmission within healthcare settings.

Students must provide documented proof of these immunizations before beginning clinical rotations, ensuring a safe environment for both themselves and the patients they serve.

Physical Requirements

Nursing is a physically demanding profession, and nursing programs require students to meet certain physical standards to ensure they can perform essential job functions safely and effectively.

- **Lifting and Moving:** Nurses often need to lift and move patients or equipment. Most programs require students to be able to lift at least 50 pounds and assist with patient transfers.

- **Endurance:** Nursing shifts can be long and physically taxing. Students must demonstrate the stamina to stand or walk for extended periods and perform repetitive tasks without compromising patient care.
- **Manual Dexterity:** Fine motor skills are critical for tasks such as administering injections, dressing wounds, and operating medical equipment.
- **Sensory Abilities:** Adequate vision, hearing, and tactile sensation are essential for assessing patient conditions, reading monitors, and performing hands-on care.

Cognitive and Emotional Requirements

In addition to physical capabilities, nursing students must possess the cognitive and emotional resilience needed to handle the stress and complexities of patient care.

- **Critical Thinking:** The ability to think critically and make quick, informed decisions is vital in nursing practice.
- **Emotional Stability:** Nurses must manage stress, cope with challenging situations, and provide compassionate care to patients and families.
- **Communication Skills:** Effective communication with patients, families, and healthcare team members is essential for successful nursing practice.

Meeting the entry requirements for nursing school is a significant first step toward a successful nursing career. Prospective students must prepare for comprehensive background checks, ensure they are up-to-date on required immunizations, and demonstrate the physical and cognitive abilities necessary for patient care. By fulfilling these prerequisites, students can confidently begin their journey in nursing education, equipped to handle the demands of the profession and provide high-quality care to those in need.

Navigating Nursing School Policies: Program Length, Leave of Absence, Failing a Course, and Transfers

Understanding the policies and procedures of your nursing program is crucial for a successful academic journey. This section covers important aspects such as the length of the program, options for taking a leave of absence, protocols for failing a course, and considerations for transferring to another school or program of study.

Length of the Program

Nursing programs vary in length depending on the degree pursued and the institution offering the program. Some colleges are on a semester system, where others are on quarters. It is helpful when planning, to know if your program runs all through the summer or if that is an opportunity to take other courses, work experience or simply take a break. Students should review the specific program requirements and timelines provided by their chosen institution to plan accordingly.

Leave of Absence for Illness

Life can be unpredictable, and illness may necessitate a temporary break from your studies. Most nursing programs have policies in place to accommodate students facing health challenges:

- **Requesting a Leave of Absence:** Students must formally request a leave of absence (LOA) through their program's administration. This process typically involves submitting medical documentation and completing an LOA application form.
- **Duration and Terms:** The duration of an LOA can vary but generally ranges from one semester to a full academic year. Institutions may have specific guidelines on how long a student can remain on leave before needing to reapply to the program.
- **Reentry Procedures:** Returning to the program after an LOA usually requires meeting certain conditions, such as providing a doctor's clearance and demonstrating the ability to resume full-time studies.

It's important to communicate proactively with your academic advisor and the nursing program administration to ensure a smooth transition during and after a leave of absence.

Failing a Course in the Program

Failing a course in nursing school can be a significant setback, but it's not insurmountable. Here's what typically happens if a student fails a course:

- **Remediation Options:** Many programs offer remediation plans, which may include retaking the failed course, completing additional assignments, or participating in tutoring sessions.
- **Academic Probation:** Students who fail a course may be placed on academic probation. This status requires meeting specific conditions, such as maintaining a minimum GPA in subsequent courses.

- **Repeat Policies:** Nursing programs often allow students to retake a failed course once. However, failing the same course twice or failing multiple courses can lead to dismissal from the program.
- **Impact on Graduation:** Failing a course can delay graduation, as students must pass all required courses to complete the program. It's essential to work closely with academic advisors to develop a plan for getting back on track.

Transferring to Another School or Program of Study

Transferring to another nursing school or changing your program of study requires careful consideration and planning:

- **Transfer Credits:** Not all credits may transfer between institutions. Students should verify which courses will be accepted by the new program to avoid repeating coursework.
- **Admission Requirements:** Each nursing program has its own admission criteria. Ensure you meet the requirements of the new program, which may include maintaining a certain GPA and completing prerequisite courses.
- **Application Process:** Transferring students must go through the application process for the new program, which may involve submitting transcripts, letters of recommendation, and a personal statement.
- **Timing:** Consider the timing of your transfer. Some programs may only accept transfers at the beginning of a new academic year or semester, which could affect your academic progression.

Navigating the policies related to program length, leaves of absence, course failures, and transfers is essential for maintaining your academic trajectory in nursing school. Understanding these processes helps you make informed decisions and ensures you are prepared for any challenges that may arise during your educational journey. Always communicate with your academic advisors and program administrators to receive the support and guidance needed to achieve your goals.

Hospital Clinical Rotations: Schedule, Expectations, Preparation, and Dress Code

Clinical rotations are a vital component of nursing education, providing students with hands-on experience in real healthcare settings. Understanding the schedule, expectations, preparation requirements, and dress code for clinical rotations is crucial for success and professional development.

Schedule

Clinical rotations typically follow a structured schedule that aligns with the nursing program's academic calendar. Key aspects of the schedule include:

- **Duration:** Clinical rotations usually span several weeks to a full semester, depending on the specific course and program requirements.
- **Hours:** Students may be required to complete a specific number of clinical hours, often ranging from 8 to 12 hours per shift. Rotations can occur during day, evening, or night shifts, including weekends.
- **Rotations:** Students rotate through various departments, such as medical-surgical units, pediatrics, obstetrics, mental health, and critical care. This diversity ensures exposure to different patient populations and nursing specialties.

It's essential to review the rotation schedule in advance and plan accordingly to balance clinical hours with coursework and personal commitments.

Expectations

Clinical rotations come with high expectations and responsibilities. Nursing students must:

- **Professionalism:** Display professional behavior at all times, including punctuality, respect, and effective communication with patients, families, and healthcare team members.
- **Patient Care:** Apply theoretical knowledge and practical skills to provide safe, compassionate, and competent care under the supervision of experienced nurses and clinical instructors.
- **Learning Objectives:** Meet specific learning objectives set by the nursing program and clinical site. This includes demonstrating proficiency in various nursing procedures and patient care activities.
- **Documentation:** Accurately document patient information, assessments, and interventions in electronic health records (EHR) or other charting systems.

Failure to meet these expectations can result in remediation or disciplinary actions, impacting the student's academic progression.

Preparation

Thorough preparation is key to a successful clinical experience. Students should:

- **Review Materials:** Study relevant course materials, clinical guidelines, and procedures related to the specific rotation. Familiarize yourself with the policies and protocols of the clinical site.
- **Pre-Clinical Assignments:** Complete any required pre-clinical assignments or simulations provided by the nursing program or clinical instructor.
- **Skills Practice:** Practice essential nursing skills in the skills lab or simulation center to build confidence and competence before performing them in a clinical setting.
- **Self-Care:** Ensure you are well-rested and in good health to handle the physical and emotional demands of clinical rotations. Maintain a healthy lifestyle, including proper nutrition, exercise, and stress management.

Effective preparation helps build confidence and ensures you are ready to provide high-quality patient care.

Dress Code

Adhering to the dress code is crucial for maintaining a professional appearance and ensuring safety and hygiene in clinical settings. Common dress code requirements include:

- **Uniform:** Wear the designated nursing uniform, usually consisting of scrubs in a specific color or style approved by the nursing program and clinical site.
- **Footwear:** Wear clean, closed-toe, and non-slip shoes to ensure safety and comfort during long shifts.
- **Identification:** Display your student ID badge and any required clinical site identification at all times.
- **Personal Hygiene:** Maintain high standards of personal hygiene, including clean, neatly groomed hair, short and clean nails, and minimal use of fragrances to prevent allergies or sensitivities among patients. Some clinical partner facilities do not allow the use of any fragrance in the healthcare setting.
- **Accessories:** Limit jewelry to a watch and small stud earrings, if allowed. Avoid wearing rings, bracelets, or other accessories that could harbor bacteria or pose a safety risk.
- **Equipment:** Carry essential nursing tools, such as a stethoscope, penlight, scissors, and a pocket-sized notebook for taking notes.

Following the dress code reflects professionalism and respect for the clinical environment, patients, and healthcare team members. Hospital clinical rotations are a critical aspect of nursing education, providing valuable hands-on experience in real-world healthcare settings. Understanding the schedule, meeting expectations, preparing thoroughly, and adhering to the dress code are essential for success. By approaching clinical rotations with professionalism and dedication, nursing students can develop the skills and confidence needed to excel in their future careers as competent and compassionate nurses.

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14.2: Extra degrees- Being a Lifelong Learner

After graduating, passing the NCLEX-RN, and obtaining your first nursing position, your learning as a nurse has just begun. The first year of your nursing career is a continual process of transitional stages and experiential learning and is the beginning of lifelong learning as a nurse. Lifelong learning can be achieved through a variety of methods, such as obtaining additional nursing degrees, acquiring certifications, joining professional organizations, attending conferences and workshops, and staying up-to-date on current evidence-based practices by reading nursing literature and other research.

Advanced Nursing Degrees

After obtaining an RN license, there are many opportunities to advance your education through accredited schools of nursing. Many health care organizations encourage nurses to obtain higher degrees and provide tuition reimbursement for a BSN and other advanced degrees.

Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing

Many hospitals hire nurses with an Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN) on a condition they complete their Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing (BSN) within a specific time frame.

Master's Degree in Nursing

A Master's of Science in Nursing Degree (MSN) requires additional credits and years of schooling beyond the BSN. There are a variety of degree options, including, but not limited to, Nurse Educator, Advanced Practice Nurse (APRN), Informatics, Leadership, and Clinical Educators.

Doctoral Degrees in Nursing

Doctoral nursing degrees include the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing (PhD) and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP). PhD-prepared nurses complete doctoral work that is focused on research. They often teach in a university setting and/or conduct research. DNP-prepared nurses complete doctoral work that is focused on clinical nursing practice. They typically have work roles in advanced nursing practice, clinical leadership, or academic settings.

Advanced Practice Nurses

Advanced Practice Nurses (APRN) are defined by the NCSBN as an RN who has a graduate degree and advanced knowledge. There are four categories of Advanced Practice Nurses: certified nurse-midwife (CNM), clinical nurse specialist (CNS), certified nurse practitioner (CNP), and certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA). APRNs can diagnose illnesses and prescribe treatments and medications. Additional information about advanced nursing degrees and roles is provided in the box below.[1]

Nurse Practitioners: Nurse practitioners (NPs) work in a variety of settings and complete physical examinations, diagnose and treat common acute illness, manage chronic illnesses, order laboratory and diagnostic tests, prescribe medications and other therapies, provide health teaching and supportive counseling with an emphasis on prevention of illness and health maintenance, and refer patients to other health professionals and specialists as needed. In many states, NPs can function independently and manage their own clinics, whereas in other states physician supervision is required. NP certifications include, but are not limited to, Family Practice, Adult-Gerontology Primary Care, Adult-Gerontology Acute Care, and Psychiatric/Mental Health.

To read more about NP certification, visit Nursing World's Our Certifications web page.(opens in new window)

Clinical Nurse Specialists: Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) practice in a variety of health care environments and participate in mentoring other nurses, case management, research, designing and conducting quality improvement programs, and serving as educators and consultants. Specialty areas include, but are not limited to, Adult/Gerontology, Pediatrics, and Neonatal.

To read more about CNS certification, visit NACNS's What is a CNS? web page.(opens in new window)

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists: Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) administer anesthesia and related care before, during, and after surgical, therapeutic, diagnostic, and obstetrical procedures, as well as provide airway management during medical emergencies. CRNAs deliver more than 65 percent of all anesthetics to patients in the United States. Practice settings include operating rooms, dental offices, and outpatient surgical centers.

To read more about CRNA certification, visit NBCRNA's website.(opens in new window)

Certified Nurse Midwives: Certified Nurse Midwives (CNM) provide gynecological exams, family planning advice, prenatal care, management of low-risk labor and delivery, and neonatal care. Practice settings include hospitals, birthing centers, community clinics, and patient homes.

To read more about CNM certification, visit AMCB Midwife's website.(opens in new window)

Specialty Certifications

Acquiring nursing specialty certification is a way to demonstrate expertise. National certifications have various requirements but most require continuing education credits and successful completion of a national examination. After successfully obtaining a specialty certification, additional credentials are displayed after "RN" in a nurse's signature. See Table 11.6 for a list of common specialty certifications and their associated credentials.

Table 11.6 Nursing Specialty Certification

Certification	Credentials
Critical Care Nursing	CCRN
Certified Nurse Educator	CNE
Oncology Certified Nurse	ONC
Stroke Certified Registered Nurse	SCRN
Trauma Certified Registered Nurse	TCRN
Surgical Nurse	CORN
Nursing Professional Development	NPD-BC

Read more about specialty ANCC nursing certifications(opens in new window).

Professional Organizations

Joining a local, state or national nursing organization is a way to connect with other RNs and promote continued professional growth. The largest national organization is the American Nurses Association (ANA). The ANA provides RN members with the following benefits:

- Advance your career with free development resources and webinars.
- Stay current with the most up-to-date nursing news.
- Save money with big discounts on continuing education (CE), certification, publications, and more.
- Network and connect with Registered Nurses (RN) for support and advice.
- Make your voice heard with opportunities to tell policymakers what you think.
- Receive state nurse association member benefits.

In addition to the ANA, each state has their own state nursing association.

Read more about joining the American Nurses Association and your state Nursing Association(opens in new window) on the ANA website.

Attending Conferences and Workshops

Regularly attending nursing conferences and workshops is an excellent way to maintain current, evidence-based knowledge and continue to provide safe, quality nursing care. Many opportunities exist for these types of experiences provided by local health care agencies, state nursing associations, or national conferences. Joining local, state, and national nursing organizations is the best way to be aware of upcoming conferences and workshops. See Figure 11.7[2] for an illustration of a lifelong learner and leader.

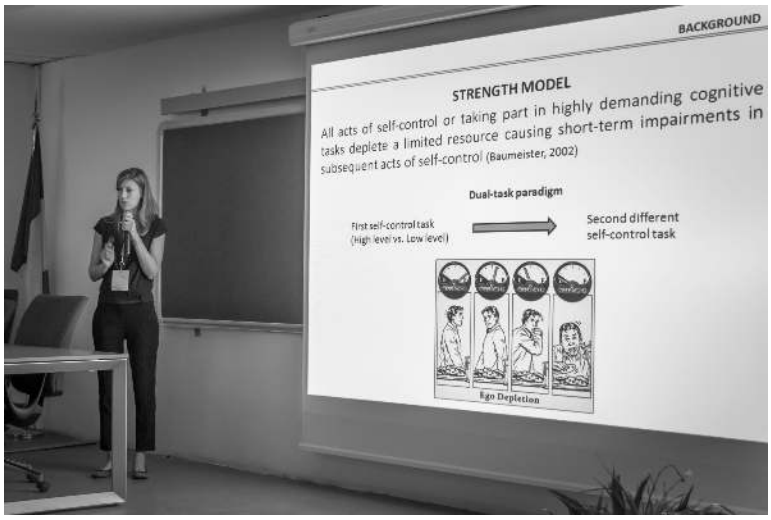


Figure 11.7 Lifelong Learner

Nursing Journals

There are many nursing journals that you can access electronically or have delivered to your home to read regularly.

Read more about staying current on evidence-based practices in the "Quality and Evidence-Based Practice(opens in new window)" chapter.

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1. Institute of Medicine. (2011). *The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health.* National Academies Press. DOI(opens in new window) [doi.org]↵
2. "EFP_2015_speaker_II.jpg(opens in new window)" by Adrian Soldati(opens in new window) is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0(opens in new window)↵

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14.3: Testing and question types

Nursing Test Item Types and the Importance of Practice Questions

Nursing education includes a variety of test item types designed to assess a student's knowledge, critical thinking, and clinical judgment. Understanding these test item types is crucial for effective preparation and success in nursing exams.

1. **Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs):**
   - **Format:** MCQs present a question or a clinical scenario followed by several answer choices, typically four or five. Only one choice is correct.
   - **Purpose:** These questions assess a student's ability to recall information, apply knowledge, and make decisions based on clinical scenarios.
   - **Strategy:** Read each question carefully, eliminate incorrect answers, and choose the best option based on your knowledge and understanding of the subject.
2. **Select All That Apply (SATA):**
   - **Format:** SATA questions provide a list of options where more than one answer may be correct. Students must select all correct answers.
   - **Purpose:** These questions test a student's comprehensive understanding of a topic and ability to identify multiple aspects of a clinical situation.
   - **Strategy:** Treat each option as a true or false question and select all options that apply to the scenario provided.
3. **Fill-in-the-Blank:**
   - **Format:** These questions require students to provide a specific word, number, or phrase as the answer without any options to choose from.
   - **Purpose:** They assess a student's ability to recall specific information accurately.
   - **Strategy:** Focus on key concepts and terminologies during study sessions to improve recall.
4. **Hotspot Questions:**
   - **Format:** Students interact with an image or diagram and select the correct area or point that answers the question.
   - **Purpose:** These questions evaluate a student's ability to identify anatomical landmarks, equipment parts, or areas on charts and graphs.
   - **Strategy:** Familiarize yourself with visual aids and practice identifying key areas relevant to nursing care.
5. **Chart/Exhibit Questions:**
   - **Format:** Students review information presented in charts, tables, or exhibits and answer questions based on that information.
   - **Purpose:** These questions assess analytical skills and the ability to interpret data and clinical information.
   - **Strategy:** Practice interpreting clinical data and information presented in various formats.
6. **Case Studies:**
   - **Format:** A detailed clinical scenario is provided, followed by a series of questions related to the scenario.
   - **Purpose:** These questions test a student's ability to apply knowledge to real-life clinical situations and make informed decisions.
   - **Strategy:** Work through practice case studies to enhance critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills.

Importance of Completing Practice Questions

Engaging with practice questions throughout your nursing program is essential for several reasons:

1. **Reinforces Learning:**
   - Practice questions help reinforce the material learned in lectures, readings, and clinical experiences. They promote active recall, which strengthens memory and understanding of key concepts.
2. **Identifies Knowledge Gaps:**
   - Regularly answering practice questions helps identify areas where further study is needed. Understanding your weaknesses allows you to focus on specific topics and improve overall competency.
3. **Improves Test-Taking Skills:**

- Familiarity with different types of test items enhances your ability to approach and answer questions effectively during exams. Practice questions help develop strategies for tackling various question formats, such as MCQs and SATA.

4. **Enhances Critical Thinking:**
   - Nursing practice involves complex decision-making and problem-solving. Practice questions simulate real-life clinical scenarios, fostering the critical thinking and clinical judgment skills necessary for effective patient care.
5. **Reduces Test Anxiety:**
   - Regular practice builds confidence and reduces anxiety related to exams. Knowing what to expect and having strategies for answering different types of questions can make test-taking a less stressful experience.
6. **Prepares for Licensing Exams:**
   - Nursing programs culminate in licensing exams, such as the NCLEX-RN, which determine eligibility to practice as a registered nurse. Consistent practice with NCLEX-style questions ensures readiness for these high-stakes exams.

Strategies for Effective Practice

- **Schedule Regular Practice Sessions:** Integrate practice questions into your study routine. Consistent practice over time is more effective than cramming before exams.
- **Use Diverse Resources:** Utilize question banks, textbooks, online platforms, and review courses that offer a variety of practice questions and test item types.
- **Review Rationales:** After answering practice questions, review the rationales for both correct and incorrect answers. Understanding the reasoning behind each answer enhances learning and retention.
- **Simulate Exam Conditions:** Occasionally, simulate exam conditions by timing yourself and minimizing distractions. This helps build endurance and familiarity with the exam environment.

Incorporating regular practice with diverse test item types is essential for mastering the content and skills required in nursing education. By engaging with practice questions throughout your program, you will enhance your learning, build confidence, and prepare effectively for both academic exams and professional licensure.

Activity: Practice NCLEX Next-Gen Style Questions with the following Learning Activity:

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14.4: Summary

End of Chapter Summary:

Applying to a Nursing Program

This chapter has provided a comprehensive guide to the application process for nursing programs. Here's a summary of the essential steps and considerations involved:

1. **Understanding Nursing Program Requirements:**
   - **Prerequisites:** Ensure you meet the prerequisite courses and educational requirements for the nursing program. Common prerequisites include anatomy and physiology, microbiology, and chemistry.
   - **Application Materials:** Prepare and gather necessary documents such as transcripts, letters of recommendation, personal statements, and proof of any required certifications or vaccinations.
2. **Researching Programs:**
   - **Program Types:** Explore different types of nursing programs, including associate degree programs, bachelor's degree programs, and accelerated options. Consider factors like program length, curriculum, and career outcomes.
   - **Accreditation:** Verify that the program is accredited by a recognized accrediting body to ensure the quality and recognition of your degree.
3. **Application Process:**
   - **Application Deadlines:** Be aware of application deadlines and submit your application well in advance to avoid any last-minute issues.
   - **Entrance Exams:** Some programs may require entrance exams such as the TEAS (Test of Essential Academic Skills) or the HESI (Health Education Systems Incorporated) exam. Prepare thoroughly for these tests to achieve competitive scores.
   - **Interviews:** Prepare for interviews by reviewing common questions and practicing your responses. Be ready to discuss your motivations, experiences, and understanding of the nursing profession.
4. **Financial Considerations:**
   - **Tuition and Fees:** Research the cost of the nursing program, including tuition, fees, and other expenses. Understand what is covered and what additional costs may arise.
   - **Financial Aid:** Explore financial aid options such as scholarships, grants, and student loans. Apply for financial aid early to secure funding and manage expenses.
5. **Background Checks and Health Requirements:**
   - **Background Checks:** Be prepared for background checks as part of the application process. Ensure you have a clean record, as this is crucial for clinical placements.
   - **Health Requirements:** Complete required health screenings, vaccinations, and provide proof of health insurance as mandated by the program.
6. **Preparing for the Next Steps:**
   - **Acceptance and Enrollment:** Once accepted, follow the program's enrollment procedures, including orientation, registration, and scheduling classes.
   - **Planning for Success:** Develop a plan for balancing coursework, clinical rotations, and personal commitments. Utilize resources such as academic advising and peer support to navigate your nursing education successfully.

By understanding and diligently following these steps, you will effectively navigate the application process and set the stage for a successful nursing education. Being well-prepared and informed will help you secure a spot in your desired nursing program and embark on a rewarding career in nursing.

Mastering Nursing Test Item Types and Practice

This chapter has explored critical aspects of preparing for nursing exams, including the various types of test items you may encounter and the importance of practice questions throughout your nursing program. Here's a summary of the key points:

1. **Understanding Test Item Types:**
   - **Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs):** Assess recall, application, and decision-making. Approach these questions by carefully reading each option and selecting the best answer based on your knowledge.

- **Select All That Apply (SATA):** Require identifying multiple correct responses. Treat each option individually and select all that apply to the scenario.
- **Fill-in-the-Blank:** Test your ability to recall specific information. Focus on memorizing key terms and concepts.
- **Hotspot Questions:** Involve selecting areas on images or diagrams. Practice identifying critical anatomical landmarks and equipment.
- **Chart/Exhibit Questions:** Require interpretation of data from charts or tables. Enhance your skills in analyzing clinical information presented in various formats.
- **Case Studies:** Provide detailed scenarios followed by questions. Develop your critical thinking and clinical reasoning by working through practice case studies.

2. **Importance of Practice Questions:**
   - **Reinforces Learning:** Practice questions help solidify your understanding and memory of nursing concepts.
   - **Identifies Knowledge Gaps:** Regular practice highlights areas needing further study, allowing you to target your review efforts effectively.
   - **Improves Test-Taking Skills:** Familiarity with different question formats and strategies enhances your ability to perform well on exams.
   - **Enhances Critical Thinking:** Practice questions simulate real-life scenarios, fostering essential decision-making and problem-solving skills.
   - **Reduces Test Anxiety:** Consistent practice builds confidence and reduces anxiety, making exams less stressful.
   - **Prepares for Licensing Exams:** Regular practice ensures readiness for high-stakes exams like the NCLEX-RN.
3. **Effective Practice Strategies:**
   - **Schedule Regular Sessions:** Incorporate practice questions into your routine for consistent reinforcement.
   - **Use Diverse Resources:** Explore various question banks and review materials to expose yourself to different types of questions.
   - **Review Rationales:** Analyze the reasons behind correct and incorrect answers to deepen your understanding.
   - **Simulate Exam Conditions:** Practice under timed conditions to build endurance and familiarity with the exam environment.

By mastering the different test item types and engaging in regular practice, you will enhance your knowledge, improve your exam performance, and prepare effectively for a successful nursing career. This proactive approach to studying and test preparation is crucial for achieving academic success and professional competence in nursing.

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15: Appendix

Nursing organizations' Index

Use this index to connect with the organizations and literature associated with various fields of nursing.

Nursing organizations' Index

Nursing Organization	Website	Journal Name
Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses	www.amsn.org	MEDSURG Nursing Journal
Academy of Neonatal Nursing	www.academyonline.org	Neonatal Network: The Journal of Neonatal Nursing
Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association	www.astna.org	N/A
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing	www.aaacn.org	ViewPoint
American Academy of Nursing	www.aannet.org	Nursing Outlook
American Association for Men in Nursing	www.aamn.org	Nursing History Review
American Association for the History of Nursing	www.aahn.org	Nursing History Now
American Association of Colleges of Nursing	www.aacnnursing.org	Journal of Professional Nursing
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses	www.aacn.org	Critical Care Nurse American Journal of Critical Care AACN Advanced Critical Care AACN Bold Voices
American Association of Diabetes Educators	www.diabeteseducator.org	ADCES in Practice
American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants	www.aalnc.org	Journal of Legal Nurse Consulting
American Association of Managed Care Nurses	www.aamcn.org	Journal of Managed Care Nursing
American Association of Neuroscience Nurses	www.aann.org	Journal of Neuroscience Nursing
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists	www.aana.com	AANA Journal
American Association of Nurse Attorneys	www.taana.org	N/A
American Association of Spinal Cord Injury Nurses	www.academyscipro.org	Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine
American Board of Nursing Specialties	www.nursingcertification.org	N/A

Nursing Organization	Website	Journal Name
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	www.aaidd.org	American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
American College of Nurse Midwives	www.midwife.org	Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health
American Holistic Nurses Association	www.ahna.org	Beginnings Journal of Holistic Nursing
American Nephrology Nurses' Association	www.annanurse.org	Nephrology Nursing Journal
American Nurses Association	www.nursingworld.org	American Nurse Online Journal of Issues in Nursing
American Nursing Informatics Association	www.ania.org	Journal of Informatics Nursing
American Organization of Nurse Executives	www.aone.org	Nurse Leader Journal of Nursing Administration
American Psychiatric Nurses Association	www.apna.org	Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Public Health Association	www.apha.org	American Journal of Public Health The Nation's Health
American Society of Ophthalmic Registered Nurses	www.asorn.org	InSight
American Society for Pain Management Nursing	www.aspmn.org	Pain Management Nursing
American Society of Paranesthesia Nurses	www.aspan.org	Journal of PeriAnesthesia Nurses
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology	www.apic.org	American Journal of Infection Control
Association for Nursing Professional Development	www.anpd.org	Journal for Nurses in Professional Development
Association for Radiologic and Imaging Nursing	www.arinursing.org	Journal of Radiology Nursing
Association for Vascular Access	www.avainfo.org	Journal of the Association for Vascular Access
Association of Camp Nurses	www.campnurse.org	CompassPoint
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators	www.achne.org	N/A
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care	www.nursesinaidscare.org	Journal of the Association Of Nurses in AIDS Care
Association of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Nurses	www.aphon.org	N/A
Association of Perioperative Registered Nurses	www.aorn.org	AORN Journal

Nursing Organization	Website	Journal Name
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses	www.rehabnurse.org	Rehabilitation Nursing Journal
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses	www.awhonn.org	Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, & Neonatal Nursing Nursing for Women's Health
California Nurses Association	www.nationalnursesunited.org/california-nurses-association	National Nurse Magazine
Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools	www.cgfns.org	N/A
Dermatology Nurses' Association	www.dnanurse.org	Journal of the Dermatology Nurses' Association
Developmental Disabilities Nurses Association	www.ddna.org	International Journal of Nursing in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
Emergency Nurses Association	www.ena.org	Journal of Emergency Nursing
Endocrine Nurses Association	www.endo-nurses.org	Endocrine News
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association	www.gapna.org	Geriatric Nursing
Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association	www.hpna.org	Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care Nursing Journal of Palliative Medicine
Infusion Nurses Society	www.ins1.org	Journal of Infusion Nursing
International Council of Nurses	www.icn.ch	N/A
International Nurses Society on Addictions	www.intnsa.org	Journal of Addictions Nursing
International Organization of Multiple Sclerosis Nurses	www.iomsn.org	International Journal of MS Care
International Society of Nurses in Genetics	www.isong.org	N/A
International Society of Plastic and Aesthetic Nurses	www.ispan.org	Plastic Surgical Nursing
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses	www.ispn-psych.org	Archives of Psychiatric Nursing
National Association Directors of Nursing Administration/ Long Term Care	www.nadona.org	The Director: Journal of the National Association of Directors of Nursing Administration in Long Term Care
National Association for Home Care and Hospice	www.nahc.org	N/A
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists	www.nacns.org	Clinical Nurse Specialist: The International Journal for Advanced Nursing
National Association of Hispanic Nurses	www.thehispanicnurses.org	Hispanic Health Care International

Nursing Organization	Website	Journal Name
National Association of Neonatal Nurses	www.nann.org	Advances in Neonatal Care
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health	www.npwh.org	Women's Healthcare: A Clinical Journal for NPs
National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses	www.orthonurse.org	Orthopaedic Nursing
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners	www.napnap.org	Journal of Pediatric Health Care
National Association of School Nurses	www.nasn.org	The Journal of School Nursing NASN School Nurse
National League for Nursing	www.nln.org	Nursing Education Perspectives
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties	www.nonpf.com	Nurse Educator
National Student Nurses Association	www.nsna.org	Imprint
North American Nursing Diagnosis Association International	www.nanda.org	International Journal of Nursing Knowledge
Oncology Nursing Society	www.ons.org	Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing
Organization for Associate Degree Nursing	www.oadn.org	Teaching and Learning in Nursing
Pediatric Endocrinology Nursing Society	www.pens.org	Journal of Pediatric Nursing
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association	www.pcna.net	Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing
Respiratory Nursing Society	www.respiratorynursingsociety.org	Perspectives in Respiratory Nursing
Society of Gastroenterology Nurses & Association, Inc.	www.sgna.org	Gastroenerology Nursing
Society of Otorhinolaryngology and Head-Neck Nurses, Inc.	www.sohnnurse.com	ORL – Head and Neck Nursing Journal
Society of Pediatric Nurses	www.pedsnurses.org	Journal of Pediatric Nursing
Society of Trauma Nurses	www.traumanurses.org	Journal of Trauma Nursing
Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates	www.suna.org	Urologic Nursing
Society for Vascular Nursing	www.svnnet.org	Journal of Vascular Nursing
Texas Nursing Association	www.texasnurses.org	Texas Nursing
Transcultural Nursing Society	www.tcns.org	Journal of Transcultural Nursing
Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Nurses Society	www.wocn.org	Journal of Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing

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15.1: Chapter 15

Answers to interactive elements are given within the interactive element.

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Index

A

academic advisors
5.4: Making a Plan
academic freedom
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
academic planning
5.4: Making a Plan
accessing prior knowledge
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
accountability
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
action plan
4.7: Goal Setting and Motivation
active reading
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
adjust plan
12.2: Personal Financial Planning
affirmative action
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
alternatives for achieving goals
12.2: Personal Financial Planning
Americans with Disabilities Act
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
analytical thinking
8.5: Analytical Thinking
annuities and life insurance
12.8: Defending against Attack- Securing Your Identity and Accounts
anorexia nervosa eating disorder
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
anxiety disorders
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
applying reading
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
artificial colors
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
asking for help
5.5: Managing Change and the Unexpected
asking questions
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
assessing strategies
8.10: Metacognition
associate's degree
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
assumptions
10.6: Barriers to Effective Communication
attention
10.4: Communication and Technology

B

bachelor's degree
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
banking fees
12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
banking products and services
12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
be aware of any negative bias
3.5: The Motivated Learner
beans
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
better job stability
1.3: Why College?
better outcomes for the next generation
1.3: Why College?
bias
8.6: Critical Thinking
binge drinking
13.8: Your Safety
binge eating disorder
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
Bloom's Taxonomy
8.4: Creative Thinking
Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
building skills
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
bulimia eating disorder
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health

C

cardiovascular
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
category of learning
3.2: The Power to Learn
checking accounts
12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
chronic stress
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
civil engagement
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
civility
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
Clery Act
13.8: Your Safety
clinicals
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
cocaine
13.8: Your Safety
collaboration
10.4: Communication and Technology
collective identity
11.3: Categories of Diversity
commitment
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
communication
10.2: An Overview of Communication
communication action
10.5: The Context of Communication
communication barriers
10.6: Barriers to Effective Communication
communication experiences
10.6: Barriers to Effective Communication
communication technology
10.4: Communication and Technology
compound interest
12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
12.6: Credit Cards and Other Debt
confronting prejudice
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
connect to your environment
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
context of communication
10.2: An Overview of Communication
contingency plan
8.5: Analytical Thinking
core curriculum
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
creating change
8.5: Analytical Thinking
creative processes
8.4: Creative Thinking
creative solutions
8.4: Creative Thinking
creativity
8.4: Creative Thinking
credit card benefits
12.6: Credit Cards and Other Debt
credit cards
12.6: Credit Cards and Other Debt
critical consumption
10.4: Communication and Technology
critical thinking
8.6: Critical Thinking
cultural competence
10.6: Barriers to Effective Communication
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
11.3: Categories of Diversity
11.6: Inclusivity and Civility- What Role Can I Play?
cultural competency in college
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
culturally responsive curriculum
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
curriculum maps
5.4: Making a Plan

D

debit cards
12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
deep breathing
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
deliberate, focused effort
1.6: College Culture and Expectations
depression
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
develop goals
12.2: Personal Financial Planning
distraction free
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
distractions
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
diversity
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
doctorate and professional degree
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path

E

earning interest
12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
Eisenhower Decision Matrix
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It

electives
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
emergency fund
12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
emotional intelligence
10.2: An Overview of Communication
10.5: The Context of Communication
equity
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
evaluating reading
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies

F

factual arguments
8.6: Critical Thinking
fear of failure
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
feel like an imposter
1.6: College Culture and Expectations
fieldwork and internships
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
financial planning process
12.2: Personal Financial Planning
Fisher v. University of Texas
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
fixed vs. growth mindset
3.8: It's All in the Mindset
flexibility
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
focus on the positive before you begin
3.5: The Motivated Learner
focus on your breath
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
food packeging
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
forget to enjoy the experience
1.6: College Culture and Expectations
fragrance
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
fruits
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health

G

gender
11.3: Categories of Diversity
general education
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
good credit score
12.6: Credit Cards and Other Debt
grains
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
gratitude
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
greater job satisfaction
1.3: Why College?
grit
3.5: The Motivated Learner
growth
3.5: The Motivated Learner

H

healthy eating
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
heavy drinking
13.8: Your Safety
heroin
13.8: Your Safety
hidden or invisible curriculum
3.10: The Hidden Curriculum
hyper organization
8.5: Analytical Thinking
hypothesis
9.8: What are Research Studies?

I

identity
10.6: Barriers to Effective Communication
identity theft
12.8: Defending against Attack- Securing Your Identity and Accounts
ignore your mental and physical health needs
1.6: College Culture and Expectations
impact of tasks
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
implement plan
12.2: Personal Financial Planning
implicit bias
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
importance of community
13.6: Maintaining Healthy Relationships
importance of tasks
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
improved health and wellness
1.3: Why College?
incivility
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
inclusion
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
inferring and implying
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
information literacy
9.2: Information Literacy
9.8: What are Research Studies?
information versus knowledge
9.8: What are Research Studies?
instinct
3.5: The Motivated Learner
interpretation
9.8: What are Research Studies?
intersectionality
11.3: Categories of Diversity
investment schemes
12.8: Defending against Attack- Securing Your Identity and Accounts

J

Jim Crow laws
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?

K

keep a gratitude and accomplishment journal
3.5: The Motivated Learner

L

lack of focus
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
lack of sleep
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
learning partnership
3.9: Applying What You Know about Learning
learning vocabulary
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
listening
10.5: The Context of Communication
literature review
9.8: What are Research Studies?
loss of goals
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
loss of time
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within

M

major courses
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
managing change
5.5: Managing Change and the Unexpected
marijuana
13.8: Your Safety
master's degrees
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
meditation
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
mental health
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
mental health stigma
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
mentors
5.5: Managing Change and the Unexpected
metacognition
8.10: Metacognition
methamphetamine (meth)
13.8: Your Safety
methodology
9.8: What are Research Studies?
microagressions
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
mindfulness
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
moderate alcohol consumption
13.8: Your Safety
money management
12.2: Personal Financial Planning
motivation
1.6: College Culture and Expectations
motivational goals
4.7: Goal Setting and Motivation

N

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
National Sexual Assault Hotline
13.8: Your Safety

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
netiquette
10.4: Communication and Technology
network awareness
10.4: Communication and Technology
nonverbal communication
10.3: Purpose of Communication

O

occupation related
3.9: Applying What You Know about Learning
online and mobile banking
12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
online civility
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
online learning
6.2: The Nature and Types of Reading
opinions
8.6: Critical Thinking
oppression
11.6: Inclusivity and Civility- What Role Can I Play?
optimal communication
10.2: An Overview of Communication
oral presentation
9.8: What are Research Studies?
organization
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within

P

participation
10.4: Communication and Technology
personal identity
11.3: Categories of Diversity
personal safety
13.8: Your Safety
plagiarism
9.8: What are Research Studies?
planning strategies
8.10: Metacognition
preconceptions
10.6: Barriers to Effective Communication
prejudging
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
prescription pain medicines
13.8: Your Safety
prioritization
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
privilege
11.6: Inclusivity and Civility- What Role Can I Play?
problem centered
3.9: Applying What You Know about Learning
problem resolution
8.6: Critical Thinking
processed foods
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
procrastination
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
progress tracking
1.6: College Culture and Expectations
purpose of communication
10.3: Purpose of Communication

R

reading food labels
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
reading speed and pacing
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
reading to comprehend familiar content
6.2: The Nature and Types of Reading
reading to introduce new content
6.2: The Nature and Types of Reading
recursive reading
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
Regents of the University of California v. Bakke
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
research question
9.8: What are Research Studies?
research study
9.8: What are Research Studies?
resilience
3.5: The Motivated Learner
revolutionary movements
8.5: Analytical Thinking
reward yourself
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
role identity
11.3: Categories of Diversity

S

safe mistakes
3.9: Applying What You Know about Learning
safety conscious
13.8: Your Safety
savings accounts
12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds
scheduling reading
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
service learning
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
setting deadlines
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
sexual health
13.6: Maintaining Healthy Relationships
sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
13.6: Maintaining Healthy Relationships
skill acquired
3.2: The Power to Learn
skimming
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
slow down
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
SMART goals
4.7: Goal Setting and Motivation
social identity
11.3: Categories of Diversity
social roles
11.3: Categories of Diversity
SQ3R Reading Strategy
6.3: Effective Reading Strategies
stereotyping
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
strength
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
stress
4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within
stress toolkit
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health
student loans
12.6: Credit Cards and Other Debt
student teaching
5.2: Planning Your Degree Path
style of talking
10.5: The Context of Communication
suicidal behavior
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
symbols of communication
10.2: An Overview of Communication

T

technological tools
5.4: Making a Plan
tenacity
3.5: The Motivated Learner
the high cost of poor time management
4.2: The Benefits of Time Management
thinking skills
8.4: Creative Thinking
time and task management
1.6: College Culture and Expectations
time management
3.9: Applying What You Know about Learning
Title IX
13.8: Your Safety
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape
tobacco
13.8: Your Safety
tracking strategies
8.10: Metacognition
Trail of Tears
11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It?
try to manage everything yourself
1.6: College Culture and Expectations

U

unconventional ideas
8.4: Creative Thinking
understanding tasks
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Healthy Plate Guidelines
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
urgency of tasks
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
USDA MyPlate
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
Uses and Gratification model
3.5: The Motivated Learner

V

validity and credibility
9.8: What are Research Studies?
vaping
13.8: Your Safety
vegetables
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health

victim of a crime
13.8: Your Safety
victim of sexual assault or rape
13.8: Your Safety
virtual community
10.4: Communication and Technology
visual presentation
9.8: What are Research Studies?
VUCA acronym
13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health

W

whole foods
13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health
work space
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
working at the right time
4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It
World Health Organization
13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health
worry about making a mistake
1.6: College Culture and Expectations

Glossary

Academic Integrity | Adhering to ethical standards in academic work, avoiding plagiarism and falsification of data.

Barriers to Communication | Factors that hinder understanding, such as language differences, cultural barriers, or misinterpretations.

Citing Sources | Properly acknowledging the work of others in research papers and assignments to avoid plagiarism.

Class Participation | Active involvement in class through discussions, questions, and responses to enhance learning and show engagement.

Clinical Judgment | The ability to make decisions based on clinical knowledge, patient data, and professional experience in nursing.

College Culture | The set of expectations, social norms, and behaviors commonly practiced in college environments.

Communicating with Instructors | Building relationships with professors and academic staff through clear, respectful communication.

Credit Cards and Debt | Understanding how credit works and managing debt responsibly, an important aspect of financial health.

Critical Thinking | The ability to analyze and evaluate information, form judgments, and make informed decisions—essential in nursing for patient care.

Cultural Competence | The ability to interact effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly essential in healthcare settings.

Degree Path | The sequence of courses and experiences leading to graduation, including prerequisite courses and elective choices.

Diversity | The range of differences among people, including race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic background, important for creating an inclusive environment.

Effective Communication | Clear, concise, and respectful exchange of information, a skill essential in both academic and healthcare settings.

Effective Reading Strategies | Techniques for engaging with academic texts, such as skimming, summarizing, and questioning.

Goal Setting | Establishing clear, measurable, and time-bound objectives to stay focused and motivated.

Healthy Relationships | Building and maintaining supportive and respectful connections with others, both academically and personally.

Inclusivity | Actively creating an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and included.

Information Literacy | The ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively, a crucial skill for research and academic success.

Job Seeking | The process of finding job opportunities, often starting with internships and volunteer work during college.

Learning Styles | The preferred way in which an individual learns (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic).

Lifelong Learning | The commitment to ongoing education and professional development throughout one's nursing career.

Mindset | The mental attitude that influences how students approach learning and challenges, particularly growth vs. fixed mindset.

Motivated Learner | A student who is driven and proactive in their education, managing their learning effectively.

Networking | Building professional relationships that can provide support, mentorship, and career opportunities in the future.

Note-Taking | Recording key concepts and information during lectures to aid understanding and retention.

Nursing Program Requirements | The specific academic and clinical requirements necessary to succeed in nursing school and become a registered nurse.

Nursing School Test Types | Understanding the different types of exams (e.g., multiple choice, clinical exams) and preparation strategies for nursing students.

Paying for College | Exploring various methods to finance education, including scholarships, loans, and work-study programs.

Personal Financial Planning | The process of managing income, expenses, and savings to ensure financial stability during college and beyond.

Problem Solving | The process of finding solutions to challenges, a key skill for both nursing practice and academic success.

Procrastination | Delaying tasks, often due to lack of motivation or anxiety, that can negatively affect academic performance.

Public Speaking | Presenting information in front of an audience, important for both classroom settings and professional nursing environments.

Safety | Ensuring personal safety, including physical health and mental well-being, in both college and nursing settings.

Self-Care | Practices that support one’s physical, emotional, and mental well-being, crucial for maintaining balance during college.

Social World of College | The networks and relationships students navigate, including friendships, study groups, and extracurricular activities.

Study Skills | Techniques for effective studying, including summarizing, reviewing, and applying concepts.

Success | Achieving goals in college, both academically and personally, through effective time management, engagement, and self-awareness.

Technology in Communication | The use of tools like email, video conferencing, and other platforms to enhance communication with peers and instructors.

Test Anxiety | Stress and nervousness experienced before and during exams, which can hinder performance if not managed.

Test Results Analysis | Reviewing performance on tests to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.

Time Management | Organizing and allocating time efficiently to balance academic, personal, and professional responsibilities.

Vocabulary Building | Expanding one’s vocabulary to improve understanding of complex concepts and improve communication.

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Hyperlinks

4

Chapter 2: Successful Time Management

- Ask UTA: https://ask.uta.edu/

Chapter 2.1: Start now

- How to Take Control of Your Free Time: https://youtu.be/n3kNlFMXslo
- One Week Time Audit Workbook: https://uta.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/90/2020/10/One_Week_Time_Audit_Sheet.xlsx

CHAPTER 2.2: PROCRASTINATION

Chapter 2.4: planning a college course load

- Course schedules: https://www.uta.edu/academics/courses-and-schedules

Chapter 2.5: Building a Semester Calendar

- Academic Calendar: http://www.uta.edu/uta/acadcal.php
- University Catalog: http://www.uta.edu/uta/acadcal.php
- Registration Timetable: http://www.uta.edu/records/calendars/registration-timetables.php
- Schedule of Classes: https://www.uta.edu/academics/courses-and-schedules
- Course Syllabus Information: https://www.uta.edu/academics/courses-and-schedules/courses
- Final Exam Schedule: http://www.uta.edu/records/calendars/final-exams.php
- Academic Advising: https://www.uta.edu/student-success/advising
- New Maverick Orientation: http://www.uta.edu/orientation/
- College of Nursing and Health Innovation Student Resources: https://www.uta.edu/conhi/students/index.php
- Applications: https://play.google.com/store/search?q=student%20planner&c=apps
- Paper planners: https://www.amazon.com/s?k=student+planner+college&ref=nb_sb_noss_1
- Software: https://www.savethestudent.org/save-money/free-software-for-students.html&uact=5
- G Suite: https://gsuite.google.com/features/
- G Suite learning center: https://gsuite.google.com/training/
- Microsoft 365 account: https://oit.uta.edu/services/office-365/

Chapter 2.6: Email Management

- Microsoft Support Page: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/manage-email-messages-by-using-rules-c24f5dea-9465-4df4-ad17-a50704d66c59#ID0EAAFAAA=Step_1
- Office of Information Technology: https://uta.service-now.com/navpage.do
- Library: http://www.libraries.uta.edu
- Found here: https://libguides.uta.edu/?b=s
- Webpage: https://www.recruiter.com/i/mastering-the-intro-email-to-a-prospective-employer/
- UTA Career Development Center: https://www.uta.edu/careers/students/index.php

Chapter 4.3: Bonus Material: Getting Ready for the NCLEX

- http://www.ncsbn.org/

Chapter 5.1: THE BASICS OF SELF CARE

- Sleep Foundation: http://www.sleepfoundation.org/
- Chapter 2: Successful Time Management: https://uta.pressbooks.pub/nursingschoolsuccess/part/2-successful-time-management/

Chapter 5.3: Self-awareness and self-compassion

- Self compassion: https://self-compassion.org/

Chapter 6.1: Information Gathering

- Chapter 6.2: https://uta.pressbooks.pub/nursingschoolsuccess/chapter/database-searching-cinahl-complete/
- Chapter 6.4: https://uta.pressbooks.pub/nursingschoolsuccess/chapter/citations-and-academic-integrity/

Chapter 6.3: Academic Integrity: Why Does It Matter So Much?

- Student Code of Conduct: http://www.uta.edu/policy/hop/
- Academic Integrity**:** http://www.uta.edu/conduct/academic-integrity
- Plagiarism Tutorial: http://library.uta.edu/plagiarism
- UTA Writing Tutorial: http://www.uta.edu/owl

Chapter 6.4: How to Cite Your Sources: Avoiding Plagiarism

- Purdue OWL: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html
- APA Style Blog: https://apastyle.apa.org/blog
- APA guide**:** https://libguides.uta.edu/apa
- APA 7th Ed. Reference Examples: https://ereserves.uta.edu/2020/spring/APAWILL100.pdf
- APA 7th Ed. Reference List: https://ereserves.uta.edu/2020/spring/APAWILL100.pdf

Chapter 7.1:

- Scholarship Fraud Prevention Act of 2000: http://www.finaid.org/scholarships/s1455.pdf
- Scholarship fraud: http://www.finaid.org/scholarships/s1455.pdf
- Scholarship Junkies: http://scholarshipjunkies.org/
- Unigo: https://www.unigo.com/scholarship
- Fastweb: http://www.fastweb.com
- Fin Aid: https://finaid.org/
- UTA CONHI scholarships: https://www.uta.edu/conhi/students/scholarships/index.php
- UTA Mav ScholarShop: https://uta.academicworks.com/
- Nurse.org: https://nurse.org/scholarships/
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing: https://www.aacnnursing.org/Students/Financial-Aid
- FAFSA application: http://www.fafsa.ed.gov
- Subsidized and Unsubsidized**:** https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/loans/subsidized-unsubsidized loan:
- Free loan calculator: http://www.finaid.org/calculators/loanpayments.phtml
- The Feds Don't Care If You Dropped Out of College. They Want Their Money: http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-08-08/the-feds-don-t-care-if-you-dropped-out-of-college-they-want-their-money-back
- FAFSA website: http://www.fafsa.ed.gov
- Johnson & Johnson's Nursing Specialties: https://nursing.jnj.com/specialty
- Occupational Outlook Handbook: https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm
- Imprint Career Planning Guides: https://www.nsna.org/career-planning-guides.html
- Professional Nursing by Beth Black: https://uta.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/openurl?institution=01UTAR_INST&rfr_id=info:sid%2Fsummon&rft_dat=ie%3D21132469740004911,language%3DEN&svc_dat=CTO&u.ignore_date_coverage=true&vid=01UTAR_INST:Services&Force_direct=false
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- Coping with Caring by Meredith Mealer: https://uta.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/openurl?institution=01UTAR_INST&rfr_id=info:sid%2Fsummon&rft_dat=ie%3D51135813750004911,language%3DEN&svc_dat=CTO&u.ignore_date_coverage=true&vid=01UTAR_INST:Services
- Imprint: Career Planning Guides by National Student Nurse Association: https://www.nsna.org/career-planning-guides.html
- Advancing Your Career by Rose Kearney Nunnery: https://uta.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/openurl?institution=01UTAR_INST&vid=01UTAR_INST:Services&%3Fctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info:ofi%2Fenc:UTF-8&rfr_id=info:sid%2Fsummon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi%2Ffmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Advancing%20Your%20Career&rft.au=Kearney%20Nunnery,%20Rose&rft.date=2019-01-01&rft.pub=F.%20A.%20Davis%20Company&rft.isbn=9780803690141&rft.externalDocID=EBC5985006&paramdict=en-US
- 2019 Texas Professional Nursing Trends: Statewide: https://uta.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/openurl?institution=01UTAR_INST&vid=01UTAR_INST:Services&%3Fctx_ver=Z39.88-2004&ctx_enc=info:ofi%2Fenc:UTF-8&rfr_id=info:sid%2Fsummon.serialssolutions.com&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi%2Ffmt:kev:mtx:book&rft.genre=book&rft.title=Advancing%20Your%20Career&rft.au=Kearney%20Nunnery,%20Rose&rft.date=2019-01-01&rft.pub=F.%20A.%20Davis%20Company&rft.isbn=9780803690141&rft.externalDocID=EBC5985006&paramdict=en-US

CHAPTER 7.2: SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- UTA Alumni Association: http://utaalumni.org/
- Sigma Theta Tau (Delta Theta Chapter): https://deltatheta.sigmanursing.org/home
- Arlington Student Nurses Association: https://mavorgs.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/ansa
- National Student Nurses Association: https://www.nsna.org/
- Texas Nurses Association: https://www.texasnurses.org/
- American Nurses Association: https://www.nursingworld.org/ana/
- Appendix: https://uta.pressbooks.pub/nursingschoolsuccess/back-matter/appendix/
- The Leadership Center at the University of Texas at Arlington: http://www.uta.edu/leadership
- VolunteerMatch.org: https://www.volunteermatch.org/
- GoAbroad.com: http://www.goabroad.com/volunteer-abroad/search/nursing/volunteer-abroad-1
- WorkingAbroad.com: http://www.workingabroad.com/database
- American Red Cross: https://www.redcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer.html
- Search tool: https://netforum.nhpco.org/eWeb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=NHPCO&WebKey=a9338cdd-546a-42f5-9061-6b91dbdb31da
- CollegeRecruiter.com: http://www.collegerecruiter.com/
- Internships.com: http://www.internships.com/
- Appendix: https://uta.pressbooks.pub/nursingschoolsuccess/back-matter/appendix/
- CareerOneStop: http://www.careeronestop.org/jobseekertools/jobSeekerChallenge.aspx?category=5&subcategory=&keyword=&searchTab=&recommanded=&recommandedCategory=&recommandedSubCategory=

CHAPTER 7.3 Job Seeking

- Reverse Chronological Résumé Examples: https://www.google.com/search?q=Reverse+Chronological+R%C3%A9sum%C3%A9+Example&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjVjZTT1MPKAhWDOyYKHU66B6gQ_AUIBygB
- Functional Résumé Examples: https://resumegenius.com/resume-formats/functional-samples-writing-guide#functional-resume-samples-by-industry
- Hybrid Résumé Examples: https://www.google.com/search?q=hybrid+R%C3%A9sum%C3%A9+Example&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiQ_7b41MPKAhWBWCYKHd7LDFkQ_AUIBygB&biw=1280&bih=565
- Video Resume Examples: https://www.google.com/search?q=video+resume&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8#q=video+resume&tbm=vid
- Infographic Résumé Examples: http://biginterview.com/blog/2013/06/infographic-resumes.html
- Website Résumé Examples: https://www.themuse.com/advice/the-35-best-personal-websites-weve-ever-seen
- Cover Letter Examples: https://www.google.com/search?q=cover+letter&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiMydqLjsTKAhWFPj4KHaueCEMQ_AUIBygB&biw=992&bih=438&dpr=1.94

- Common behavioral interview questions: https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/most-common-behavioral-interview-questions-and-answers
- STAR technique: https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/interviewing/how-to-use-the-star-interview-response-technique

cHAPTER 8: UTA RESOURCES

- CHEMISTRY CLINIC– http://www.uta.edu/chemistry
- ENGLISH WRITING CENTER AND ONLINE WRITING LAB- http://www.uta.edu/owl
- LIBRARY SERVICES: https://libraries.uta.edu/services/undergraduate
- MATH CLINIC/MATH EMPORIUM- http://www.uta.edu/math/emporium/
- SCIENCE EDUCATION AND CAREER CENTER- http://www.uta.edu/cos/SECC
- STUDENT ACCESS AND RESOURCE CENTER- https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/sarcenter
- STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES- http://www.uta.edu/sss
- UNIVERSITY TUTORIAL AND SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION- http://www.uta.edu/tutoring
- RESOURCES- http://www.uta.edu/resources
- UTA HEALTH SERVICES- http://www.uta.edu/healthservices/
- COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES- https://www.uta.edu/caps/
- RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION- http://www.uta.edu/rvsp/
- BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION TEAM- http://www.uta.edu/bit/
- CENTER FOR STUDENTS IN RECOVERY- http://www.uta.edu/csr/
- BYSTANDER INTERVENTION- http://www.uta.edu/deanofstudents/bystander/
- EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FUND- https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/about-student-affairs/giving-to-student-affairs/giving-emergency-assistance-fund
- THE MAC: MAVERICK ACTIVITIES CENTER- https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/campus-recreation/fitness-and-wellness
- STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS: MAV ORGS- https://mavorgs.campuslabs.com/engage/
- NURSING STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS: https://www.uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/conhi/academics/student-resources/student-orgs
- GET INVOLVED- https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/get-involved
- LOCKHEED MARTIN CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER- https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/careers
- Resume- https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/careers/students-alumni/get-ready-to-apply/resume
- Cover Letter- https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/careers/students-alumni/get-ready-to-apply/cover-letters
- Career Spot Drop-Ins and Appointments: https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/careers/students-alumni
- Practice Interviews- https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/careers/students-alumni/prepare-for-your-interview/practice-interviews
- Assistance Planning for Grad School- https://www.uta.edu/student-affairs/careers/students-alumni/plan-for-graduate-school
- NURSING STUDENT RESOURCES- http://www.uta.edu/conhi/students/index.php
- BSN APPLICANT CHECKLIST- https://cdn.web.uta.edu/-/media/project/website/conhi/documents/unurs/cb-bsn-ud_applicantchechecklist.ashx?revision=07c4b8fb-e6d7-4c3f-882c-e7303cff4148
- PRE-LICENSURE NURSING IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS- https://www.uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/conhi/academics/undergrad-programs/imm-prelic
- TEAS INFORMATION- https://www.uta.edu/student-success/resources/testing-services/admissions-tests/program-admissions/teas
- CONHI BSN page- https://www.uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/conhi/academics/undergrad-programs/nursing-bsn

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- What is self-compassion– https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/
- Six Reasons People Procrastinate- https://success.oregonstate.edu/sites/success.oregonstate.edu/files/LearningCorner/Tools/procrastination_-_six_reasons_-_19.pdf
- Sleep is your superpower [Video]- https://www.ted.com/talks/matt_walker_sleep_is_your_superpower?language=en#t-175716

Derivatives

- Foundations and Strategies for College Success-https://uta.pressbooks.pub/nolimits/
- Blueprint for Success in College and Career-https://press.rebus.community/blueprint2/#main
- University101: Study, Strategize and Succeed- https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/studystrategizesucceed/
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3

This open textbook is compiled from selected content mainly from two open resources: Foundations and Strategies for College Success, by the University of Texas Arlington, and Blueprint for Success in College and Career, by Dave Dillon. The chapter Escape the Procrastination Trap is adapted from University101: Study, Strategize and Succeed by the Kwantlen Polytechnic University Learning Centre team. The following index details where content from each source was used in this book. New content (as noted below) indicates major additions that were created. All 'Notes for Nursing Success' are original content. Minor revisions not noted below include editing language for clarify, length, and flow as well as corrections to hyperlinks and citations.

Chapter 1 Introduction

- Quote from Dillon (Chapter 33)

Chapter 2 Time Management

- Quote from J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

Chapter 2.1 Start Now!

- All new content.

Chapter 2.2 Procrastination

- Adapted from Kwantlen Polytechnic University Learning Centre team.

Chapter 2.3 Goal Setting

- Charts and selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 4)

Chapter 2.4 Planning a College Course Load

- All new content.

Chapter 2.5 Building a Semester Schedule

- All new content.

CHAPTER 2.6 EMAIL MANAGEMENT

- All new content.

Chapter 2.7 Putting It All Together

- All new content.

Chapter 3 Successful Study Skills

- Quote from Dillon (Chapter 20)

Chapter 3.1 Basic Study Skills

- Selected content from Dillon (Chapter 20)
- Selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 5)

Chapter 3.2 Success Before Class; Pre-reading

- Selected content from Dillon (Chapters 22, 23, and 24)
- Selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 4)

Chapter 3.3 Success During Class; Note-taking

- Selected content from Dillon (Chapters 26, 27)
- Selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 5)

Chapter 3.4 Success After Class

- Selected content from Dillon (Chapters 30, 31)
- Selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 5)

Chapter 4 Successful Test Taking Strategies

- Quote from Dillon (Chapter 31)

Chapter 4.1 Test Anxiety

- Selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 6)

Chapter 4.2 Successful Study Strategies

- Selected content from Dillon (Chapters 30, 31)
- Selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 5)

Chapter 4.3 Bonus Chapter

- Straker & Kelman, (c) 2021, Vital Skills: Study Strategies Every Nursing Student Must Know, pp. 223-241, Karista Press. Reprinted with permission.

Chapter 5 Self-Care: Strategies for Personal and Professional Success

Chapter 5.1 The Basics of Self Care

- Selected content from Dillon (Chapters 49 and 50)
- Selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 7)

Chapter 5.2 Stress Management and Your Best Self

- Selected content from Dillon (Chapter 53)
- Selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 7)

Chapter 5.3 Self Awareness and Self Compassion

- All new content.

Chapter 6 Using the Library a Key to Success

- Quote from American Libraries (2014)

Chapter 6.1 Information Gathering

- All new content.

Chapter 6.2 Keyword Searching: CINAHL Complete Database

- All new content.

Chapter 6.3 Academic Integrity: Why Does It Matter So Much?

- Selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 6)

Chapter 6.4 How to Cite Your Sources: Avoiding Plagiarism

- All new content.

Chapter 7 Planning for a Successful Career

- Quote from Dillon (Chapter 14)

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- Selected content from Dillon (Chapter 60)
- Selected content from University of Texas Arlington (Chapter 9)
- Selected content from Lamoreaux, 2016, “Beyond Tuition: Understanding College Expenses,” *A Different Road to College*, Open Oregon Educational Resources

Chapter 7.2 Exploration of the Field

- Selected content from Dillon (Chapter 34)

Chapter 7.3 Skill Development

- Selected content from Dillon (Chapters 37, 40)

Chapter 7.4 Job Seeking

- Selected content from Dillon (Chapters 42, 43)

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    - 1.7: What Is College, Really? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 1.8: Navigating the Social world of College - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 1.9: Summary- How Can This Book And This Course Help? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 2: Classroom Experiences in College - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 2.1: Prelude to Classroom Experiences in College - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 2.2: Participating in Class - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 2.3: Communicating with Instructors - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 2.4: Public Speaking and Class Presentations - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 2.5: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 3: Knowing Yourself as a Learner - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.1: Prelude to Knowing Yourself as a Learner - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.2: The Power to Learn - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.3: How You Learn - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.4: Setting Yourself Up for Success - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.5: The Motivated Learner - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.6: Are You Ready for Class? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.7: Are You Really Listening? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.8: It's All in the Mindset - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.9: Applying What You Know about Learning - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.10: The Hidden Curriculum - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 3.11: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 4: Managing Your Time and Priorities with Goal Setting - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.1: Prelude to Managing Your Time and Priorities...Start Now! - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.2: The Benefits of Time Management - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3: Time Management in College - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.4: Organizing Your Time - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.5: Procrastination- The Enemy Within - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.6: Prioritization- Self-Management of What You Do and When You Do It - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.7: Goal Setting and Motivation - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 4.8: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 5: Planning Your Academic Pathways - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.1: Prelude to Planning Your Academic Pathways - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.2: Planning Your Degree Path - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.3: Getting the Right Stuff - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.4: Making a Plan - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.5: Managing Change and the Unexpected - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.6: Exploration of the Field - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.7: Skill Development - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.8: Job Seeking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.9: The Power of Networking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 5.10: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 6: Reading and Notetaking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 6.1: Prelude to Reading and Notetaking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
    - 6.2: The Nature and Types of Reading - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

- 6.3: Effective Reading Strategies - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 6.4: Are You Ready for the Big Leagues? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 6.5: How Do You Read to Learn? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 6.6: Dealing with Special Texts - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 6.7: Building Your Vocabulary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 6.8: Success Before Class - Pre-reading - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 6.9: Success During Class- Effective Note-Taking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 6.10: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

7: Studying, Memory, and Test Taking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 7.1: Prelude to Studying, Memory, and Test Taking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 7.2: The Basics of Study Skills - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 7.3: Remembering Course Materials - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 7.4: Success After Class - Reviewing Material - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 7.5: The Honest Truth - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 7.6: Dealing with Test Anxiety- Managing Your Stress for Success - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 7.7: The Secrets of the Q and A's - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 7.8: Taking Tests, Quizzes and Nursing School Tests - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 7.9: Using Test Results - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 7.10: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

8: Thinking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.1: Prelude to Thinking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.2: Types of Thinking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.3: What Thinking Means - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.4: Creative Thinking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.5: Analytical Thinking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.6: Critical Thinking - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.7: Critical Thinking, Clinical Judgment and the Nursing Profession - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.8: Searching for "Aha" - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.9: Problem Solving and Decision Making - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.10: Metacognition - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 8.11: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

9: Using the Library - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 9.1: Prelude to Using the Library - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 9.2: Information Literacy - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 9.3: Using the Library Resources - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 9.4: Using Databases - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 9.5: Academic Integrity- Why Does It Matter So Much? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 9.6: How to Cite Your Sources- Avoiding Plagiarism - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 9.7: Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Academic Integrity - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 9.8: What are Research Studies? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 9.9: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

10: Communicating - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 10.1: Prelude to Communicating - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 10.2: An Overview of Communication - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 10.3: Purpose of Communication - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 10.4: Communication and Technology - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 10.5: The Context of Communication - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 10.6: Barriers to Effective Communication - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 10.7: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

11: Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 11.1: Prelude to Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 11.2: What Is Diversity, and Why Is Everybody Talking About It? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 11.3: Categories of Diversity - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 11.4: Living with Diversity - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 11.5: Navigating the Diversity Landscape - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 11.6: Inclusivity and Civility- What Role Can I Play? - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 11.7: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

12: Understanding Financial literacy - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.1: Prelude to Understanding Financial literacy - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.2: Personal Financial Planning - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.3: Making Money - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.4: Spending Less - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.5: Banking and Emergency Funds - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.6: Credit Cards and Other Debt - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.7: Paying for College - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.8: Defending against Attack- Securing Your Identity and Accounts - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 12.9: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

13: Engaging in a Healthy Lifestyle - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.1: Prelude to Engaging in a Healthy Lifestyle - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.2: Taking Care of Your Physical Health - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.3: The Basics of Self-Care-Sleep - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.4: Taking Care of Your Emotional Health - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.5: Taking Care of Your Mental Health - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.6: Maintaining Healthy Relationships - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

- 13.7: Self Awareness and Self Compassion - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.8: Your Safety - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 13.9: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

14: Nursing school Specific ..... most applies to other healthcare specialties too - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

- 14.1: Prelude to Nursing Program Specific Requirements - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 14.2: Extra degrees- Being a Lifelong Learner - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
- 14.3: Testing and question types - *CC BY-SA 4.0*
  - 14.4: Summary - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

15: Appendix - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

- 15.1: Chapter 15 - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

Back Matter - *CC BY-SA 4.0*

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