COLL 103: EXPLORING ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL SUCCESS



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COLL 103

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Detailed Licensing

Licensing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Unit 1 - Student Success Strategies

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1.1: Introduction

Norma Cárdenas

The stereotype of the “traditional” college student is a young white person, age 18-to-24, who lives on campus, by the majority of popular films and college brochures. This stereotype has had negative effects on historically underrepresented college students, making it less likely that they will perceive college as something that can be done. The image of community college is a setting of comedy and it is not “real” college. Community college is looked down as unsuitable for high-wage and white-collar work. Similarly, community college students are perceived as second-rate students, which influences students’ decision to attend community college. Through your enrollment, you will find that postsecondary education, community colleges specifically, creates opportunities and offers a quality education to the community.

Nontraditional college students have debunked the myth that college is only for white, young, middle-class people. For a long time, the admissions criteria at selective colleges and universities was a gatekeeping system where elite students could apply, get into, and afford those colleges. The college cheating and bribing scandal in 2019 revealed the misconceptions about wealth and merit in elite colleges and universities. The unfair system should give us pause to think about access, wealth, and success. Historically underrepresented minority students have been denied access to elite institutions of higher education, despite being worthy and capable. Less than one-half of 1 percent of children from the poorest fifth of American families attend elite colleges and universities. In contrast, enrollment at the 3,250 lowest-funded community colleges and four-year universities is 43 percent Black and Hispanic (The Washington Post: There’s a lot of talk about changing college admissions after the Varsity Blues scandal — don’t hold your breath)

As the college student profile shifts at area colleges and universities, young adults with few responsibilities other than college are becoming a shrinking demographic on many college campuses. Today’s college campuses are increasingly becoming infused with nontraditional students, those 25 and older, with responsibilities beyond the classroom walls. These are not students who transition directly from high school to postsecondary education. Many are first-generation college students whose parents did not attend college and are not providing the student with first-hand information about the inner workings of college. Besides the basic foundational information surrounding college, nontraditional college students need help understanding aspects of college systems and navigating the youth centric culture.

Nontraditional college students are more diverse with work and family obligations. Women students, students of color, student parents, working students, first-generation college students, undocumented/DACAmented students or mixed-status immigration families, queer students, students with a disability, STEM majors, returning students, veteran students, students with intersectional social identities show students do not share a universal experience. While the lived experiences and perspectives of nontraditional college students can be perceived as assets, colleges have not caught up with the changing demographics of their students.

Graduating high school seniors receive support to prepare for college admission. From visiting colleges, attending college-going workshops, test preparation, and coaching for the college application process, college choice, and transition process, these students are primed for college success. For some students, there is a gap between high school graduation requirements and college-readiness standards and career education and training. Undervalued and underserved, students do not have access to college-going guidance and resources at their high schools. For nontraditional students, the complicated language, confusing policies, maze of offices and programs, and cultural isolation make college feel like it is anything other than earned. As nontraditional college students struggle through the confusion, the college experience highlights the differences and skepticism of their place in college.

What Makes A Student Non-Traditional?

The term ‘college student’ is no longer exclusive to the traditional 18-to 24-year-old. The term ‘nontraditional’ is a misnomer since most college students diverge from the traditional path. Nontraditional college students can be broadly defined as having one or more of the following characteristics:

- is 24 years old or older;
- delayed entry to college at least one year following high school;
- has dependents (elder parents, siblings, or other members of the family);
- is a single parent;
- is employed full-time;
- is financially independent;
- is a veteran or member of the armed forces;
- is homeless or at risk of homelessness;
- is an orphan, in foster care, or a dependent or ward of the court since age 13;
- is an emancipated minor;
- is a commuter student;
- is enrolled in non-degree occupational program;
- is attending college part-time;
- has adult learning needs;
- is a GED recipient or Certificate of Completion;
- is a first-generation college student;
- is first-generation in the United States;
- is an English Language Learner; or
- is a dislocated worker

Nontraditional college students do not start at the same place. Nontraditional college students face critical issues surrounding participation in college and ultimately, college success. The critical issues are amenable to change or intervention at various stages in a student’s college life. These critical issues include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Strategies for managing competing time demands;
- Difficulty navigating confusing institutional environments;
- Understanding the culture of college;
- Transitional services for “nontraditional” students;
- Knowledgeable support systems;
- Personal barriers;
- Unpredictable constraints on their schedules;
- Employee enrolled in school priorities;

- Paying for college;
- Membership in professional organizations, practicum placements, or professional licenses; or
- Underprepared foundation skills and remedial education.

It's okay to feel ambivalent about higher education, its many requirements, and being out of place. Taking your assets and experiences and shaping them into goals and ambitions is necessary. Turning doubt and challenges into opportunities will help to demystify the norms and processes for being a "successful" college student.

Does A Non-Traditional Student Select The Same College Environment As Traditional Student?

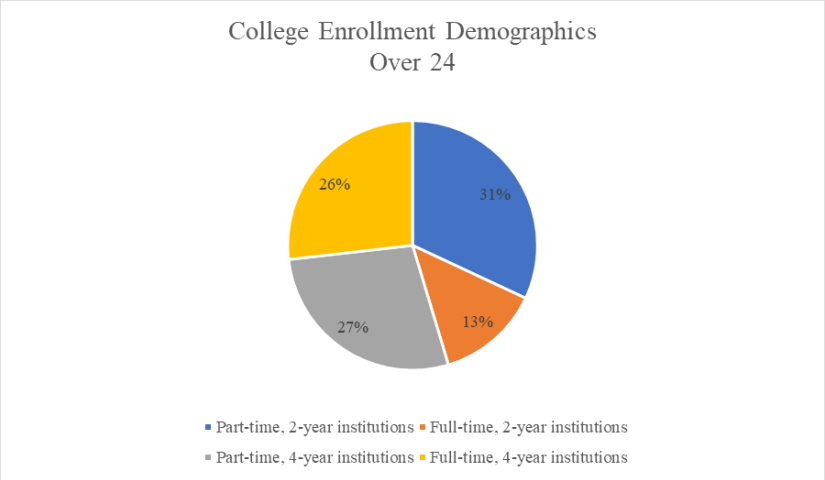


Figure 1.1: College Enrollment Demographics for Students over 24

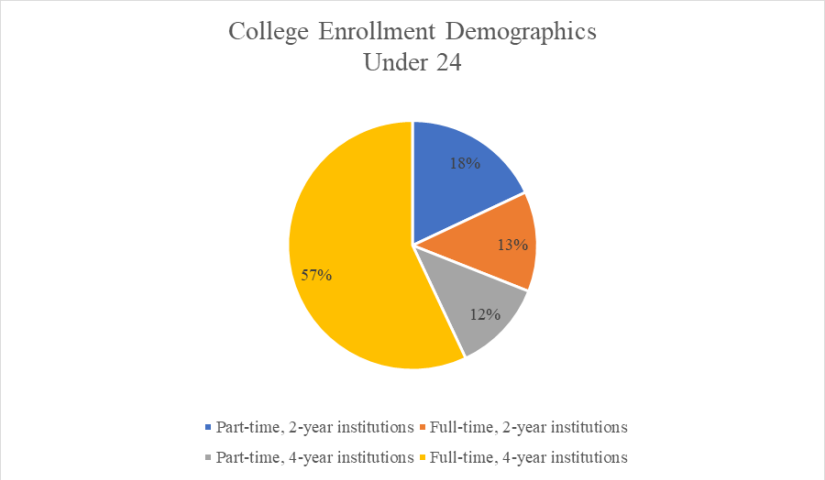


Figure 1.2: College Enrollment Demographics for Students under 24

Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education, reported that over 30% of undergraduates are nontraditional students and 58% attended college part-time during the 2019-2020 academic year. According to the Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success (CLASP), 51% of undergraduate students are classified as independent students. You can only qualify as an independent student for federal financial aid (FAFSA) if you are at least 24 years of age (fafsa.ed.gov). Financial independence combined with the growing cost of attending college are leading to a growing number of part-time students enrolled in colleges. Paying for college can be a combination of federal, state or institutional financial aid. Federal Pell Grants are available for up to six years. The GI Bill provides 36 months of education once you begin college.

A 2018 Briefing Paper titled Understanding the New College Majority, from the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), revealed that 66% of college students qualified as low income and would have to work to cover direct and indirect college expenses. The data shows that almost half of college students work 20 hours/week or more while balancing their course loads, homework, and meeting family responsibilities. A little more than half of non-traditional students are parents, 60% of single parents are women, and women of color are especially likely to be student parents. As with student mothers, student fathers also struggle with finances and child care.

Research prepared for the National Center for Education Statistics in 2018, Working Before, During, and After Beginning at a Public 2-Year Institution, showed financial independence influences attendance patterns and suggests a trend in college selection by nontraditional students. In the brief, 28% percent of the students employed while attending 2-year college thought of themselves as an "employee enrolled in school" compared with 12% of students at public 4-year institutions. A significant difference between "employee enrolled in school" and "student working to meet expenses" is how they blend work and college attendance. Not surprisingly, "employee enrolled in school" work full-time and attend college part-time; students who work attend college full-time and work part-time.

Analyzing the data from NCES on college attendance patterns in the fall of 2019, 4-year colleges, both public and private had over 85% of their full-time student enrollment composed of young adults (under the age of 25). This trend was not true for private for-profit colleges, where young adults represented about 34% of the student population. Students over 24 years old tend to select 4-year private for-profit colleges. At 2-year colleges, the same trend could be seen. Approximately 80% of students attending 2-year

public colleges and 51% of students attending 2-year private colleges were young adults and 20% were over the age of 24. Once again, private for-profit colleges were composed of more non-traditional students. Students over 24 years old made up over 50% of their student population.

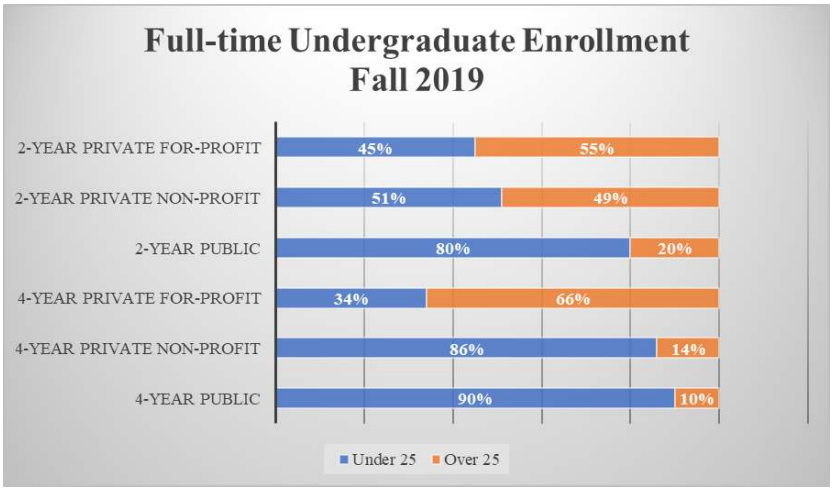


Figure 1.3: Full-time Undergraduate Enrollment Trends for Different Types of Institutions

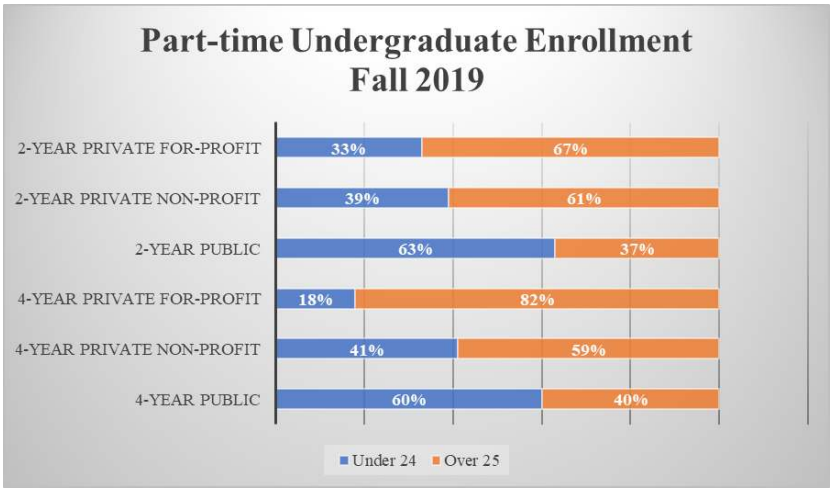


Figure 1.4: Part-time Undergraduate Enrollment Trends for Different Types of Institutions

According to NCES data, students over the age of 24 accounted for 40% of the part-time students at public 4-year institutions; nearly 60% of part-time enrollment at private non-profit institutions; and over 80% of part-time students enrolled at 4-year for profit institutions. At 2-year colleges, 37% at public colleges were over 24 years of age. At two-year private colleges, 61% were over 24 years old. At private for-profit 2-year colleges, 67% of part-time students were over the age of 24. Nontraditional college students are concentrated at 2-year public institutions.

Yesterday's nontraditional students are becoming today's students and bringing with them a different set of experiences and expectations. Employees-who-study report being interested in gaining skills to enhance their positions or improve future work opportunities as reasons for attending post-secondary education. In the Work First Study Second report, 80% of the employees who work reported enrolling in post-secondary education to gain a degree or credential.

Based on the research, nontraditional students are more likely to display the following preferences/behaviors than traditional students:

- Attend community colleges;
- Work towards an associate degree and vocational certificates;
- Major in occupational fields such as computer science, business, vocational/technical fields; and
- Take fewer courses in behavioral sciences and general education

The nontraditional student population is rapidly becoming the new majority. There is an ever-growing presence of Black and Latinx students, along with those who receive Pell grants at community colleges because of affordability and flexibility. Community colleges are access points with "student-ready" supports and services. However, nontraditional college students do not complete their degrees within six years as well as traditional students. It is highly critical that students receive support from the start of a student's enrollment in college.

Bridges Not Gates to Completing College

Analysis reveals that the majority of students do not follow the traditional path taking 2 years for an associate degree or 4 years for a bachelor's degree. Average times to degree are longer because students are starting late, enrolling part-time, changing institutions, or taking stop-outs, often in response to family and work obligations. The Signature Report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center College reports on completion rates. Nearly one in four college graduates complete at a different institution. Part-time students over the age of 24 showed a higher completion rate than did the part-time students in either of the two younger age groups.

The pathways to success are different for every person and affect the time to degree for students at two-year public and four-year public institutions. Redefining success as you navigate higher education is critical. College students attend multiple institutions. Reverse transfers, a student who starts at a 4-year institution then transfers to a two-year, have become more normal. Only one-third of independent students earn a degree or certificate within six years. Independent students are nearly 70% less likely to graduate with a degree or certificate within 6 years of enrolling in college (33 percent versus 56 percent) (IWPR, 2018). Outreach programs and support services such as the federal TRIO program increase college entrance, persistence, completion rates among low-income, first-generation, and students with disabilities. The Beginning Postsecondary Study (BPS) found 9 percent will have attained a bachelor's degree and 38 percent will have obtained some form of a degree or certificate by 6-years after first enrolling. Another 13 percent will still be enrolled, and 49 percent will not be enrolled and will not have obtained any degree or certificate.

The pathways for students who started at college and stopped out before completing a degree or certificate (Some College, No Credential, SCNC) has grown. Black, Latinx, and Native American learners were over-represented in the SCNC population. While Latinx students are more likely to be enrolled 6 years after enrollment than other groups, Latinx students' completion rate was 47% compared to 63% for white and Asian students, according to Excelencia in Education (The Condition of Latinos in Education: 2015 Factbook). This does not imply that degree attainment is the only way that students can profit from postsecondary education. Nontraditional students combined work experience and postsecondary course taking to improve their marketability in ways not yet possible for their traditional counterparts who have not begun a career.

Since the pandemic, undergraduate enrollment declined across all institution sectors and for every age group. Public two-year colleges remain the hardest hit sector. Adult students (age 24 and older) saw the sharpest relative enrollment decline this fall. White, Black, and Native American undergraduates declined more than other racial and ethnic U.S. student groups, each falling between 4.4% and 5.1%. Latinx and Asian students fell at about half those rates (-2.4% and -2.2%, respectively).

The pandemic also amplified transfer, financial, scheduling, advising, grading, and pedagogical barriers. The grief and loss of the pandemic took a mental health toll causing students to withdraw or take a mental health leave from college. A few positive outcomes of the pandemic were the increase in online classes for stopped-out students, colleges dropped or made testing optional to address systemic racism within the admission process, and spurred activism on social justice issues.

Why Do The Demographics Matter?

If you talk to people who have gone to college 10, 15, 20, or even 40 years ago, you will hear similar stories about what their college experiences were like. College systems and structural foundations have not changed much from the past. The change that is happening is in the student demographics and their needs/expectations. It is important for students to realize every college has quality programs, culturally responsive services and supports, and its own culture. Finding a comfortable match between student expectations and college expectations is essential for student success. Looking at demographics can help students think about what type of student needs would impact college selection and how that relates to their individual needs. For example, working students may need more flexible course offerings that are online or convenient class times. Students may have work experience or credit transfers to satisfy credentials and finish their degrees. For commuter students, it may be a logistical question of affordable, reliable transportation. In addition, looking at college selection demographics can help prospective students understand there are many roads to college. Employers may offer assistance for tuition, fees, and books. Ultimately, college is a dynamic equation. Recognizing expectations from the student's needs (financial, admissions, and cultural) and the college's ability to provide for those needs is a major factor in the student's college success.

A pathway to college and career success to further Latinx student success is the Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) federal designation, for colleges with a minimum of 25% Latinx student population. According to Excelencia in Education, a Latina-founded and led non-profit organization, HSIs accelerate Latinx student success by addressing students' intersectional needs, experiences, and identities. Currently in Oregon, three institutions, Portland State University, Western Oregon University. and the University of Oregon, are designated "emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution" (eHSI), where Hispanic students make up between 15 and 24 percent. Another milestone in increasing college graduation is the HB 2871, passed in 2019 by the Oregon legislature, to improve the affordability of course materials and to positively impact student success.

Barriers to College Success

Financial barriers in higher education include tuition and fees, room and board. Navigating the stereotypes, internal fear, self-doubt, and assumptions is part of surviving and a way of life. "Am I supposed to be here?" or "Am I smart enough?"

For students, it may seem like straddling two worlds and feel pressure to assimilate to the middle-class and bridge the gap between college and family. against the cultural values of humility and hard work. Feeling the pull of family responsibility and the push of your studies is difficult to balance. Family and social class plays a role in the academic areas of study the student chooses. For students working part- or full-time, course offerings and sequencing may prevent staying on track. Being overextended limits engagement in group work, co-curricular activities. and study habits. Students face racism and microaggressions and the disconnect between their cultural identities and Western higher education institutions.

With campus navigators, students can access services and talk about workforce needs and educational options. mental-health crisis on campus and the pressure from yourself, family, the cost of higher education (money), and need to finish quickly (time). Finding professors, peers, and mentors who understand and can help create a sense of community is helpful. Through personal connections and networks, knowing how to apply for testing accommodations, picking courses in which you are likely to succeed, are ways to be successful.

Textbook Outline

Our goal in this book is to provide tools and strategies to support college access and success for students. It takes an educational equity perspective and an asset-based framework. The equity framework provides for college access and inclusion and addresses the academic needs of students and the barriers they face. Colleges and universities were not designed with the changing college student population. They shape inequalities students experience. Rather than focus on the assumptions and generalizations that blame students for failing and ignore the circumstances and barriers, an asset-based approach values the strengths of students and focuses on meeting students as capable and deserving of college success and opportunity. Another perspective is a collectivist approach rather than an individualized view of perseverance. No one succeeds alone. To successfully complete college, individual determination is not enough. You will need institutional bridges such as mentors and advisors to navigate the college experience and create a sense of belonging.

The structure of the book follows a life course approach that covers matriculation to graduation: pre-enrollment, matriculation, advising, stress points (first set of finals), orientation, transition (graduation), academic support, advising, campus navigation, time management/study skills, financial aid, and career exploration. We intentionally invite students to look at their own histories, stories, own legacies, and community cultural wealth to prepare you for a college education. Tara Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model focuses on the array of assets nontraditional students possess such as aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social capital. Students bring their talents and strengths such as resilience, ambition, and a track record of beating the odds with them to their college environment and then build upon it. The goal of using inclusive language is to affirm race and ethnicity, immigration status, gender and sexual orientation, and ability. We used insights from the authors combined with scholarly sources about word choice.

We hope this blueprint for care contributes to your college success.

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1.2: Motivation, Growth Mindset, and Self-Efficacy

Amy Baldwin; Julie Hovden; Anh Nguyen; and Aivee Ortega

Questions to Consider:

- What are motivation, growth mindset, and self-efficacy and how do they affect my learning?
- What are performance goals versus learning goals?

Motivation

Every New Year, many people make resolutions—or goals—that go unsatisfied: eat healthier; pay better attention in class; lose weight. As much as we know our lives would improve if we actually achieved these goals, people quite often don't follow through. But what if that didn't have to be the case? What if every time we made a goal, we actually accomplished it? Each day, our behavior is the result of countless goals—maybe not goals in the way we think of them, like getting that beach body or being the first person to land on Mars. But even with "mundane" goals, like getting food from the grocery store, or showing up to work on time, we are often enacting the same psychological processes involved with achieving loftier dreams. To understand how we can better attain our goals, let's begin with defining what a goal is and what underlies it, psychologically.

A goal is the cognitive representation of a desired state, or, in other words, our mental idea of how we'd like things to turn out (Fishbach & Ferguson 2007; Kruglanski, 1996). This desired end state of a goal can be clearly defined (e.g., stepping on the surface of Mars), or it can be more abstract and represent a state that is never fully completed (e.g., eating healthy). Underlying all of these goals, though, is motivation, or the psychological driving force that enables action in the pursuit of that goal (Lewin, 1935). Motivation can stem from two places. First, it can come from the benefits associated with the process of pursuing a goal (intrinsic motivation). For example, you might be driven by the desire to have a fulfilling experience while working on your Mars mission. Second, motivation can also come from the benefits associated with achieving a goal (extrinsic motivation), such as the fame and fortune that come with being the first person on Mars (Deci & Ryan, 1985). One easy way to consider intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is through the eyes of a student. Does the student work hard on assignments because the act of learning is pleasing (intrinsic motivation)? Or does the student work hard to get good grades, which will help land a good job (extrinsic motivation)?



Figure 2.1: Goals are fundamental guides for human behavior. Some are biological in origin, some are cultural in nature and some are unique to the individual.

Social psychologists recognize that goal pursuit and the motivations that underlie it do not depend solely on an individual's personality. Rather, they are products of personal characteristics and situational factors. Indeed, cues in a person's immediate environment (including images, words, sounds, and the presence of other people) can activate, or prime, a goal. This activation can be conscious, such that the person is aware of the environmental cues influencing his/her pursuit of a goal. However, this activation can also occur outside a person's awareness, and lead to nonconscious goal pursuit. In this case, the person is unaware of why s/he is pursuing a goal and may not even realize that s/he is pursuing it.

Common sense suggests that human motivations originate from some sort of inner need. We all think of ourselves as having various needs that influence our choices and activities. For example, we have a need for food or a need for companionship. This same idea also forms part of some theoretical accounts of motivation, though the theories differ in the needs that they emphasize or recognize.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

One such theory on motivation is that of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. According to Abraham Maslow and his hierarchy of needs, individuals must satisfy physical survival needs before they seek to satisfy needs of belonging, they satisfy belonging needs before esteem needs, and so on. People have both deficit needs and growth needs, and the deficit needs must be satisfied before growth needs can influence behavior (Maslow, 1970). In Maslow's theory, as in others that use the concept, a need is a relatively lasting condition or feeling that requires relief or satisfaction and that tends to influence action over the long term. Some needs may decrease when satisfied (like hunger), but others may not (like curiosity). Either way, needs differ from the self-efficacy beliefs discussed earlier, which are relatively specific and cognitive, and affect particular tasks and behaviors fairly directly.

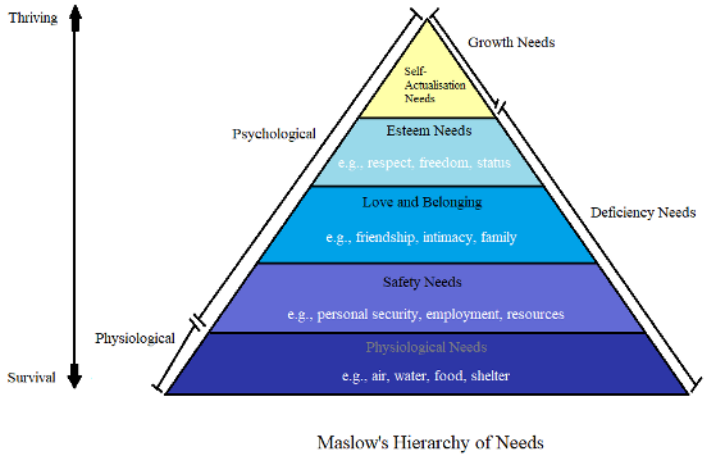


Figure 2.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs with examples.

Another theory of motivation based on the idea of needs is self-determination theory, proposed by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (2000). The theory proposes that understanding motivation requires taking into account three basic human needs:

- autonomy—the need to feel free of external constraints on behavior
- competence—the need to feel capable or skilled
- relatedness—the need to feel connected or involved with others

Note that these needs are all psychological, not physical; hunger and sex, for example, are not on the list. They are also about personal growth or development, not about deficits that a person tries to reduce or eliminate. Unlike food (in behaviorism) or safety (in Maslow's hierarchy), you can never get enough of autonomy, competence, or relatedness. You will seek to enhance these continually throughout life.

The key idea of self-determination theory is that when people feel that these basic needs are reasonably well met, they tend to perceive their actions and choices to be intrinsically motivated or "self-determined". In that case, they can turn their attention to a variety of activities that they find attractive or important, but that do not relate directly to their basic needs. If one or more basic needs are not met well, however, people will tend to feel coerced by outside pressures or external incentives. They may become preoccupied, in fact, with satisfying whatever need has not been met and thus exclude or avoid activities that might otherwise be interesting, educational, or important. If the people are students, their learning will suffer.

Self-Determination Theory and Intrinsic Motivation

In proposing the importance of needs, then, self-determination theory is asserting the importance of intrinsic motivation. The self-determination version of intrinsic motivation emphasizes a person's perception of freedom, rather than the presence or absence of "real" constraints on action. Self-determination means a person feels free, even if the person is also operating within certain external constraints. In principle, a student can experience self-determination even if the student must, for example, live within externally imposed rules of appropriate classroom behavior. To achieve a feeling of self-determination, however, the student's basic needs must be met—needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. To develop intrinsic motivation, students need to find ways to meet these basic needs.

There is an element of the college experience that will improve your ability to meet the expectations and new challenges: Your belief in your abilities to learn, grow, and change. No doubt that you have enrolled in college because you want to do those very things, but it is easy to get discouraged and revert to old ways of thinking about your abilities if you are not mindful of what kinds of thoughts you have about yourself. This section covers the concept of a fixed mindset, or the belief that you are born with certain unchangeable talents, and growth mindset, or the belief that with effort you can improve in any area. Understanding the role that your beliefs play in the eventual outcomes of your learning can help you get through those challenges that you may encounter.



Figure 2.3 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, such as working with new classmates on projects in your chosen field.

Performance vs. Learning Goals

Much of our ability to learn is governed by our motivations and goals. 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 say things in a classroom discussion when they think it will make them look knowledgeable to the instructor or their classmates. Likewise, a performance-oriented student might ask a question that they know 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.

Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

The research-based model of these two mindsets and their influence on learning was presented in 1988 by Carol Dweck. In 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.

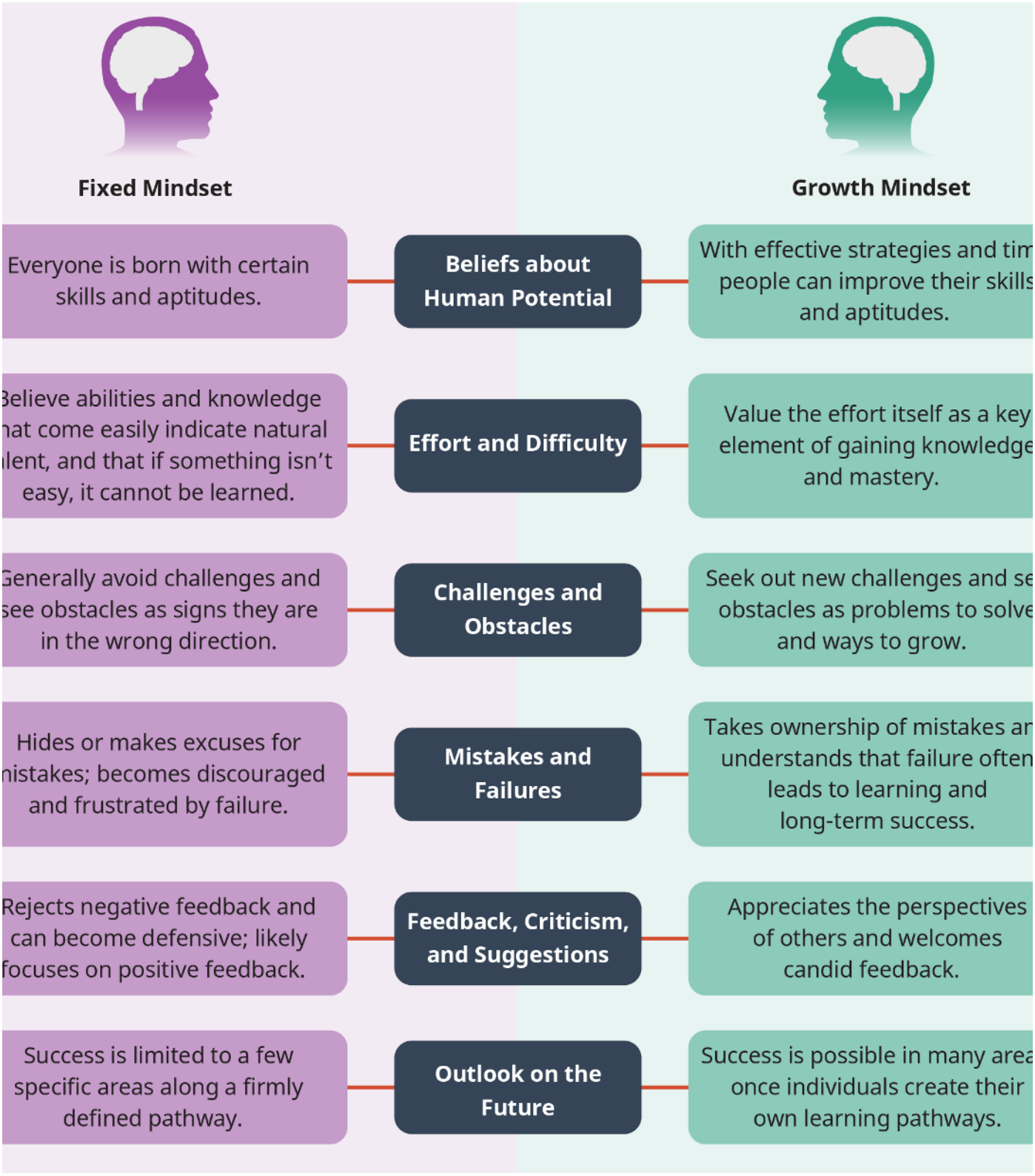


Figure 2.4 The differences between fixed and growth mindset are clear when aligned to key elements of learning and personality.

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 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 mindset 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 can increase your probability of success when it comes to learning.

ACTIVITY 2.1

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 2.1

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	

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the belief that you are capable of carrying out a specific task or of reaching a specific goal. Note that the belief and the action or goal are specific. In addition to being influenced by their goals, interests, and attributions, students' motives are affected by specific beliefs about the student's personal capacities. In self-efficacy theory, the beliefs become a primary, explicit explanation for motivation (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). For example, self-efficacy is a belief that you can write an acceptable term paper or repair an automobile, or make friends with the new student in class. These are relatively specific beliefs and tasks. Self-efficacy is not about whether you believe that you are intelligent in general, whether you always like working with mechanical things, or think that you are generally a likeable person. These more general judgments are better regarded as various mixtures of self-concepts (beliefs about general personal identity) or of self-esteem (evaluations of identity). They are important in their own right, and sometimes influence motivation, but only indirectly (Bong & Skaalvik, 2004).

Self-efficacy beliefs, furthermore, are not the same as "true" or documented skill or ability. They are self-constructed, meaning that they are personally developed perceptions. As with confidence, it is possible to have either too much or too little self-efficacy. The optimum level seems to be either at or slightly above true capacity (Bandura, 1997). As we indicate below, large discrepancies between self-efficacy and ability can create motivational problems for the individual.

Sources of Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Psychologists who study self-efficacy have identified four major sources of self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares & Schunk, 2001, 2002). In order of importance they are (1) prior experiences of mastering tasks, (2) watching others' mastering tasks, (3) messages or "persuasion" from others, and (4) emotions related to stress and discomfort.

Effects of Self-Efficacy on Students' Behavior

Self-efficacy may sound like a uniformly desirable quality, but research suggests that its effects are a bit more complicated than they first appear. Self-efficacy has three main effects, each of which has both a "dark" or undesirable side and a positive or desirable side.

The first effect is that self-efficacy makes students more willing to choose tasks where they already feel confident of succeeding. Since self-efficacy is self-constructed, furthermore, it is also possible for students to miscalculate or misperceive their true skill, and the misperceptions themselves can have complex effects on students' motivations.

A second effect of high self-efficacy is to increase a persistence at relevant tasks. If you believe that you can solve crossword puzzles, but encounter one that takes longer than usual, then you are more likely to work longer at the puzzle until you (hopefully) really do solve it. This is probably a desirable behavior in many situations, unless the persistence happens to interfere with other, more important tasks. What if you should be doing homework instead of working on crossword puzzles?

Third, high self-efficacy for a task not only increases a person's persistence at the task, but also improves their ability to cope with stressful conditions and to recover their motivation following outright failures. Suppose that you have two assignments—an essay and a science lab report—due on the same day, and this circumstance promises to make your life hectic as you approach the deadline. You will cope better with the stress of multiple assignments if you already believe yourself capable of doing both of the tasks, than if you believe yourself capable of doing just one of them or (especially) of doing neither.

Self-Efficacy and Learned Helplessness

If a person's sense of self-efficacy is very low, he or she can develop learned helplessness, a perception of complete lack of control in mastering a task. The attitude is similar to depression, a pervasive feeling of apathy and a belief that effort makes no difference and does not lead to success. Learned helplessness was originally studied from the behaviorist perspective of classical and operant conditioning by the psychologist Martin Seligman (1995). The studies used a somewhat "gloomy" experimental procedure in which an animal, such as a rat or a dog, was repeatedly shocked in a cage in a way that prevented the animal from escaping the shocks. In a later phase of the procedure, conditions were changed so that the animal could avoid the shocks by merely moving from one side of the cage to the other. Yet frequently, they did not bother to do so! Seligman called this behavior learned helplessness. In people, learned helplessness leads to characteristic ways of dealing with problems. They tend to attribute the source of a problem to themselves, to generalize the problem to many aspects of life, and to see the problem as lasting or permanent. In other words, they display a fixed mindset. More optimistic individuals, in contrast, are more likely to attribute a problem to outside sources, to see it as specific to a particular situation or activity, and to see it as temporary or time-limited.

Growth mindset and self-efficacy are **closely related but slightly different**. For optimal success, students need both self-efficacy (belief in their ability to accomplish a task) coupled with a growth mindset (belief that with effort, their ability to accomplish that task will improve).

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OpenStax College Success Concise Chapter 1.4. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/1-4-its-all-in-the-mindset

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Modifications: Figures and tables renumbered.

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1.3: College Culture and Expectations

Amy Baldwin

The Importance of the Syllabus

This video curated by Dr. Benny Ng outlines the importance of the Syllabus.

Video: Chem 160 Welcome Video Featuring a Special Guest, Benny Ng, 2021.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=193#oembed-1

Questions to Consider:

- What language and customs do you need to know to succeed in college?
- What is the hidden curriculum?
- What is your responsibility for learning in college?
- What resources will you use to meet these expectations?
- What are the common challenges in the first year?

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, below, has a brief list of other words that you will want to know when you hear them on campus (see Table 1.2).

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

Table 3.1

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 the 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.
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 high school teacher does, 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 below for just a few differences between high school teachers and college professors.

Table 3.2

Differences Between High School and College Faculty	
High School Faculty	College Faculty

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
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 1.4 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."***

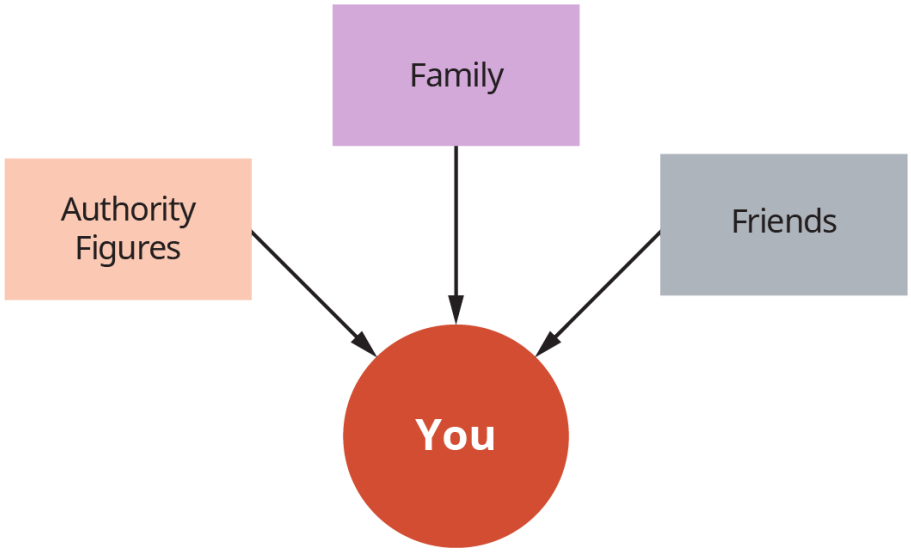


Figure 3.1 You and Your Relationships Before College

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 Figure 3.2, You and Your Relationships During College, and think about how you will go about expanding your network while you are completing your degree.

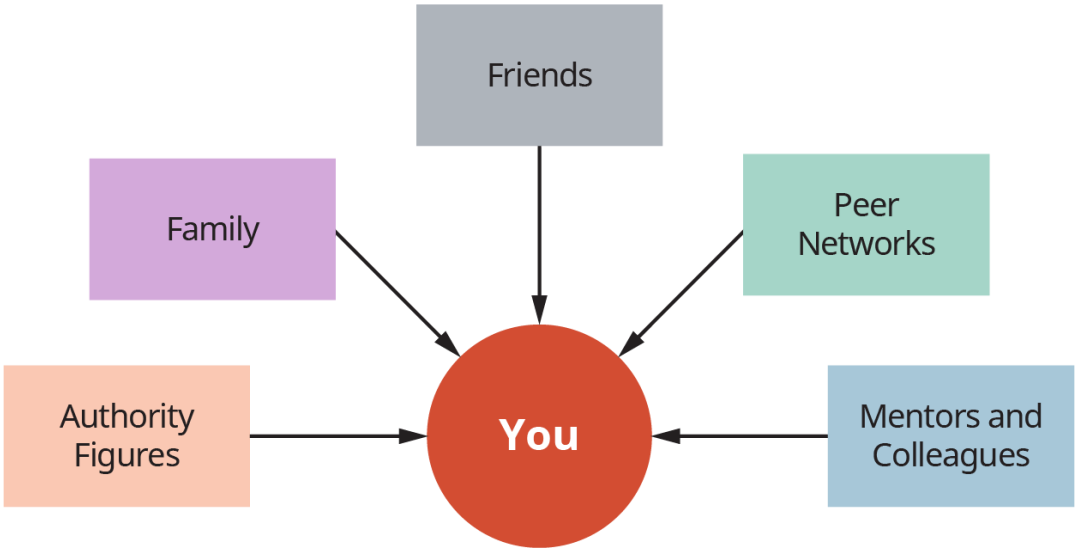


Figure 3.2 You and Your Relationships During College

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 Table 3.3, 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.

Differences Between High School and College

Table 3.3

	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 pay 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, take good notes in class, and spend 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 *hidden curriculum*, which was coined by sociologists, describes unspoken, unwritten, or unacknowledged (hence, *hidden*) rules that students are expected to follow that can affect their learning.

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. 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 3.4

Before class:	Review your course syllabus or planner to determine what is being covered, read the assigned chapter, take notes, record any questions you have about the reading
During class:	Focus your attention on the lecture, discussion, or activity and put away any distractions, take detailed notes, ask critical thinking or clarifying questions, avoid distractions, bring your book and your reading notes
After class:	Review what you learned in that class and connect it to other class lectures or discussions, organize 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:	Avoid asking your professor "Did I miss anything important?", 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.

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. Let's review some other ways that you may encounter the hidden curriculum.

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 the right 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 a 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 Zoom 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.

Learning Is Your Responsibility

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

ACTIVITY 3.1

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 3.5

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
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.

First-Year College Student Milestones for the First Semester

Table 3.6 While each student's first semester will differ, you will likely experience some of the following typical college milestones.

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
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

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 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.

Issues, Campus Resources, and Potential Outcomes

Table 3.7

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.
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.

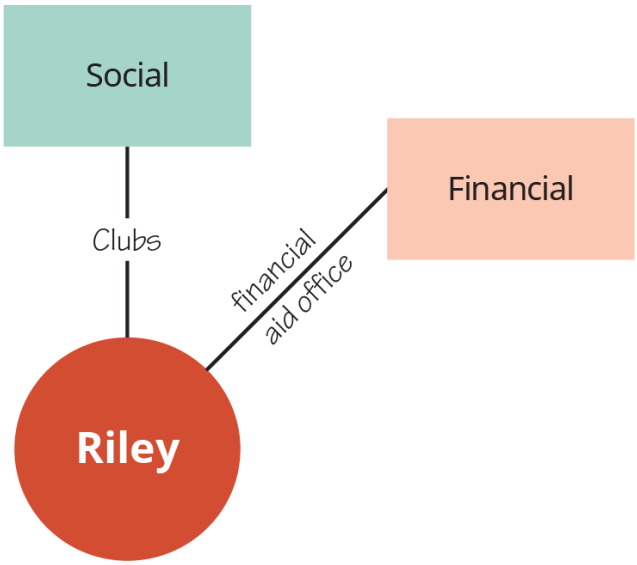


Figure 3.3 For each of the six adjustment areas mentioned above—Academic, Cultural, Emotional, Financial, Intellectual, and Social—identify a campus resource or strategy that will aid you in making a smooth adjustment.

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 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 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 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 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.

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Baldwin, A. (2023). College Culture and Expectations. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

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Footnotes:

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

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1.4: Creating Your Study Environment

Linnea Spitzer

Of course, learning is strengthened and solidified when it occurs in a safe, secure and normal environment.
– Jean-Bertrand Aristide

Having a safe, supportive environment where you can learn is just as important as the learning itself. It is important to remember that your study environment does not consist of just one thing. Look around you and think about the friends, family members, coworkers, and/or community that have helped you in different times of your life. It is the same with your educational journey. It's important to develop a network of people around you that you can use as academic, emotional, and social support as you continue down this path.

Some support that you can find is formal, which means that it comes from a program or an office on campus. Other support is informal, and can come from classmates, your professors, or other connections that you establish.

Exercise 4.1: Assessing your support network.

Where do you draw support from? Read through this list and assess your support network. Where is your network strong? Where do you have gaps?

Academic support: Where do you go if you need help with…

- editing a writing project or presentation?
- finding sources or information for a project?
- Understanding difficult assignments or readings?
- studying for a test or high-stakes exams?
- focusing on your academic work?

Career planning and support: Where do you go if you need help with…

- Planning your academic schedule?
- Deciding on a major?
- Finding a job that's within your professional interests?
- Practicing interviewing or getting your resume polished?
- Finding internships?

Emotional support: Where do you go if you feel…

- lonely?
- stressed?
- like everyone else knows what's going on except for you?

Who can you add to your network? How do you find them?

Institutional Resources for Support

There are many resources that students can tap into for support. These resources are common at most colleges and universities, and they are always free for students. Look at the list below. Does your college or university have something similar?

- **Disability Resource Center (DRC):** DRCs work to make college accessible for students with disabilities. They can work with professors to ensure that students have the necessary accommodations so their learning can be supported. If you are unsure about whether you have a disability, DRCs can provide testing for Attention-Deficit Disorder, learning disabilities, mental health diagnoses, or chronic medical conditions.
- **Learning Centers:** Learning Centers often offer tutoring and study support for students. They can help with specific classes, as well as things like creating a study schedule, studying for exams, and reading effectively. Learning Centers sometimes hire peer tutors, so if you are strong in some subjects, you may want to consider working in a Learning Center to help other students as well!

- **Writing Centers:** Writing Centers support student writing. They can help with any stage of writing, from understanding an assignment to brainstorming for a paper to polishing a final draft. Remember that writing is not just "essays." You can also get writing help with lab reports, business memos, cover letters, or CVs. Writing Center tutors are also often peer tutors, so you may work with people who have experience with the same kinds of writing assignments that you are working on!
- **Reference Librarians:** Reference librarians or Subject librarians are librarians who specialize in a particular discipline or field of study. They can be a great help in finding sources for a research paper or understanding the citation conventions of your field.
- **Advisors:** There are so many kinds of advisors. You can connect with academic advisors, financial advisors, or departmental advisors, just to name a few. The main job of an advisor is, well, to advise you! It's a good idea to visit with an advisor at least once per term, even if you do not have a problem. Financial advisors can help you stay on top of your finances and may be able to advise you in how to pay for your studies more effectively.
- **Special programs for migrant, low-income, or first generation students:** These programs are generally federally run, but they have branches at many campuses. Check with your college or university to see if these programs are available. They can offer financial help, mentoring, tutoring, and many other kinds of support:
    - **TRIO Program:** The TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) Program "provides services to low-income students, first generation college students, and disabled students enrolled in post-secondary education programs. Eligible students may receive (among other services) personal and academic career counseling, career guidance, instruction, mentoring, and tutoring. The goal of SSS program is to increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants and help students make the transition from one level of higher education to the next" (from https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/411). Here is an example of the TRIO program at Portland State University: https://www.pdx.edu/trio-student-support-services/
    - **College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP):** The CAMP program "is a federally-funded program designed to support students from migrant and seasonal farm worker backgrounds during their first year in college. The program provides students with both financial assistance and support services, with the goal of preparing them to continue their education at a four-year college or university" (from https://www.pcc.edu/camp/). Here is the federal website: https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-migrant-education/college-assistance-migrant-program
    - **Educational Opportunities Program (EOP):** The EOP program "supports the academic, personal, and professional development of students who have traditionally been denied equal access to higher education" (from https://eop.oregonstate.edu/)

Informal Support Opportunities

- **Research Opportunities:** Are you interested in research? Do you really like a particular subject and want to go deeper into it? Very often college campuses will have student research groups that are open to undergraduates and graduates. You should start by looking on your departmental or college website for student groups associated with your discipline. Find out how you can join and start attending meetings! You could also check in with the professor of a class you like. Let them know that you are interested in research and would be open to opportunities if they come up.
- **Study Groups:** Having a study group can be a real life saver! Start by connecting to people in your classes. Talk to the people you are sitting next to. If there are people you feel comfortable with, suggest meeting before class to go over the homework or the readings. Study groups can also meet online, via Zoom. It can also be useful to just have a group chat set up with other people in your major. Some departments have Slack Channels, Facebook groups, or other ways to connect. It's a good idea to join these groups, even if you are not a regular participant.

Creating a Supportive Study Environment

All of the suggestions above can help create an environment that will support you in your learning. The last thing to consider is *where* you study! For some students, home is busy and distracting–it can sometimes be difficult to focus, even if it's the place you feel most comfortable.

If this is the case for you, find a place on campus or close to campus where you can go. If you get in the habit of going there to study, you'll begin to associate this place with learning, and it will become an even more supportive environment for you. Here are a few recommendations for places:

- **Library:** Libraries are often seen as places where you have to be quiet and where you can't eat or drink. This is changing on college campuses. While there are still many libraries that have quiet floors and strict eating/drinking policies, there are also now often study floors where students can chat, work together, and sit in comfortable locations. Libraries also often have study rooms that you can book for some privacy with yourself and your books or with your study group.

- **Student centers:** If the library doesn't work for you, try a student center! There is often a building that is for students to hang out. These buildings will also often host a cafeteria and meeting rooms. Multicultural centers can also be fruitful places to study, especially for students who want to connect with others from their same culture. If you are studying at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), multicultural centers can be a welcome break from White American culture.
- **Favorite cafes or parks:** Some students feel too intimidated or tired to study at school when they are done with their classes. For these students, a nearby cafe or park can be a neutral place away from the pressures of school and home life.

As you build your supportive study environment, always think about what *you* need and what will work for your specific situation. Make sure you are getting the support that you need and that is available to you, and identify a place where you can go to work that will nurture you in your studies.

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Modifications: Exercise renumbered.

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1.5: Learning Theory

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- What are the steps to learning something new?
- How is the brain affected by learning?
- What kinds of learning are expected in college?

Have you ever thought about how we learn something new? Think back on a skill you have learned. Did you start with an interest in the topic or skill? Then, did you start practicing the skill or deepening your understanding of the topic? Perhaps you received feedback using the skill or sharing your knowledge and then you worked on refining that skill or understanding. If you participated in that process, then you did what Rita Smilkstein (2011) calls "The Natural Learning Process." We're born to learn: Using the brain's natural learning process to create today's curriculum. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Here are the steps that she says we go through any time we learn:

(1) motivation;

(2) beginning practice;

(3) advanced practice to build a foundation upon which control, creativity, and critical and abstract thinking can be applied;

(4) skillfulness;

(5) refinement; and

(6) mastery.

Another way to look at learning is through the biological lens. When we go through the learning process outlined above, our brains actually change. This is called *neuroplasticity*, or the brain's ability to form or reorganize neural pathways in reaction to the learning process. This means that when you learn something new, and especially if you practice it and fail at getting it right the first time, your brain is changing. When you get better at a skill such as throwing a curve ball or learning how to solve for X, your brain is actually reorganizing itself so that you can perform those tasks more quickly.

So what does this have to do with reading and note-taking? Your learning process has to begin somewhere before you can claim mastery of a concept. Too many students try to move quickly through reading or take only partial notes because they think that just by scanning a text or listening to a lecture and jotting down a few key ideas, they have adequately learned something. True, your brain is changing during those initial processes, but it will take much more practice (also known as studying) to help you recall that information at a later date. Moreover, your goal in college classes is not just to remember the information for a test, but it is to build on that foundational knowledge to learn different levels of thinking, which we will talk about in the next section.

Bloom's Taxonomy

One aspect of learning in college is that different professors and different courses expect different types of learning from you. Figuring out how you need to learn the material and how you will be tested on it is part of learning the (sometimes) hidden curriculum.

If you want some insight into the types of learning you will do in college, you will want to get to know the work of Dr. Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist best known for his classification of different levels of learning, and the concept called Bloom's Taxonomy. All our children learning. See Figure 5.1 for a list of the levels as well as verbs that demonstrate what you would do at each level. The bottom two levels, Remember and Understand, are called "lower levels" of Bloom's because they often take less effort than the others, and they are seen as foundational to the learning process.

The remaining levels are considered "higher levels" of Bloom's because they often require you not only understand the information, but also do something with it: apply it to a new situation, analyze its components, evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, or create something new from your knowledge. Not all of your learning in college and the workplace will be at the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, but as you gain more knowledge and develop more sophisticated academic and workplace skills, you will move beyond merely remembering information.

Let's break down the different levels so you have a better understanding of them. The first and lowest level is "Remember." At this level, you are attempting to recall information, such as definitions of terms or steps in a process. You don't have to really understand (that will come next) the concepts at this level. For example, you may be able to memorize the steps of the Krebs Cycle by naming them in order, but that doesn't mean you truly understand the processes involved and the effects of each step.

The second level is "Understand." This is the stage in which you can explain or describe a concept in your own words. Usually, if you have restated a term, concept, or process in your own words, you have a basic understanding of it. Again, these are lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and are the fundamental first steps if you want to move higher up on the taxonomy. The next level is "Apply," which indicates that you know the concept well enough to use it in a new context. Math classes often ask you to remember and understand the steps of a formula and the reason you would use it, but then ask that you use that formula in a new problem.

The levels in which you "Analyze" and "Evaluate" require that you be able to examine the concepts in depth and be able to, for example, compare and contrast a concept with another concept (Analyze) or choose the best concept among others (Evaluate). The final level is "Create," which, according to Bloom, is the pinnacle of learning: If you can create (or recreate) something new based on what you have learned, you have demonstrated understanding of a concept, idea, or skill.

We will revisit Bloom's Taxonomy in the chapter on studying, but it is worth introducing in relation to reading and note-taking because students who read texts and take notes on their readings or the professor's lectures are often capturing information to remember it later. This is a good first step to the learning process, but as you will see later, that is not the only or final step to learning.

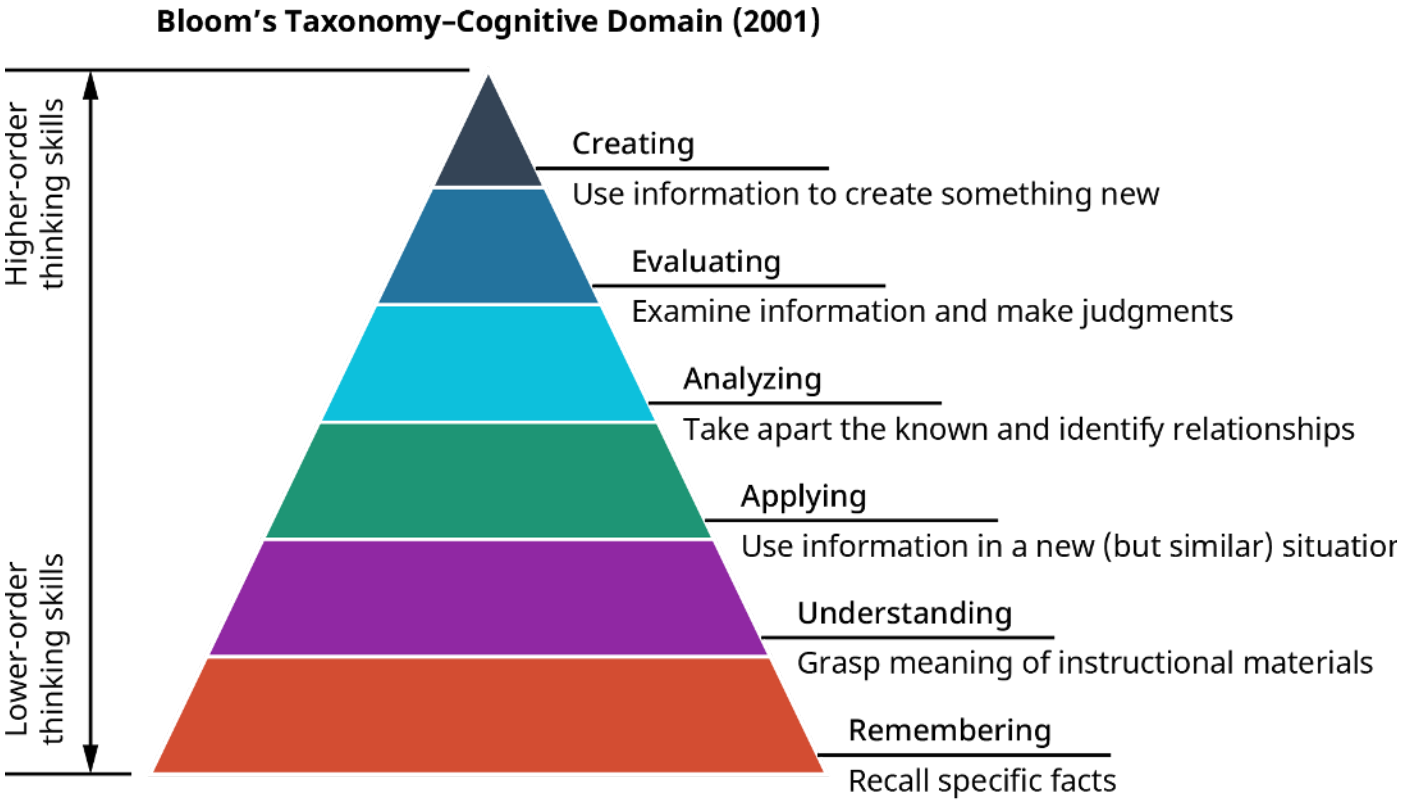


Figure 5.1 Bloom's Taxonomy provides both instructors and students with a method to classify learning objectives and skills into different levels of complexity.

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Smilkstein, R. (2011). We're born to learn: Using the brain's natural learning process to create today's curriculum. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

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1.6: Reading Techniques

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- What methods can you incorporate into your routine to allow adequate time for reading?
- What are the benefits and approaches to active and critical reading?
- Do your courses or major have specific reading requirements?

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 6.1 If you plan to make time for reading while you commute, remember that unexpected events like delays and cancellations could impact your concentration. (Credit: The LEAF Project / Flickr, Public Domain (CC-0))

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 up to date 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

Table 6.1

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

In the table above, you can see three students with different reading speeds. 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. The table below shows the differences in time needed between reading quickly without taking notes and reading actively.

Example Active Reading Times

Table 6.2

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, but rereading with the intention of improving comprehension and taking notes.

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.

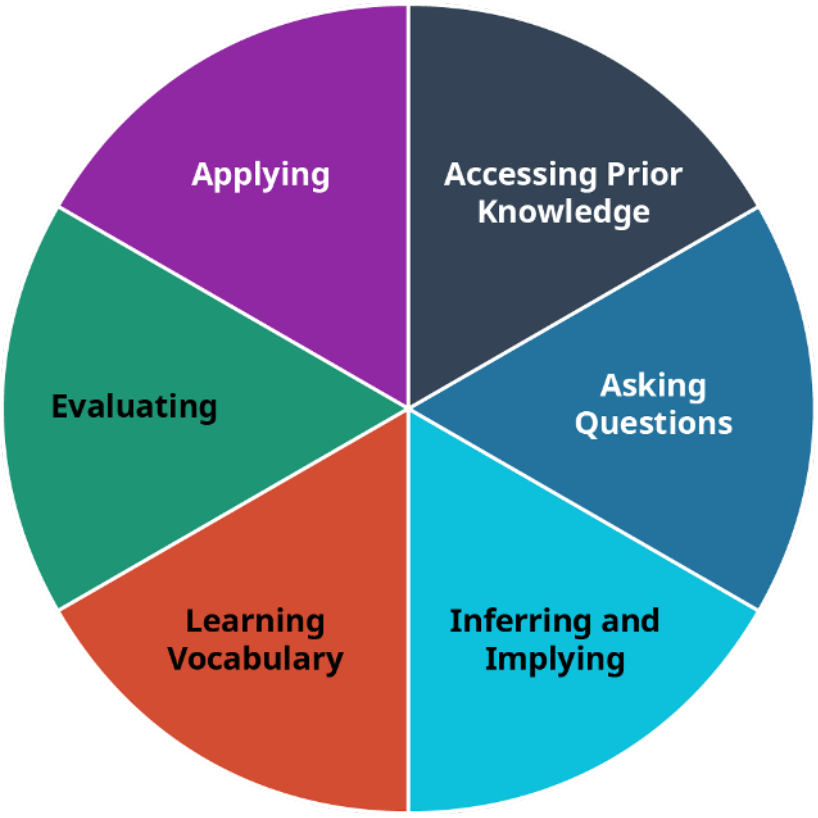


Figure 6.2 The six elements of recursive reading should be considered as a circular, not linear, process.

Accessing Prior Knowledge

When you read, you naturally think of anything else you may know about the topic, but when you read deliberately and actively, you make yourself more aware of accessing this prior knowledge. Have you ever watched a documentary about this topic? Did you study some aspect of it in another class? Do you have a hobby that is somehow connected to this material? All of this thinking will help you make sense of what you are reading.

APPLICATION

Imagine that you were given a chapter to read in your American history class about the Gettysburg Address, now write down what you already know about this historic document. How might thinking through this prior knowledge help you better understand the text?

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 note-taking, 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 texts that do 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 intend 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.

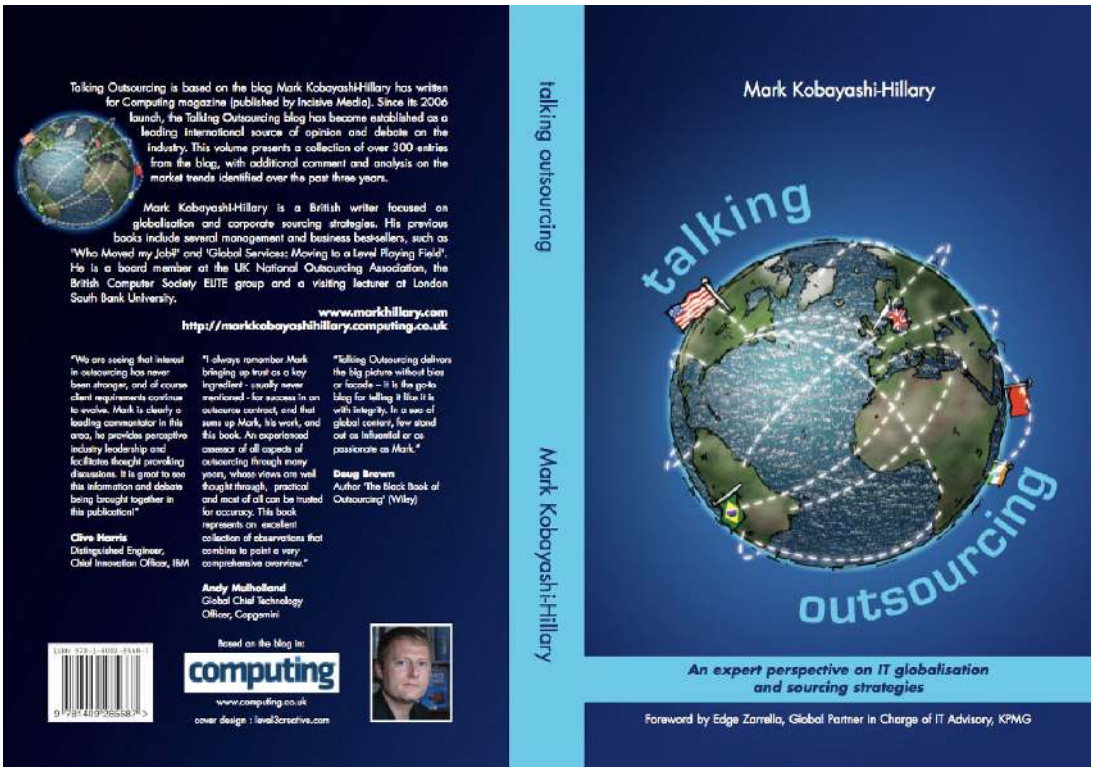
Likewise, secondary sources are inevitably another person's perspective on the primary source, so a reader of secondary sources must also be aware of potential biases or preferences the secondary source writer inserts in the writing that may persuade an incautious reader to interpret the primary source 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.

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.



ng 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 Gene

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

Consider this scenario: 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 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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1.7: Listening and Note Taking

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- How can you prepare to take notes to maximize the effectiveness of the experience?
- What are some specific strategies you can employ for better note-taking?
- Why is annotating your notes after the note-taking session a critical step to follow?

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 note-taking and reading are two compatible skill sets. Taking notes also helps you stay focused on the question at hand. Taking notes during presentations or class lectures may allow you to 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.



Figure 7.1 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. (Credit: Betsy Weber / Flickr Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

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 note-taking 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.

Note-taking 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 note-taking is almost as important as the actual taking of notes, and what you do after your note-taking 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 note-taking 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?

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 note-taking 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 note-taking 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 note-taking 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 note-taking have pros and cons.

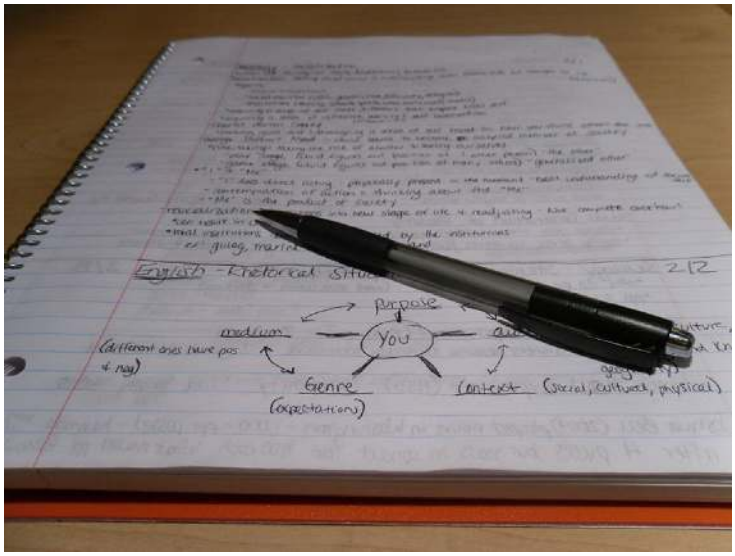


Figure 7.2 The best notes are the ones you take in an organized manner. Frequent review and further annotation are important to build a deep and useful understanding of the material. (Credit: English106 / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Managing Note-Taking Systems

Whichever of the many note-taking 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 note-taking 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 note-taking 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 note-taking 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.

GET CONNECTED

Staying organized is a challenge when you are juggling multiple assigned readings and lecture notes, but keeping track of what you have read and heard in lecture improves your ability to study the material and retain it. These resources can provide you with opportunities to sharpen your reading and note-taking game.

Evernote provides students with the opportunity to keep track of tasks and assignment due dates. Users can also connect to Google Calendar, share notes with others, and annotate documents. The app allows for you to access your notes on multiple devices.

The Learning Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill provides background information on an array of studying and learning techniques, beyond those listed above. For any that appeal to you or seem to apply to your fields of study, consult other material specifically focused on them.

Note-Taking 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 note-taking 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 note-taking session.

Cornell Method

One of the most recognizable note-taking 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.

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	Class/Period:
	Date:

ntial Question:

stions:	Notes:

mary:

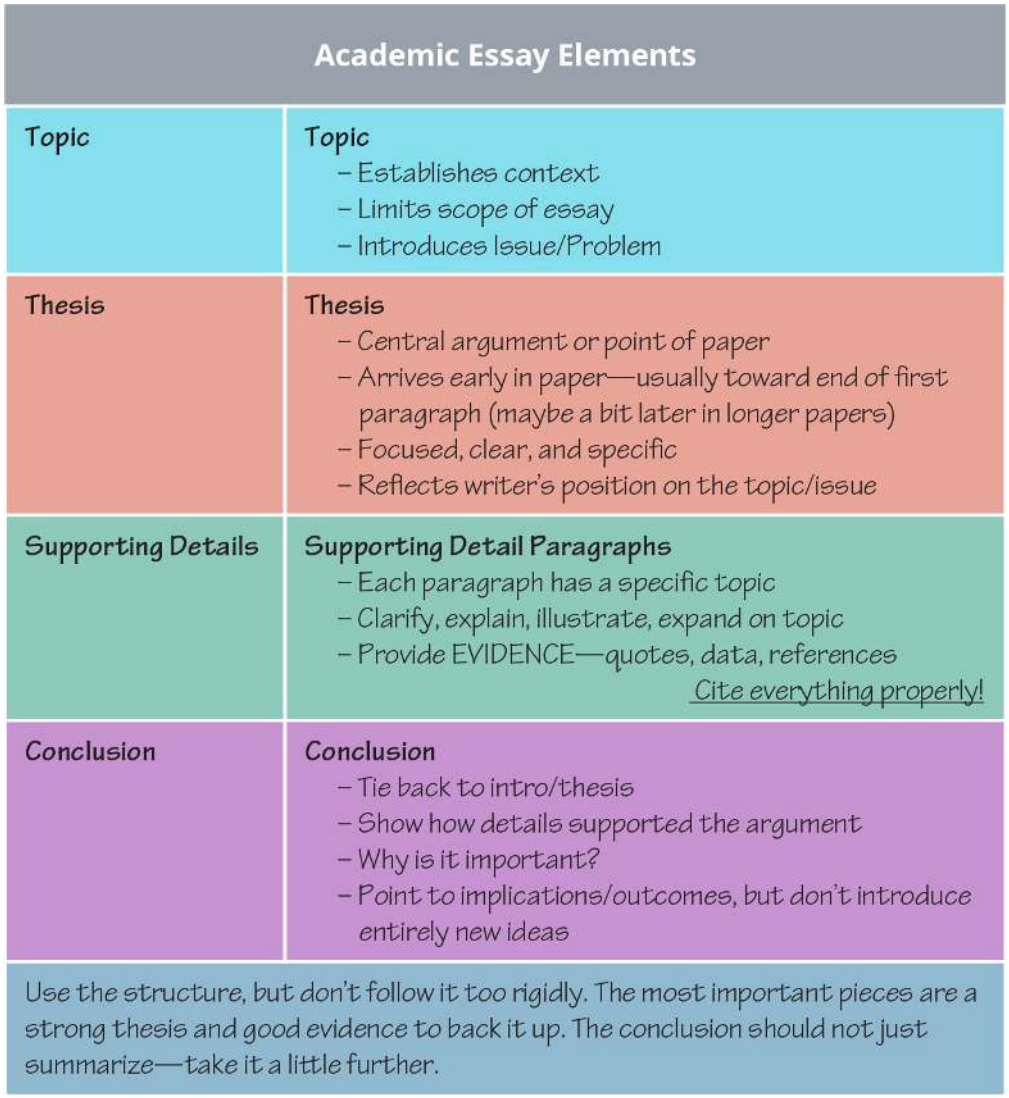
Figure 7.3 The Cornell Method provides a straightforward, organized, and flexible approach.

Now that you have the note-taking 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 note-taking 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 to 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 note-taking 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.



e 7.4 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 meth

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.

Outlining

Other note organizing systems may help you in different disciplines. You can take notes in a formal outline if you prefer, using Roman numerals for each new topic, moving down a line to capital letters indented a few spaces to the right for concepts related to the previous topic, then adding details to support the concepts indented a few more spaces over and denoted by an Arabic numeral. You can continue to add to a formal outline by following these rules.

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. Cats *(main topic)*

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 note-taking session, you can add after the lecture as you review your outline.

Chart or Table

Similar to creating an outline, you can develop a chart to compare and contrast main ideas in a note-taking session. Divide your paper into four or five columns with headings that include either the main topics covered in the lecture or categories such as How?, What?, When used?, Advantages/Pros, Disadvantages/Cons, or other divisions of the information. You write your notes into the appropriate columns as that information comes to light in the presentation. The table below provides an example of a table that can help you organize topics in a science course.

Table 7.1 Example of a Chart to Organize Ideas and Categories

	Structure	Types	Functions in Body	Additional Notes
Carbohydrates				
Lipids				
Proteins				
Nucleic Acid				

This format helps you pull out the salient ideas and establishes an organized set of notes to study later. (If you haven't noticed that this *reviewing later* idea is a constant across all note-taking systems, you should take note of that.) Notes by themselves that you never reference again are little more than scribblings. That would be a bit like compiling an extensive grocery list so you stay on budget when you shop, work all week on it, and then just throw it away before you get to the store. You may be able to recall a few items, but likely won't be as efficient as you could be if you had the notes to reference. Just as you cannot read all the many books, articles, and documents you need to peruse for your college classes, you cannot remember the most important ideas of all the notes you will take as part of your courses, so you must review.

Concept Mapping and Visual Note-Taking

One final note-taking 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.

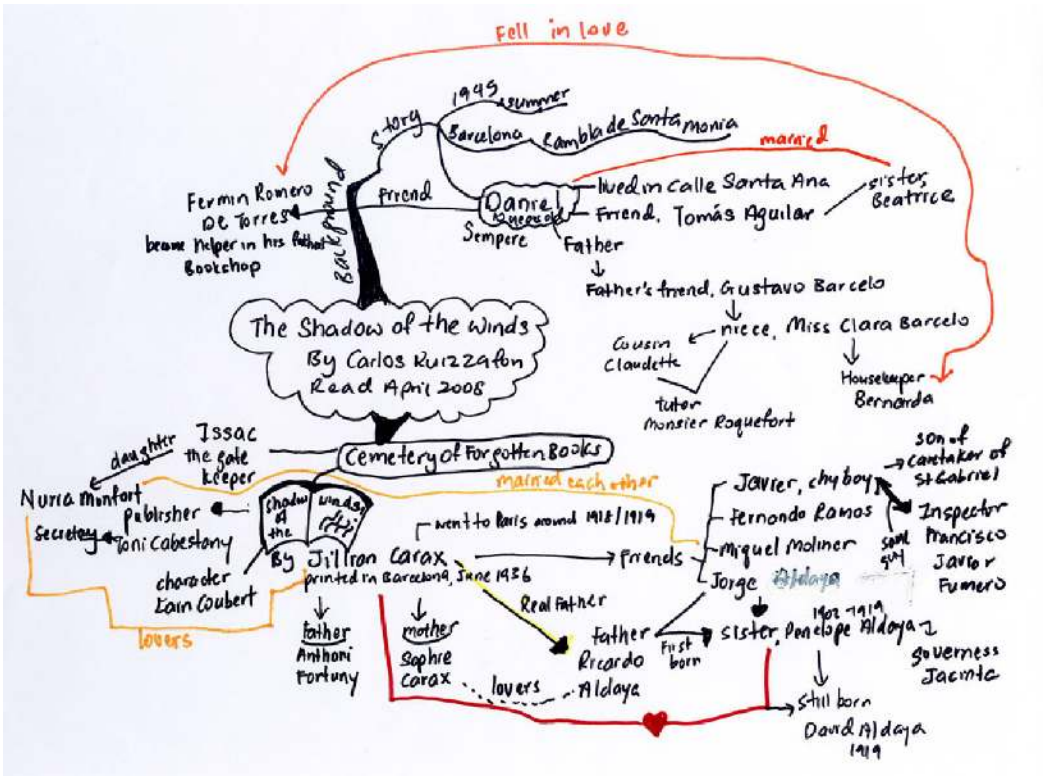


Figure 7.5 Concept mapping, sometimes referred to as mind mapping, can be an effective and very personalized approach to capturing information. (Credit: ArtistIvanChew / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

You may be interested in trying visual note-taking 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 Note-

taking," this strategy is effective because "When students use images and text in note-taking, 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 note-taking 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" to learn more about visual note-taking.

You can play with different types of note-taking 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 note-taking, review, and test prep will become, if not easier, certainly more organized, which can decrease your anxiety.

Practicing Decipherable Shorthand

Most college students don't take a class in shorthand, once the domain of secretaries and executive assistants, but maybe they should. That almost-lost art in the age of computers could come in very handy during intense note-taking sessions. Elaborate shorthand systems do exist, but you would be better served in your college note-taking adventures to hone a more familiar, personalized form of shorthand to help you write more in a shorter amount of time. Seemingly insignificant shortcuts can add up to ease the stress note-taking can induce—especially if you ever encounter an "I'm not going to repeat this" kind of presenter! Become familiar with these useful abbreviations:

Table 7.2

Shortcut symbol	Meaning
w/, w/o, w/in	with, without, within
&	and
#	number
b/c	because
X, √	incorrect, correct
Diff	different, difference
etc.	and so on
ASAP	as soon as possible
US, UK	United States, United Kingdom
info	information
Measurements: ft, in, k, m	foot, inch, thousand, million
¶	paragraph or new paragraph
Math symbols: =, +, >, <, ÷	equal, plus, greater, less, divided by
WWI, WWII	World Wars I and II
impt	important
?, !, **	denote something is very significant; don't over use

See the table above for examples of common shorthand symbols and abbreviations. Do you have any other shortcuts or symbols that you use in your notes? Ask your parents if they remember any that you may be able to learn.

Annotating Notes After the Initial Note-Taking Session

Annotating notes after the initial note-taking session may be one of the most valuable study skills you can master. Whether you are highlighting, underlining, or adding additional notes, you are reinforcing the material in your mind and memory.

Admit it—who can resist highlighting markers? Gone are the days when yellow was the star of the show, and you had to be very careful not to press too firmly for fear of obliterating the words you were attempting to emphasize. Students now have a veritable rainbow of highlighting options and can color-code notes and text passages to their hearts' content.

The only reason to highlight anything is to draw attention to it, so you can easily pick out that ever-so-important information later for further study or reflection. One problem many students have is not knowing when to stop. If what you need to recall from the passage is a particularly apt and succinct definition of the term important to your discipline, highlighting the entire paragraph is less effective than highlighting just the actual term. And if you don't rein in this tendency to color long passages (possibly in multiple colors) you can end up with a whole page of highlighted text. Ironically, that is no different from a page that is not highlighted at all, so you have wasted your time. Your mantra for highlighting text should be *less is more*. Always read your text selection first before you start highlighting anything. You need to know what the overall message is before you start placing emphasis in the text with highlighting.

Another way to annotate notes after initial note-taking is underlining significant words or passages. Albeit not quite as much fun as its colorful cousin highlighting, underlining provides precision to your emphasis.

Some people think of annotations as only using a colored highlighter to mark certain words or phrases for emphasis. Actually, annotations can refer to anything you do with a text to enhance it for your particular use (either a printed text, handwritten notes, or other sort of document you are using to learn concepts). The annotations may include highlighting passages or vocabulary, defining those unfamiliar terms once you look them up, writing questions in the margin of a book, underlining or circling key terms, or otherwise marking a text for future reference. You can also annotate some electronic texts.

Realistically, you may end up doing all of these types of annotations at different times. We know that repetition in studying and reviewing is critical to learning, so you may come back to the same passage and annotate it separately. These various markings can be invaluable to you as a study guide and as a way to see the evolution of your learning about a topic. If you regularly begin a reading session writing down any questions you may have about the topic of that chapter or section and also write out answers to those questions at the end of the reading selection, you will have a good start to what that chapter covered when you eventually need to study for an exam. At that point, you likely will not have time to reread the entire selection especially if it is a long reading selection, but with strong annotations in conjunction with your class notes, you won't need to do that. With experience in reading discipline-specific texts and writing essays or taking exams in that field, you will know better what sort of questions to ask in your annotations.

When did Lincoln die? April 15, 1865

The Gettysburg Address

Where is Gettysburg? Pennsylvania
What happened there? Civil War battle of Gettysburg, July 1-3, 1863 - union victory, but largest # of dead in entire war

President Abraham Lincoln

November 19, 1863

80 (4x20) + 7 = 87

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

1776

from US Constitution? No - Dec of Independence

proposal

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

(1861-65)

formed

last

cemetery

repetition

make holy

make holy

IRONY

like royalty

death

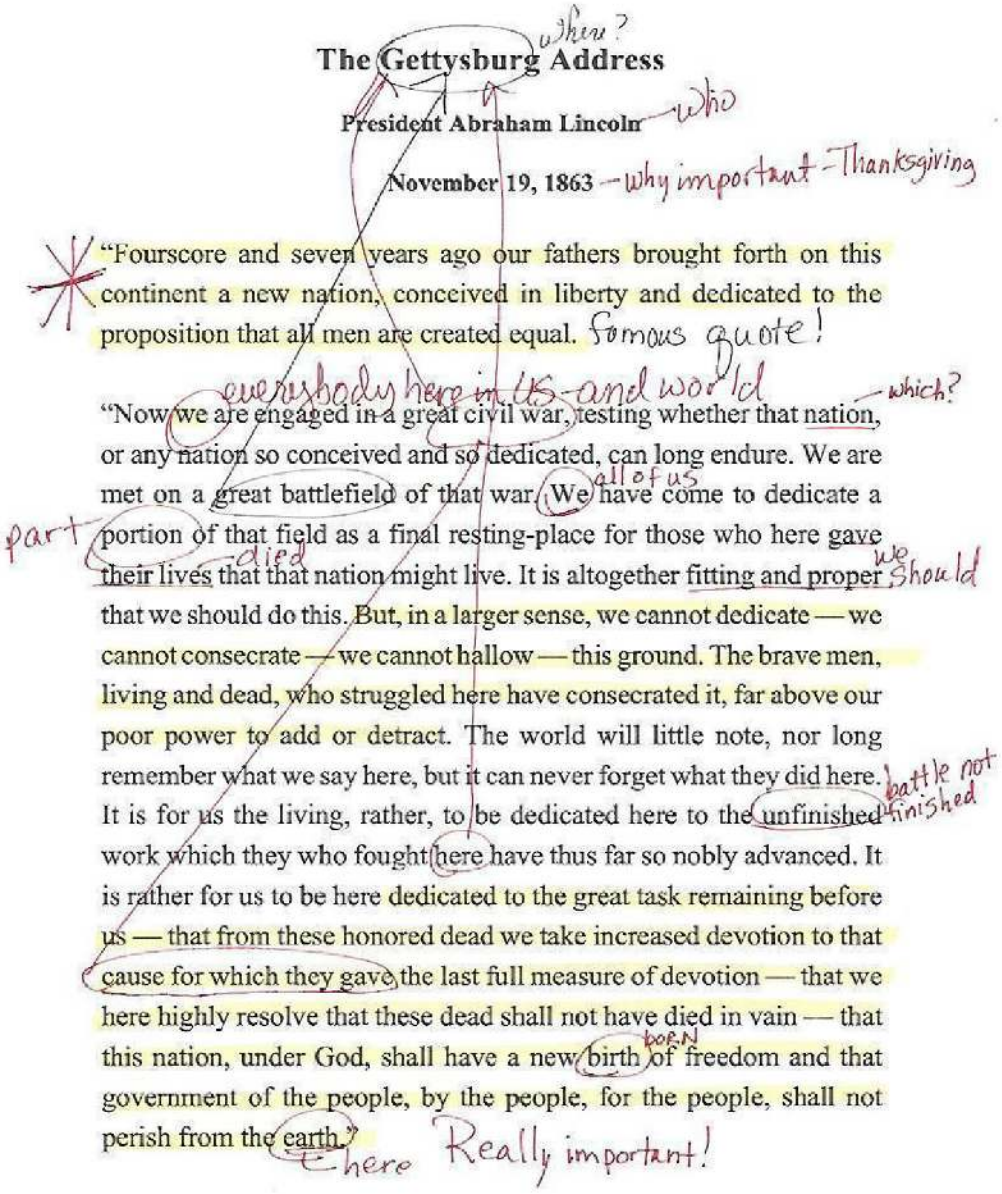
for no reason

phrases from Constitution?

repetition

Ldie

notations may include highlighting important topics, defining unfamiliar terms, writing questions in, underlining or circling key terms, or otherwise marking a text for future reference. Whichever approach you choose, try no
d, and efficient notes are more effective than crowded or overdone notes.



ıile these notes may be meaningful to the person who took them, they are neither organized nor consistent. For example, note that some of the more commonly used terms, like "we" and "unfinished," are defined, but less con and "hallow" — are not.

What you have to keep in the front of your mind while you are annotating, especially if you are going to conduct multiple annotation sessions, is to not overdo whatever method you use. Be judicious about what you annotate and how you do it on the page, which means you must be neat about it. Otherwise, you end up with a mess of either color or symbols combined with some cryptic notes that probably took you quite a long time to create, but won't be worth as much to you as a study aid as they could be. This is simply a waste of time and effort.

You cannot eat up every smidgen of white space on the page writing out questions or summaries and still have a way to read the original text. If you are lucky enough to have a blank page next to the beginning of the chapter or section you are annotating, use this, but keep in mind that when you start writing notes, you aren't exactly sure how much space you'll need. Use a decipherable shorthand and write only what you need to convey the meaning in very small print. If you are annotating your own notes, you can make a habit of using only one side of the paper in class, so that if you need to add more notes later, you could use the other side. You can also add a blank page to your notes before beginning the next class date in your notebook so you'll end up with extra paper for annotations when you study.

Professional resources may come with annotations that can be helpful to you as you work through the various documentation requirements you'll encounter in college as well. Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) provides an annotated sample for how to format a college paper according to guidelines in the Modern Language Association (MLA) manual that you can see, along with other annotations.

Providing Needed Additional Explanations to Notes

Consider this scenario: Marlon was totally organized and ready to take notes in a designated course notebook at the beginning of every philosophy class session. He always dated his page and indicated what the topic of discussion was. He had various colored highlighters ready to denote the different note purposes he had defined: vocabulary in pink, confusing concepts in green, and note sections that would need additional explanations later in yellow. He also used his own shorthand and an impressive array of symbols to indicate questions (red question mark), highly probable test material (he used a tiny bomb exploding here), additional reading suggestions, and specific topics he would ask his instructor before the next class. Doing everything so precisely, Marlon's methods seemed like a perfect example of how to take notes for success. Inevitably though, by the end of the hour-and-a-half class session, Marlon was frantically switching between writing tools, near to tears, and scouring his notes as waves of yellow teased him with uncertainty. What went wrong?

As with many of us who try diligently to do everything we know how to do for success or what we think we know because we read books and articles on success in between our course work, Marlon is suffering from trying to do too much simultaneously. It's an honest mistake we can make when we are trying to save a little time or think we can multitask and kill two birds with one stone.

Unfortunately, this particular error in judgment can add to your stress level exponentially if you don't step back and see it for what it is. Marlon attempted to take notes in class as well as annotate his notes to get them ready for his test preparation. It was too much to do at one time, but even if he could have done all those things during class, he's missing one critical point about note-taking.

As much as we may want to hurry and get it over with, note-taking in class is just the beginning. Your instructor likely gave you a pre-class assignment to read or complete before coming to that session. The intention of that preparatory lesson is for you to come in with some level of familiarity for the topic under consideration and questions of your own. Once you're in class, you may also need to participate in a group discussion, work with your classmates, or perform some other sort of lesson-directed activity that would necessarily take you away from taking notes. Does that mean you should ignore taking notes for that day? Most likely not. You may just need to indicate in your notes that you worked on a project or whatever other in-class event you experienced that date.

Very rarely in a college classroom will you engage in an activity that is not directly related to what you are studying in that course. Even if you enjoyed every minute of the class session and it was an unusual format for that course, you still need to take some notes. Maybe your first note could be to ask yourself why you think the instructor used that unique teaching strategy for the class that day. Was it effective? Was it worth using the whole class time? How will that experience enhance what you are learning in that course?

If you use an ereader or ebooks to read texts for class or read articles from the Internet on your laptop or tablet, you can still take effective notes. Depending on the features of your device, you have many choices. Almost all electronic reading platforms allow readers to highlight and underline text. Some devices allow you to add a written text in addition to marking a word or passage that you can collect at the end of your note-taking session. Look into the specific tools for your device and learn how to use the features that allow you to take notes electronically. You can also find apps on devices to help with taking notes, some of which you may automatically have installed when you buy the product. Microsoft's OneNote, Google Keep, and the Notes feature on phones are relatively easy to use, and you may already have free access to those.

Taking Notes on Non-Text Items (i.e., Tables, Maps, Figures, etc.)

You may also encounter situations as you study and read textbooks, primary sources, and other resources for your classes that are not actually texts. You can still take notes on maps, charts, graphs, images, and tables, and your approach to these non-text features is similar to when you prepare to take notes over a passage of text. For example, if you are looking at the following map, you may immediately come up with several questions. Or it may initially appear overwhelming. Start by asking yourself these questions:

What is the main point of this map?

- Who is the intended audience?
- Where is it?
- What time period does it depict?
- What does the map's legend (the explanation of symbols) include?
- What other information do I need to make sense of this map?

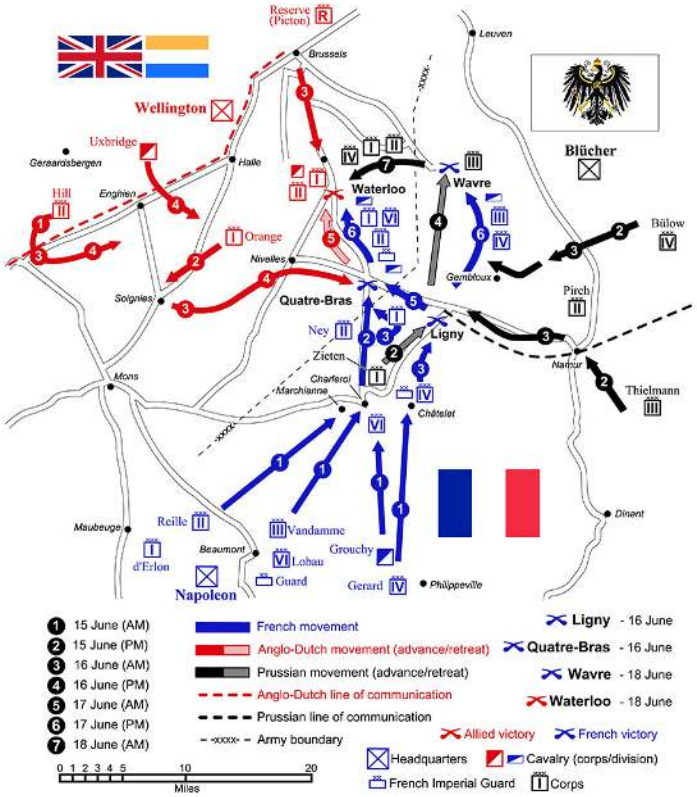


Figure 7.8 A map showing the "Order of Napoleon's Battle of Waterloo". Graphics, charts, graphs, and other visual items are also important to annotate. Not only do they often convey important information, but they may appear on exams or in other situations where you'll need to use or demonstrate knowledge. (Credit: "Lpankonin" / Wikipedia Commons / Attribution 3.0 Generic (CC BY 3.0))

You may want to make an extra copy of a graphic or table before you add annotations if you are dealing with a lot of information. Making sense of all the elements will take time, and you don't want to add to the confusion.

Returning to Your Notes

Later, as soon as possible after the class, you can go back to your notes and add in missing parts. Just as you may generate questions as you're reading new material, you may leave a class session or lecture or activities with many questions. Write those down in a place where they won't get lost in all your other notes.

The exact timing of when you get back to the notes you take in class or while you are reading an assignment will vary depending on how many other classes you have or what other obligations you have in your daily schedule. A good starting place that is also easy to remember is to make every effort to review your notes within 24 hours of first taking them. Longer than that and you are likely to have forgotten some key features you need to include; must less time than that, and you may not think you need to review the information you so recently wrote down, and you may postpone the task too long.

Use your phone or computer to set reminders for all your note review sessions so that it becomes a habit and you keep on top of the schedule.

Your personal notes play a significant role in your test preparation. They should enhance how you understand the lessons, textbooks, lab sessions, and assignments. All the time and effort you put into first taking the notes and then annotating and organizing the notes will be for naught if you do not formulate an effective and efficient way to use them before sectional exams or comprehensive tests.

The whole cycle of reading, note-taking in class, reviewing and enhancing your notes, and preparing for exams is part of a continuum you ideally will carry into your professional life. Don't try to take short cuts; recognize each step in the cycle as a building block. Learning doesn't end, which shouldn't fill you with dread; it should help you recognize that all this work you're doing in the classroom and during your own study and review sessions is ongoing and cumulative. Practicing effective strategies now will help you be a stronger professional.

ACTIVITY 7.1

What resources can you find about reading and note-taking that will actually help you with these crucial skills? How do you go about deciding what resources are valuable for improving your reading and note-taking skills?

The selection and relative value of study guides and books about note-taking vary dramatically. Ask your instructors for recommendations and see what the library has available on this topic. The following list is not comprehensive, but will give you a starting point for books and articles on note-taking in college.

- ***College Rules!: How to Study, Survive, and Succeed in College,*** by Sherri Nist-Olejnik and Jodi Patrick Holschuh. More than just note-taking, this book covers many aspects of transitioning into the rigors of college life and studying.
- ***Effective Note-taking,*** by Fiona McPherson. This small volume has suggestions for using your limited time wisely before, during, and after note-taking sessions.
- ***How to Study in College,*** by Walter Pauk. This is the book that introduced Pauk's note-taking suggestions we now call the Cornell Method. It is a bit dated (from the 1940s), but still contains some valuable information.
- ***Learn to Listen, Listen to Learn 2: Academic Listening and Note-taking,*** by Roni S. Lebauer. The main point of this book is to help students get the most from college lectures by watching for clues to lecture organization and adapting this information into strong notes.
- ***Study Skills: Do I Really Need this Stuff?*** by Steve Piscitelli. Written in a consistently down-to-earth manner, this book will help you with the foundations of strong study skills, including time management, effective note-taking, and seeing the big picture.
- **"What Reading Does for the Mind"**, by Anne Cunningham and Keith Stanovich, 1998, https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/cunningham.pdf
- ***How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading,*** by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, 1940.
- ***Short- and Long-Term Effects of a Novel on Connectivity in the Brain,*** by Gregory S. Berns, Kristina Blaine, Michael J. Prietula, and Brandon E. Pye. https://doi.org/10.1089/brain.2013.0166

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OpenStax College Success Concise Chapter 3.4. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/3-4-helpful-note-taking-strategies

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Modifications: Figures, tables, and activity renumbered.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Unit 2 - Self-Management

2.1: Time Management in College
2.2: Procrastination
2.3: Time Management Skills
2.4: Prioritization
2.5: Enhanced Strategies for Time and Task Management
2.6: Setting Goals and Staying Motivated
2.7: Cultural Influences on the Perception of Time
2.8: Memorizing
2.9: Test Preparation and Test Taking
2.10: Placement Assessment
2.11: Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking
2.12: Fact Checking
2.13: Using Library Databases

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2.1: Time Management in College

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- Is time management different in college from what I am used to?
- How different is college schoolwork from high school or on-the-job work?

You may find that time management in college is very different from anything you have experienced previously. For high school students, almost all school time is managed by educators and parents. In many cases, even after-school time may be set by scheduled activities (such as athletics) and by nightly homework that is 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. An employee may also not have much say in what needs to be done and when. 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 good time and task management skills will help you stand out on the job and in job interviews. See the table below for a comparison of high school students and college students with regard to time and task management.

Table 14.1 Time and Task Management in K-12 and College

K-12	College
Many class activities are planned to facilitate, reinforce, and assess learning.	Class time is given to receiving information for the purpose of learning.
Homework is often similar for each student and assigned with the express purpose of reinforcing key concepts.	Out-of-class tasks such as reading and reviewing notes are often at the discretion of the student.
Time and tasks are managed by others more often.	Time is managed by the student.

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 14.1 Students may set aside specific times and specific places to study and do homework. (Credit: ThouroughlyReviewed / Flickr Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

As an example of how this works, think about an 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.

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. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center, found that 82 percent of teens report that their typical high school writing assignments were only a single paragraph to one page in length. 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 Table 14.2 for time on task estimates.)

Writing Assignments Vary in Length

Table 14.2 (Credit: Updated NSSE (Since 2013))[1]

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, as directed by their teachers.

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.

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?

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Baldwin, A. (2023). Time Management in College. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

Modifications: Renumbered figures, tables, and table reference.

Footnotes

- Pew Research Center. (2008).“Writing, Technology, and Teens. https://www.pewinternet.org/2008/04/24/writing-technology-and-teens/
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2.2: Procrastination

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- Why do we procrastinate?
- What are the effects of procrastination?
- How can we avoid procrastination?



Figure 15.1 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))

We all know about procrastination, the act of delaying some task that needs to be completed, because most of us have procrastinated at some point in our lives. For most people, a little 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. In college, students who procrastinate often report that they feel more stress and are more likely to do poorly than those who have learned to manage their time and their projects effectively.

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

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.

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2.3: Time Management Skills

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- How can I use time-on-task estimates to improve time management?
- What behaviors can help or hinder when it comes to managing time?

In this next section you will learn about managing time and prioritizing tasks. This is not only a valuable skill for pursuing an education, but it can become an ability that follows you through the rest of your life, especially if your career takes you into a leadership role.



Figure 16.1 An online calendar is a very useful tool for keeping track of classes, meetings, and other events. Most learning management systems contain these features, or you can use a calendar application.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Read each statement in the brief self-evaluation tool below, and check the answer that best applies to you. There are no right or wrong answers.

Table 16.1

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I like to be given strict deadlines for each task. It helps me stay organized and on track.					
I would rather be 15 minutes early than 1 minute late.					
I like to improvise instead of planning everything out ahead of time.					
I prefer to be able to manage when and how I do each task.					
I have a difficult time estimating how long a task will take.					
I have more motivation when there is an upcoming deadline. It helps me focus.					
I have difficulty keeping priorities in the most beneficial order.					

This exercise is intended to help you recognize some things about your own time management style. The important part is for you to identify any areas where you might be able to improve and to find solutions for them. This chapter will provide some solutions, but there are many others that can be found by researching time management strategies.

After you have decided your best response to each statement, think about what they may mean in regard to potential strengths and/or challenges for you when it comes to time management in college. If you are a person that likes strict deadlines, what would you do if you took a course that only had one large paper due at the end? Can you set a series of mini deadlines that made you more comfortable and that kept things moving along for you? Or, if you have difficulty prioritizing tasks, does it help you to make a list of the tasks to do and order them, so you know which ones must be finished first?

How to Manage Time

The simplest way to manage your time is to accurately plan for how much time it will take to do each task, and then set aside that amount of time. How you divide the time is up to you. If it is going to take you five hours to study for a final exam, you can plan to spread it over five days, with an hour each night, or you can plan on two hours one night and three hours the next. What you would not want to do is plan on studying only a few hours the night before the exam and find that you fell very short on the time you estimated you would need. If that were to happen, you would have run out of time before finishing, with no way to go back and change your decision. In this kind of situation, you might even be tempted to “pull an all-nighter,” which is a phrase that has been used among college students for decades. In essence it means going without sleep for the entire night and using that time to finish an assignment. While this method of trying to make up for poor planning is common enough to have a name, rarely does it produce the best work.

ACTIVITY 16.1

Many people are not truly aware of how they actually spend their time. They make assumptions about how much time it takes to do certain things, but they never really take an accurate account.

In this activity, write down all the things you think you will do tomorrow, and estimate the time you will spend doing each. Then track each thing you have written down to see how accurate your estimates were.

Obviously, you will not want to get caught up in too much tedious detail, but you will want to cover the main activities of your day—for example, working, eating, driving, shopping, gaming, being engaged in entertainment, etc.

After you have completed this activity for a single day, you may consider doing it for an entire week so that you are certain to include all of your activities.

Many people that take this sort of personal assessment of their time are often surprised by the results. Some even make lifestyle changes based on it.

Table 16.2 Sample Time Estimate Table

Activity	Estimated Time	Actual Time
Practice Quiz	5 minutes	15 minutes
Lab Conclusions	20 minutes	35 minutes
Food shopping	45 minutes	30 minutes
Drive to work	20 minutes	20 minutes
Physical Therapy	1 hour	50 minutes

Of all the parts of time management, accurately predicting how long a task will take is usually the most difficult—and the most elusive. Part of the problem comes from the fact that most of us are not very accurate timekeepers, especially when we are busy applying ourselves to a task. The other issue that makes it so difficult to accurately estimate time on task is that our estimations must also account for things like interruptions or unforeseen problems that cause delays.

When it comes to academic activities, many tasks can be dependent upon the completion of other things first, or the time a task takes can vary from one instance to another, both of which add to the complexity and difficulty of estimating how much time and effort are required.

For example, if an instructor assigned three chapters of reading, you would not really have any idea how long each chapter might take to read until you looked at them. The first chapter might be 30 pages long while the second is 45. The third chapter could be only 20 pages but made up mostly of charts and graphs for you to compare. By page count, it might seem that the third chapter would take the least amount of time, but actually studying charts and graphs to gather information can take longer than regular reading.

To make matters even more difficult, when it comes to estimating time on task for something as common as reading, not all reading takes the same amount of time. Fiction, for example, is usually a faster read than a technical manual. But something like the novel *Finnegan's Wake* by James Joyce is considered so difficult that most readers never finish it.

ACTIVITY 16.2

To better understand how much time different kinds of material can take to read, try this experiment. You will use two examples of famous texts that are very close to being the same number of words: *The Gettysburg Address* and the opening paragraphs from *A Christmas Carol*. Before you begin, estimate how long it will take you to read each, and predict which you think will take longer. When you do the reading, use a stopwatch function on a device such as a phone or some other timer to see how long it actually takes.

Make certain that you are reading for understanding, not just skimming over words. If you must reread a section to better comprehend what is being said, that is appropriate. The goal here is to compare reading of different texts, not to see how fast you can sight-read the words on a page.

After you have finished *The Gettysburg Address*, read and time *A Christmas Carol* and compare both of your times.

The Gettysburg Address
Abraham Lincoln
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania November 19, 1863
Word count: 278

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

A Christmas Carol
Charles Dickens
Chapman & Hall, 1843
Word count: 260

Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnized it with an undoubted bargain.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate.

In comparing the two, was one or the other easier to understand or faster to read? Was it the piece you predicted you would read faster?

It is important to note that in this case both readings were only three paragraphs long. While there may have only been half a minute or so between the reading of each, that amount of time would multiply greatly over an entire chapter.

Knowing Yourself

While you can find all sorts of estimates online as to how long a certain task may take, it is important to know these are only averages. People read at different speeds, people write at different speeds, and those numbers even change for each individual depending on the environment.

If you are trying to read in surroundings that have distractions (e.g., conversations, phone calls, etc.), reading 10 pages can take you a lot longer than if you are reading in a quiet area. By the same token, you may be reading in a quiet environment (e.g., in bed after everyone in the house has gone to sleep), but if you are tired, your attention and retention may not be what it would be if you were refreshed.

In essence, the only way you are going to be able to manage your time accurately is to know yourself and to know how long it takes you to do each task. But where to begin?

Below, you will find a table of common college academic activities. This list has been compiled from a large number of different sources, including colleges, publishers, and professional educators, to help students estimate their own time on tasks. The purpose of this table is to both give you a place to begin in your estimates and to illustrate how different factors can impact the actual time spent.

You will notice that beside each task there is a column for the *unit*, followed by the average *time on task*, and a column for notes. The *unit* is whatever is being measured (e.g., pages read, pages written, etc.), and the *time on task* is an average time it takes students to do these tasks. It is important to pay attention to the notes column, because there you will find factors that influence the time on task. These factors can dramatically change the amount of time the activity takes.

Table 16.3 Time on task for common college activities.

Time on Task			
Activity	Unit	Time on task	Notes
General academic reading (textbook, professional journals)	1 page	5–7 minutes	Be aware that your personal reading speed may differ and may change over time.
Technical reading (math, charts and data)	1 page	10–15 minutes	Be aware that your personal reading speed may differ and may change over time.
Simple Quiz or homework question: short answer—oriented toward recall or identification type answers	Per question	1–2 minutes	Complexity of question will greatly influence the time required.
Complex Quiz or homework question: short answer—oriented toward application, evaluation, or synthesis of knowledge	Per question	2–3 minutes	Complexity of question will greatly influence the time required.
Math problem sets, complex	Per question	15 minutes	For example, algebra, complex equations, financial calculations
Writing: short, no research	Per page	60 minutes	Short essays, single-topic writing assignments, summaries, freewriting assignments, journaling—includes drafting, writing, proofing, and finalizing
Writing: research paper	Per page	105 minutes	Includes research time, drafting, editing, proofing, and finalizing (built into per-page calculation)
Study for quiz	Per chapter	60 minutes	45–90 minutes per chapter, depending upon complexity of material
Study for exam	Per exam	120+ minutes	1-2 hours per chapter or concept after thoroughly reading and taking notes

Again, these are averages, and it does not mean anything if your times are a little slower or a little faster. There is no "right amount of time," only the time that it takes you to do something so you can accurately plan and manage your time.

There is also another element to look for in the table. These are differentiations in the similar activities that will also affect the time you spend. A good example of this can be found in the first four rows. Each of these activities involves reading, but you can see that depending on the material being read and its complexity, the time spent can vary greatly. Not only do these differences in time account for the different types of materials you might read (as you found in the comparative reading exercise earlier in this chapter), but also they also take into consideration the time needed to think about what you are reading to truly understand and comprehend what it is saying.

GET CONNECTED

Which apps help you best prepare for success when managing your time?

Do you have trouble keeping track of multiple tasks over the course of a term?

Trello lets you organize all your obligations in helpful boards. You can share them with others (project collaborators), set alerts as reminders, and mark tasks off as you complete them.

Do you use a particular app to help you manage your time?

Sticky note apps are available for PC, Mac, and mobile devices. They let you post quick reminders, reorganize them as needed, and view them separately or as a full to-do list.

What do you wish you could improve about your time management skills?

Toggl helps you keep track of how and where you are spending your time so you can budget better and make time management changes that free you up for the really important stuff.

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2.4: Prioritization

Amy Baldwin

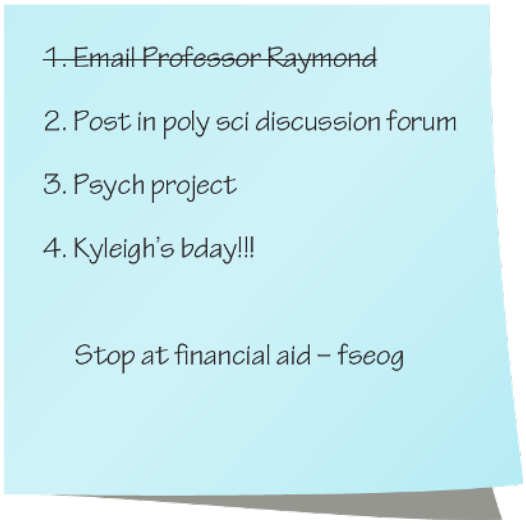


Figure 17.1 Numbered lists are useful and easy tools to create.

Questions to Consider:

- Why is prioritization important?
- What are the steps involved in prioritization?
- How do I deal with situations 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?

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 17.1

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 of 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 17.2 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 also 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 who 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 Figure 2.7 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 17.3 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 you will be gone and what the climate will be like. If it is 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 17.4 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.

What Deadlines Will You Create?

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.

How Will You 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."***

The Importance of Where You Do Your Work



Figure 17.5 Where you do work can be as important as when. While not everyone has a study nook, it's worth taking the time to find a place or a space where you can be comfortable and focused. (Credit: IMCBerea College r / 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.

What Space Will You Use?

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.

How Will You Eliminate Distractions?

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.

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.

What Are the Best Times for You to Work?

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.

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Modifications: Renumbered figures, tables, and activity.

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2.5: Enhanced Strategies for Time and Task Management

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- What strategy helps me prioritize my top tasks?
- How do I make the best use of my time when prioritizing?
- How do I make sure I tackle unpleasant tasks instead of putting them off?
- What's the best way to plan for long-term tasks?
- How do I find time in a busy schedule?

Over the years, people have developed a number of different strategies to manage time and tasks. Some of the strategies have proven to be effective and helpful, while others have been deemed not as useful.

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 18.1 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.

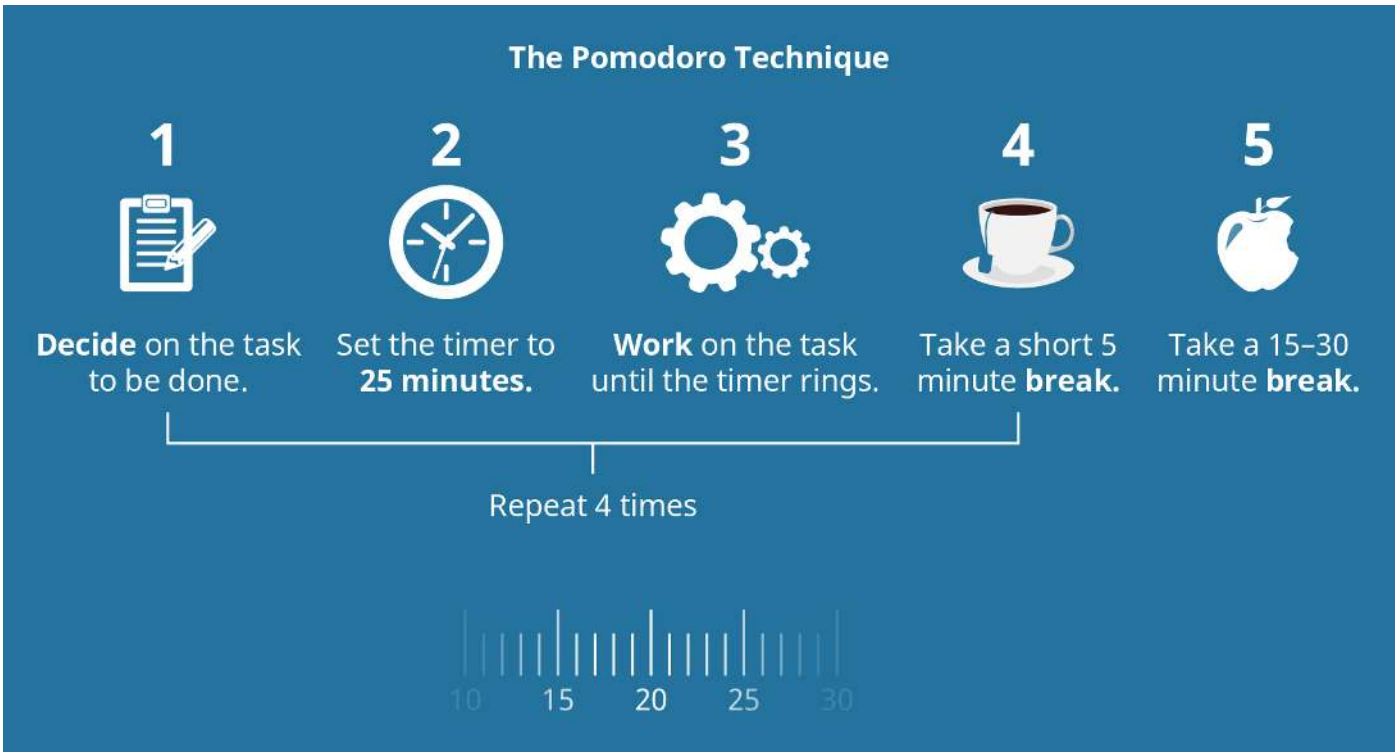


Figure 18.2 The Pomodoro Technique contains five defined steps.

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.

APPLICATION

Try Three Time Management Strategies

Over the next two weeks, try each of these three methods to see which ones might work for you. Is there one you favor over the others? Might each of these three approaches serve you better in different situations or with different tasks? Do you have a creative alternative or possibly a way to use some combination of these techniques?

In addition to these three strategies, you could also develop whole new approaches from suggestions found earlier in this chapter. For example, you could apply some of the strategies for avoiding procrastination or for setting appropriate priorities and see how they work in combination with these techniques or on their own.

The key is to find which system works best for you.

Breaking Down the Steps and Spreading Them Over Shorter Work Periods

Above, you read about several different tried-and-tested strategies for effective time management—approaches that have become staples in the professional world. In this section you will read about two more creative techniques that combine elements from these other methods to handle tasks when time is scarce and long periods of time are a luxury you just do not have.

The concept behind this strategy is to break tasks into smaller, more manageable units that do not require as much time to complete. As an illustration of how this might work, imagine that you are assigned a two-page paper that is to include references. You estimate that to complete the paper—start to finish—would take you between four and a half and five hours. You look at your calendar over the next week and see that there simply are no open five-hour blocks (unless you decided to only get three hours of sleep one night). Rightly so, you decide that going without sleep is not a good option. While looking at your calendar, you do see that you can squeeze in an hour or so every night. Instead of trying to write the entire paper in one sitting, you break it up into much smaller components and schedule them over the week as shown in the two tables below:

Breaking Down Projects into Manageable-Sized Tasks

Table 18.1

Day/Time	Task	Time
Monday, 6:00 p.m.	Write outline; look for references.	60 minutes
Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.	Research references to support outline; look for good quotes.	60 minutes
Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.	Write paper introduction and first page draft.	60 minutes
Thursday, 6:00 p.m.	Write second page and closing draft.	60 minutes
Friday, 5:00 p.m.	Rewrite and polish final draft.	60 minutes

Day/Time	Task	Time
Saturday, 10:00 a.m.	*Only if needed—finish or polish final draft.*	60 minutes?

Table 18.2

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00–10:00		Work		Work			
10:00–12:00	Algebra	Work	Algebra	Work	Algebra	10 a.m.–11 a.m. *Only if needed*	Work
12:00–2:00	Lunch/study	1 p.m. English Comp	Lunch/study	1 p.m. English Comp	Lunch/study	Family picnic	Work
2:00–4:00	History	English Comp	History	English Comp	History	Family picnic	
4:00–6:00	Study for Algebra quiz.	Grocery	Study for History exam.	Study for History exam.	5 p.m.–6 p.m. Rewrite and polish final draft.	Family picnic	Laundry
6:00–7:00	Write outline; look for references.	Research references to support outline; look for good quotes.	Research presentation project.	Write second page and closing draft	Create presentation.	Meet with Darcy.	Prepare school stuff for next week.
7:00–8:00	Free time	Free time	Write paper introduction and first page draft.	Research presentation project.	Create presentation.		Free time

While this is a simple example, you can see how it would redistribute tasks to fit your available time in a way that would make completing the paper possible. In fact, if your time constraints were even more rigid, it would be possible to break these divided tasks down even further. You could use a variation of the Pomodoro Technique and write for three 25-minute segments each day at different times. The key is to look for ways to break down the entire task into smaller steps and spread them out to fit your schedule.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Reflection

Analysis: Identify areas in the way you spend your day where you may be able to recapture and repurpose time. Are there things you can move around to gain more time? Are there ways you can combine tasks or reduce travel time?

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2.6: Setting Goals and Staying Motivated

Amy Baldwin

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?

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.

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.

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 19.1

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, measurable, 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.

Long-Term Goals

Once you have learned how to set goals that are specific and measurable, consider developing both long-term and short-term goals. Long-term goals are future goals that often take years to complete. An example of a long-term goal might be to complete a Bachelor of Arts degree within four years. Another example might be purchasing a home or running a marathon. While this chapter focuses on academic and career planning, long-term goals are not exclusive to these areas of your life. You might set long-term goals related to fitness, wellness, spirituality, and relationships, among many others. When you set a long-term goal in any aspect of your life, you are demonstrating a commitment to dedicate time and effort toward making progress in that area. Because of this commitment, it is important that your long-term goals are aligned with your values.

Short-Term Goals

Setting short-term goals helps you consider the necessary steps you'll need to take, but it also helps to chunk a larger effort into smaller, more manageable tasks. Even when your long-term goals are SMART, it's easier to stay focused and you'll become less overwhelmed in the process of completing short-term goals.

You might assume that short-term and long-term goals are different goals that vary in the length of time they take to complete. Given this assumption, you might give the example of a long-term goal of learning how to create an app and a short-term goal of remembering to pay your cell phone bill this weekend. These are valid goals, but they don't exactly demonstrate the intention of short- and long-term goals for the purposes of effective planning.

Instead of just being bound by the difference of time, short-term goals are the action steps that take less time to complete than a long-term goal, but that help you work toward your long-term goals. 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. Or, if you recall that short-term goal of paying your cell phone bill this weekend, perhaps this short-term goal is related to a longer-term goal of learning how to better manage your budgeting and finances.

Setting Long- and Short-Term Goals

Consider this scenario: While meeting with an academic advisor at his college to discuss his change of major, Sunil was tasked with setting long- and short-term goals aligned with that major. He selected a degree plan in business administration, sharing with his advisor his intention to work in business and hopefully human relations in particular. His advisor discussed with him how he could set short-term goals that would help his progress on that plan. Sunil wondered if he should be as specific as setting short-term goals week by week or for the successful completion of every homework assignment or exam. His advisor shared that he could certainly break his goals down into that level of specificity if it helped him to stay focused, but recommended that he start by outlining how many credits or courses he would hope to complete. Sunil drafted his goals and planned to meet again with his advisor in another week to discuss.

My Goals – Sunil Shah	
Long-term	My goal is to graduate from my college in a total of 4 years with a degree in business administration, concentrating in human relations.
Short-term	• Finish the 12 credits i am taking in my first semester with at least a 3.0 GPA • Take 15 credits in the spring semester while maintaining my GPA • Take a 3 credit class online in the summer • Take 15 credits in my third semester • Apply for study abroad program in my third semester • Take 18 credits in my fourth semester • Complete study abroad program for business during my fifth semester (12 credits) • Apply for summer internship program during fifth semester • Take 15 credits in my sixth semester • Complete summer internship program • Take 15 credits in my seventh semester • Take 15 credits in my eighth semester • Graduate in four years and take my parents out for an awesome dinner to thank them for their support!

Figure 19.1 Sunil drafted his goals before meeting with his advisor to discuss them.

Sunil worried that his list of short-term goals looked more like a checklist of tasks than anything. His advisor reassured him, sharing that short-term goals can absolutely look like a checklist of tasks because their purpose is to break the long-term goal down into manageable chunks that are easier to focus on and complete. His advisor then recommended that Sunil add to his plan an additional note at the end of every other semester to "check in" with his advisor to make certain that he was on track.

Planning for Adjustments

You will recall from the SMART goals goal-setting model that goals should be both measurable and attainable. Far too often, however, we set goals with the best of intentions but then fail to keep track of our progress or adjust our short-term goals if they're not helping us to progress as quickly as we'd like. When setting goals, the most successful planners also consider when they will evaluate their progress. At that time, perhaps after each short-term goal should have been met, they may reflect on the following:

1. **Am I meeting my short-term goals as planned?**
   - If so, celebrate!
   - If not, you may want to additionally consider:
2. **Are my short-term goals still planned across time in a way that they will meet my long-term goals?**
   - If so, continue on your path.

     If not, reconsider the steps you need to take to meet your long-term goal. If you've gotten off track or if you've learned that other steps must be taken, set new short-term goals with timelines appropriate to each step. You may also want to seek some additional advice from others who have successfully met long-term goals that are similar to your own.
3. **Are my long-term goals still relevant, or have my values changed since I set my goals?**
   - If your goals are still relevant to your interests and values, then continue on your path, seeking advice and support as needed to stay on track.
   - If your goals are no longer relevant or aligned with your values, give careful consideration to setting new goals.

While departing from your original goals may seem like a failure, taking the time to reflect on goals before you set them aside to develop new ones is a success. Pivoting from one goal to new, better-fitting goal involves increased self-awareness and increased knowledge about the processes surrounding your specific goal (such as the details of a college transfer, for example). With careful reflection and information seeking, your change in plans may even demonstrate learning and increased maturity!

APPLICATION

Take a moment to practice setting long- and short-term goals. Your short-term goal should help you progress toward your long-term goal. Include a plan for when and how you will know if you're on track or if you need to adjust your goals to match new priorities.

My Long-Term Goal:
My Short-Term Goal:
My Plan for Checking My Progress:

Keep in mind that values and goals may change over time as you meet new people, your life circumstances change, and you gain more wisdom or self-awareness. In addition to setting goals and tracking your progress, you should also periodically reflect on your goals to ensure their consistency with your values.



Figure 19.2 These seven ways to stay motivated are good suggestions from highly successful people. What other strategies would you suggest?

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2.7: Cultural Influences on the Perception of Time

Robert Levine

arning Objectives

nderstand how cultures differ in the views of time and the importance of these differences for social behavior.
xplore major components of social time.
se these concepts to better understand the hidden dimensions of culture.

oduction

said that “time is money” in industrialized economies. Workers are paid by the hour, lawyers charge by the minute, and advertising is sold by
ıd (US$3.3 million for a 30-second commercial, or a little over $110,000 per second, for the 2012 Super Bowl). Remarkably, the civilized mind
ed time—the most obscure and abstract of all intangibles—to the most objective of all quantities: money. With time and things on the same
, we can establish how many of our working hours equal the price of a product in a store.

way of thinking about time is not universal, however. Beliefs about time remain profoundly different from culture to culture. Research shows
ral differences in time can be as vast as those between languages. In one particularly telling study of the roots of culture shock, Spradley and Ph
l a group of returning Peace Corps volunteers to rank 33 items concerning the amount of cultural adjustment each had required of them. Th
ded a wide range of items familiar to fearful travelers, such as “the type of food eaten,” the “personal cleanliness of most people,” “the numb
le of your own race,” and “the general standard of living.” But aside from mastering the foreign language, the two greatest difficulties for the F
s volunteers were concerned with social time: “the general pace of life,” followed by one of its most significant components, “how punctual
le are” (Spradley & Phillips, 1972).



Figure 20.1

The idea that “time is money” may be good for business but is it good for society in general? What other ways do people around the world conceptualize and experience time? [Image: CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

a century ago anthropologist Edward Hall described cultural rules of social time as the “silent language” (Hall, 1983). These informal patterns of
seldom, if ever, made explicit. They exist in the air around us. They are either familiar and comfortable or unfamiliar and wrong.” The world
ren simply pick up their society’s conceptions of early and late, of waiting and rushing, of the past, the present, and the future, as they mature
ɔnary clearly defines these rules of time for them or for strangers who stumble over the maddening incongruities between the time sense they l
them and the one they face in a new land.

ıres may differ on many aspects of social time—its value, meaning, how it should be divided, allocated, and measured. The following dimension
cularly prone to different cultural, as well as individual, interpretations:

rk Versus Leisure

e are cultural differences in the value placed on work, on leisure, and upon the balance between the two. Although some balance is universal rred formulas differ both across cultures and between individuals in each culture. The differences are marked even within highly industria tries, The United States and Japan are famous for long work hours, as exemplified by the terms “workaholic” and “*karoshi*” (“death by overw ine, 1997). European nations tend to also emphasize work, with many differences among countries, but generally put greater emphasis on prese ork time than do people in the United States and Japan (Levine, 2012).

spent within the workplace also varies across cultures. People tend to spend more of their work time on-task in some cultures and more of that lizing—informal chatting, having tea or coffee with others, etc.—in other cultures. Studies have found wide cultural variation in answers t ion: “In the companies for which you have worked, what percent of time do people typically spend on tasks that are part of their job description.” ple, people working in companies in large cities in the United States tend to report in the range of “80 percent task time, 20 percent social time. ther hand, people working in companies in India, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia, and some Latin American countries tend to give answers closer t nt task time, 50 percent social time” (Brislin and Kim, 2003).

quence

culture sets rules concerning the appropriate sequence of tasks and activities. Is it work before play, or vice versa? Do people take all of their sle , or is there a siesta in the midafternoon? Is one expected to have coffee or tea and socialize, and for how long, before getting down to se ess? There are also customs about sequences over the long run. For example, how long is the socially accepted period of childhood, if it exists a when is it time to assume the responsibilities of an adult?

ck and Event Time



Figure 20.2

Cultures differ greatly in their adherence to “clock time”. While some cultures pride themselves on managing time down to the second (the trains run on time!), others have a more flexible view of when is the right time for an event to begin or end. [Image: John Tenniel, CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

most fundamental difference in timekeeping throughout history has been between people operating by the clock and those who measure time by s s (Lauer, 1981). This profound difference in thinking about time continues to divide cultures today. Under clock time, the hour on the time rns the beginning and ending of activities. Under event time, scheduling is determined by the flow of the activity. Events begin and end whe al consensus, participants “feel” the time is right (Levine, 1997).

ent-time societies, modes of time-reckoning tend to express social experience. Sometimes activities occur in finely coordinated sequences, but wi
ving the clock. For example, anthropologists have described how participants at an Indian wake move from gathering time to prayer time, sir
intermission, and mealtime. They move by consensual feeling—when "the time feels right"—but with no apparent concern for the time on the clo

countries exhort event time as a philosophy of life. In East Africa, there is a popular adage that "Even the time takes its time." In Trinidad,
nonly said that "Any time is Trinidad time" (Birth, 1999). In the United States and much of Europe, by contrast, the right way to measure tir
ned to be by the clock. This is especially true when it comes to work hours. Time is money, and any time not focused on-task is seen as wasted tir

the language of time may be more or less event-oriented. The Kachin people of North Burma, for example, have no single word equivalent of "ti
use the word *ahkying* to refer to the "time" of the clock, *na* to a long "time," *tawng* to a short "time," *ta* to springtime, and *asak* to the "time"
ın's life. Whereas, clock time cultures treat time as an objective entity—it is a noun in English—the Kachin words for time are treated more
bs (Levine, 1997).

e different ways of time-keeping can often lead to cultural misunderstandings. Individuals operating on clock time are careful to be punctual
ct the same of others. Those on event time are more spontaneous in beginning and ending events and, as a result, tend to be less punctual and
rstanding when others are less punctual.

e are also differences within cultures—on both the individual and situational levels. To take just one example, some workers may prosper under cl
ed schedules while others may prefer to complete their work on their own schedules. Similarly, some jobs (for example, financial traders) der
-time precision while others (for example, some creative arts) thrive on the spontaneity of event-time scheduling. Levine (2012) argues for fluen
approaches and to recognize when either is more beneficial.

endars

cultures use social activities to define their calendars rather than the other way around. The calendars of the Nuer people from the Upper Nile i
n, for example, are based on the seasonal changes in their environment. They know that the month of *kur* is occurring *because* they are building
ıg dams and cattle camps. When they break camp and return to their villages, they know it must now be the month of *dwat*.

societies have some type of week, but it is not always seven days long. The Muysca of Colombia had a three-day week. The Incas of Peru had
week. Often the length of the week reflects cycles of activities, rather than the other way around. For many, the market is the main activity requ
coordination. The Khasi people hold their markets every eighth day. Consequently, they have made their week eight days long and named the da
eek after the places where the main markets occur (Levine, 2005).

ychronic and Monochronic Time

strial/organizational psychologists emphasize the significance of monochronic versus polychronic work patterns (Bluedorn, 2002). People
ıizations in clock-time cultures are more likely to emphasize monochronic (M-time) approaches, meaning they like to focus on one activity at a
le in event time cultures, on the other hand, tend to emphasize polychronic (P-time) approaches, meaning they prefer to do several things at
e labels were originally developed by Hall (1983). M-time people like to work from start to finish in linear sequence: The first task is begur
pleted before turning to another, which is then begun and completed. In polychronic time, however, one project goes on until there is an inclinati
ration to turn to another, which may lead to an idea for another, then back to first, with intermittent and unpredictable pauses and reassumptions o
or another. Progress on P-time occurs a little at a time on each task.



Figure 20.3

What should dictate the conclusion of a good conversation, other time commitments or the flow of the conversation itself? P-time cultures prefer the latter. [Image: mikecogh, https://goo.gl/AjWjkE, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://goo.gl/osSgSv]

ıe cultures are characterized by a strong involvement with people. They emphasize the completion of human transactions rather than keepiı ɬules. For example, two P-time individuals who are deep in conversation will typically choose to arrive late for their next appointment rather tha ːhe flow of their discussion. Both would be insulted, in fact, if their partner were to abruptly terminate the conversation before it came to a spontar lusion.

ıe (2012) argues for the value of shifting between each approach depending on the characteristics of the individuals and the situations involved. ɔration, for example, some positions may require tight scheduling of time (e.g., accountants during tax time). On the other hand, employees in rese levelopment may be most productive when less tightly controlled.

ɛnce and “Doing Nothing”

me cultures, notably the United States and Western Europe, silence makes people uncomfortable. It may denote nothing is happening or that some ing wrong. The usual response is to say something, to fill the silence or to keep the meeting or conversation going. People in other cultures, inclu ˀ Asian and Pacific Island nations, are quite comfortable with silence. It is seen as an opportunity to focus inward and gather one’s thoughts before ɻ. The Japanese emphasize “ma,” which roughly translates as the “space” between things, or the “pause.” It implies that what happens between th ıat doesn’t seem to be happening, is as or more important than what is visibly happening. As an extreme example, consider a question people in Bı begin their day by asking: “What isn’t going to happen today?”

in (2000) has described how cultural misunderstandings and counterproductive decisions often arise from these differences. For example, “Amer ʂometimes misinterpret long periods of silence as a signal that they should make a concession. Their negotiating counterparts in Asia know this ʂometimes prolong their silence in the expectation that a concession will be made.”

lated temporal difference concerns what people perceive as “wasted time.” People, cultures, and economies that emphasize the rule that “tir ɏy” may see any time not devoted to tangible production as wasted time. People in other cultures, however, believe that overemphasis on this rule ɛ of one’s time in a larger sense, that it is a wasteful way to spend one’s life. If something more worthy of one’s attention—be it social- or work-re allenges a planned schedule, it is seen as wasteful to not deviate from the planned schedule. In fact, the term “wasted time” may make little sens al comment may be, “There is no such thing as wasted time. If you are not doing one thing, you are doing something else” (Levine, 1997).

ɾms Concerning Waiting

ıres differ in their norms for waiting, not only how long it is appropriate to keep a person waiting but how the rules change depending on the situ he people involved. Levine (1997) describes a number of “rules” to waiting and how these rules differ in various cultures. Some useful questions

ıles based on the principle that time is money? Who is expected to wait for whom, under what circumstances, and for how long? Are some indivi
virtue of their status, power, and/or wealth—exempt from waiting? What is the protocol for waiting in line? Is it an orderly procedure, as in the U
dom, or do people just nudge their way through the crowd, pushing the people ahead of them, until they somehow make their way to the front,
? Is there a procedure for buying oneself a place in front, or off the line completely? What social message is being sent when the accepted rule
ɐn?

nporal Orientation

ɐ are individual and cultural differences in people's orientation toward the past, present, and future. Zimbardo and Boyd (2008) have developed a
listinguishes between six types of temporal frames:

ast negative—a pessimistic, negative, or aversive orientation toward the past.
ast positive—a warm, sentimental, nostalgic, and positive construction of the past.
resent hedonistic—hedonistic orientation attitude toward time and life.
resent fatalistic—a fatalistic, helpless, and hopeless attitude toward the future and life.
uture—planning for, and achievement of, future goals, characterizing a general future orientation.
uture transcendental—an orientation to the future beyond one's own death.



Figure 20.4

Reflecting on our own lives, we often shift between various temporal orientations. Consider your usual perspective. Do you find yourself with a particular emphasis on the past, present, or future? [Image: Christian, https://goo.gl/QZzRLB, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, https://goo.gl/Toc0ZF]

ɹardo and Boyd have found large individual and cultural differences on both the individual subscales and the patterns of the subscales taken toge
describe a wide range of consequences of these differences. Time perspective affects political, economic, personal, social, environmental, and
ıins of life and society. One of the paradoxes, they report, is that each particular temporal perspective is associated with numerous personal and s
fits but that, in excess, they are associated with even greater costs. There are both positive and negative processes associated with each perspe
ɨiduals who focus on the past, for example, are often described with terms such as happy, grateful, patriotic, high self-esteem, and having st
ɒnal values; on the other hand, past time perspective can be associated with terms such as depressed, guilty, angry and revengeful, and resista
ge. Similarly, a focus on the present may be associated with strong social affiliations, joy, sensuality, sexuality, energy, and improvisation; but it
ɔe associated with violence, anger, over-fatalism, risk-taking, and addictive behavior. A focus on the future may be associated with achievement,
ıcy, healthy behaviors, and hope for change; but also with anxiety, social isolation, competitiveness, and unhealthy physical consequences rar
coronary artery disease to sexual impotence. The authors argue for the importance of a healthy balance in one's temporal orientation.

ɛ Pace of Life

e are profound differences in the pace of life on many levels—individual temperament, cultural norms, between places, at different times, d
ent activities. Levine and Norenzayan (1999) conducted a series of field experiments measuring walking speed, work speed, and concern with
in countries around the world. They found that the characteristic pace of life of a place has consequences—both positive and negative—fo
ical, social, economic, and psychological well-being of people who live there. The optimal pace, they argue, requires flexibility and sensitivi
hing individual preferences to the requirements of the situation.

nclusion

erstanding the values and assumptions a culture places on these temporal dimensions is essential to creating policies that enhance the quali
les' lives. The historian Lewis Mumford once observed how "each culture believes that every other space and time is an approximation
ersion of the real space and time in which it lives." The truth, however, is there is no single correct way to think about time. There are different wa
ing, each with their pluses and minuses, and all may be of value in given situations.

side Resources

o: Dealing with Time

or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernbluepr
0#oembed-1

o: RSA Animate—The Secret Powers of Time

or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernbluepr
0#oembed-2

cussion Questions

an you give an example of Edward Hall's notion of time as a "silent language"?
an you give an example of clock time in your own life? Can you give an example of event time?
re there activities where you might benefit from another culture's approach to time rather than your usual approach? Give an example.
/hat do you think are the consequences, both positive and negative, of a faster pace of life?
it fair to conclude that some cultural time practices are more advanced than others? That some are healthier than others? Explain.

abulary

k time
cheduling activities according to the time on the clock.

apanese way of thinking that emphasizes attention to the spaces between things rather than the things themselves.
ochronic (M-time)
Ionochronic thinking focuses on doing one activity, from beginning to completion, at a time.
of life
he frequency of events per unit of time; also referred to as speed or tempo.
chronic (P-time)
olychronic thinking switches back and forth among multiple activities as the situation demands.
t language
ultural norms of time and time use as they pertain to social communication and interaction.
l time
cheduling by the flow of the activity. Events begin and end when, by mutual consensus, participants "feel" the time is right.
poral perspective
he extent to which we are oriented toward the past, present, and future.

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2.8: Memorizing

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- How does working memory work, exactly?
- How do short-term and long-term memory function?
- What obstacles exist to remembering?
- When and how should you memorize things?
- In what situations is it best to memorize, and what do you memorize?
- What can you do consistently to improve both your short- and long-term memory?

Memory is one of those cherished but mysterious elements in life. Everyone has memories, and some people are very good at rapid recall, which is an enviable skill for test takers. We know that we seem to lose the capacity to remember things as we age, and scientists continue to study how we remember some things but not others and what memory means, but we don't know that much about memory, really.

Nelson Cowan is one researcher who is working to explain what we do know about memory. His article "What Are the Differences between Long-Term, Short-Term, and Working Memory?" breaks down the different types of memory and what happens when we recall thoughts and ideas. When we remember something, we actually do quite a lot of thinking. "What are the differences between long-term, short-term, and working memory?"

We go through three basic steps when we remember ideas or images: we encode, store, and retrieve that information. Encoding is how we first perceive information through our senses, such as when we smell a lovely flower or a putrid trash bin. Both make an impression on our minds through our sense of smell and probably our vision. Our brains encode, or label, this content in short-term memory in case we want to think about it again.

If the information is important and we have frequent exposure to it, the brain will store it for us in case we need to use it in the future in our aptly named long-term memory. Later, the brain will allow us to recall or retrieve that image, feeling, or information so we can do something with it. This is what we call remembering.



Figure 8.1

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Take a few minutes to list ways you create memories on a daily basis. Do you think about how you make memories? Do you do anything that helps you keep track of your memories?

Foundations of Memory

William Sumrall et al. in the *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* explain the foundation of memory by noting: "Memory is a term applied to numerous biological devices by which living organisms acquire, retain, and make use of skills and knowledge. It is present in all forms of higher order animals. The most evolutionary forms of memory have taken place in human beings. Despite much research and exploration, a complete understanding of human memory does not exist."

Working Memory

Working memory is a type of short-term memory, but we use it when we are actively performing a task. For example, nursing student Marilyn needs to use her knowledge of chemical reactions to suggest appropriate prescriptions in various medical case studies. She does not have to recall every single fact she learned in years of chemistry classes, but she does need to have a working memory of certain chemicals and how they work with others. To ensure she can make these connections, Marilyn will have to review and study the relevant chemical details for the types of drug interactions she will recommend in the case studies.

In working memory, you have access to whatever information you have stored in your memory that helps you complete the task you are performing. For instance, when you begin to study an assignment, you certainly need to read the directions, but you must also remember that in class your professor reduced the number of problem sets the written instructions indicated you needed to finish. This was an oral addition to the written assignment. The change to the instructions is what you bring up in working memory when you complete the assignment.

Short-Term Memory

Short-term memory is a very handy thing. It helps us remember where we set our keys or where we left off on a project the day before. Think about all the aids we employ to help us with short-term memory: you may hang your keys in a particular place each evening so you know exactly where they are supposed to be. When you go grocery shopping, do you ever choose a product because you recall an advertising jingle? You see the box of cereal and you remember the song on the TV commercial. If that memory causes you to buy that product, the advertising worked. We help our memory along all the time,

which is perfectly fine. In fact, we can modify these everyday examples of memory assistance for purposes of studying and test taking. The key is a deliberate use of strategies that are not so elaborate that they are too difficult to remember in our short-term memory.

ACTIVITY 6.1

Consider this list of items. Look at the list for no more than 30 seconds. Then, cover up the list and use the spaces below to complete an activity.

Baseball	Picture frame	Tissue	Paper clip
Bread	Pair of dice	Fingernail polish	Spoon
Marble	Leaf	Doll	Scissors
Cup	Jar of sand	Deck of cards	Ring
Blanket	Ice	Marker	String

Without looking at the list, write down as many items as you can remember.

Now, look back at your list and make sure that you give yourself credit for any that you got right. Any items that you misremembered, meaning they were not in the original list, you won't count in your total. TOTAL ITEMS REMEMBERED _____.

There were 20 total items. Did you remember between 5 and 9 items? If you did, then you have a typical short-term memory and you just participated in an experiment, of sorts, to prove it.

Harvard psychology professor George A. Miller in 1956 claimed humans can recall about five to nine bits of information in our short-term memory at any given time. Other research has come after this claim, but this concept is a popular one. Miller's article is entitled "The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two" and is easily accessible online if you're interested in learning more about this seminar report.[1]

Considering the vast amount of knowledge available to us, five to nine bits isn't very much to work with. To combat this limitation, we clump information together, making connections to help us stretch our capacity to remember. Many factors play into how much we can remember and how we do it, including the subject matter, how familiar we are with the ideas, and how interested we are in the topic, but we certainly cannot remember absolutely everything, for a test or any other task we face. As such, we have to use effective strategies, like those we cover later in this chapter, to get the most out of our memories.

ACTIVITY 6.2

Now, let's revisit the items above. Go back to them and see if you can organize them in a way that you would have about five groups of items. See below for an example of how to group them.

Row 1: Items found in a kitchen
Row 2: Items that a child would play with
Row 3: Items of nature
Row 4: Items in a desk drawer/school supplies
Row 5: Items found in a bedroom

Cup	Spoon	Ice	Bread	
Baseball	Marble	Pair of dice	Doll	Deck of cards
Jar of sand	Leaf			
Marker	String	Scissors	Paper clip	
Ring	Picture frame	Fingernail polish	Tissue	Blanket

Now that you have grouped items into categories, also known as chunking, you can work on remembering the categories and the items that fit into those categories, which will result in remembering more items. Check it out below by covering up the list of items again and writing down what you can remember.

Now, look back at your list and make sure that you give yourself credit for any that you got right. Any items that you misremembered, meaning they were not in the original list, you won't count in your total. TOTAL ITEMS REMEMBERED _____. Did you increase how many items you could remember?

Long-Term Memory

Long-term memory is exactly what it sounds like. These are things you recall from the past, such as the smell of your elementary school cafeteria or how to pop a wheelie on a bicycle. Our brain keeps a vast array of information, images, and sensory experiences in long-term memory. Whatever it is we are trying to keep in our memories, whether a beautiful song or a list of chemistry vocabulary terms, must first come into our brains in short-term memory. If we want these fleeting ideas to transfer into long-term memory, we have to do some work, such as causing frequent exposure to the information over time (such as studying the terms every day for a period of time or the repetition you performed to memorize multiplication tables or spelling rules) and some relevant manipulation of the information.

According to Alison Preston of the University of Texas at Austin's Center for Learning and Memory, "A short- term memory's conversion to a long-term memory requires changes within the brain . . . and result[s] in changes to neurons (nerve cells) or sets of neurons. . . . For example, new synapses—the connections between neurons through which they exchange information—can form to allow for communication between new networks of neurons. Alternatively, existing synapses can be strengthened to allow for increased sensitivity in the communication between two neurons."

When you work to convert your thoughts into memories, you are literally *changing your mind.* Much of this brain work begins in the part of the brain called the *hippocampus*. Preston continues, "Initially, the hippocampus works in concert with sensory-processing regions distributed in the neocortex (the outermost layer of the brain) to form the new memories. Within the neocortex, representations of the elements that constitute an event in our life are distributed across multiple brain regions according to their content. . . .When a memory is first formed, the hippocampus rapidly combines this distributed information into a single memory, thus acting as an index of representations in the sensory-processing regions. As time passes, cellular and molecular changes allow for the strengthening of direct connections among the neocortical regions, enabling access to the memory independent of the hippocampus."

We learn the lyrics of a favorite song by singing and/or playing the song over and over. That alone may not be enough to get that song into the coveted long-term memory area of our brain, but if we have an emotional connection to the song, such as a painful breakup or a life-changing event that occurred while we were listening to the song, this may help. Think of ways to make your study session memorable and create connections with the information you need to study. That way, you have a better chance of keeping your study material in your memory so you can access it whenever you need it.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

What are some ways you convert short-term memories into long-term memories?

Do your memorization strategies differ for specific courses (e.g., how you remember for math or history)?

Obstacles to Remembering

If remembering things 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, 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

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.

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*. Consider the following scenario: 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 okay 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."

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. 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.

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.

If you approach all your studying as memorization, you will find your course tests difficult at best. Most college courses will ask you to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create with the information you are learning, which is discussed earlier in the chapter. Merely being able to memorize so that you can recognize or recall information will not get you far in your college classes.

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.

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2.9: Test Preparation and Test Taking

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- What are the differences between test prep and taking the actual test?
- How can you take a *whole person* approach to test taking?
- What can you do on test day to increase your confidence and success?
- What should you know about test anxiety?

Once you are practicing good study habits, you'll be better prepared for actual test taking. Since studying and test taking are both part of learning, honing your skills in one will help you in the other.

Probably the most obvious differences between your preparation for an exam and the actual test itself is your level of urgency and the time constraints. A slight elevation in your stress level can actually be okay for testing—it keeps you focused and *on your game* when you need to bring up all the information, thinking, and studying to show what you've learned. Properly executed, test preparation mixed in with a bit of stress can significantly improve your actual test-taking experience.

Preparation vs. Actual Test

You can replicate the effective sense of urgency an actual test produces by including timed writing into your study sessions. You don't need all of your study time to exactly replicate the test, but you would be well served to find out the format of the exam in advance and practice the skills you'll need to use for the various test components. Consider this scenario: On one early exam in history, Stuart learned the prof was going to include several short-answer essay questions—one for each year of the time period covered. Stuart set up practice times to write for about 15 to 20 minutes on significant events from his notes because he estimated that would be about how much time he could devote out of the hour-long testing session to write one or two required short-answer questions. He would write a prompt from his notes, set a timer, and start writing. If you're ready and you have practiced and know the material, 20 minutes is adequate to prepare, draft, and revise a short response, but you don't have a lot of extra time.

Likewise, in a math exam, you will need to know what kinds of problems you will have to solve and to what extent you'll need to show your computational work on the exam. If you are able to incorporate this sort of timed problem-solving into your study time, you'll be more prepared and confident when you actually come to the exam. Making yourself adhere to a timed session during your study can only help. It puts a sense of urgency on you, and it will help you to find out what types of problems you need to practice more than ones that perhaps you're more comfortable solving.

Leveraging Study Habits for Test Prep

In your mind, you probably know what you need to do to be prepared for tests. Occasionally, something may surprise you—emphasis on a concept you considered unimportant or a different presentation of a familiar problem. But those should be exceptions. You can use all of your well-honed study habits to get ready for exams. Figure 4.7 is a checklist for study and test success for your consideration:



Figure 9.1 Checklist for Academic Success

Read this list with each separate class in mind, and check off the items you already do. Give yourself one point for every item you checked. If you always take the success steps—congratulations! They are not a guarantee, but doing the steps mindfully will give you a nice head start. If you do fewer than five of the steps—you have some work to do. But recognition is a good place to start, and you can incorporate these steps starting now.

As strange as this may sound, you can find some interesting research articles online about using the taste or smell of peppermint to increase memory, recall, and focus. Read more at: https://naturalsociety.com/mint-scent-improve-brain-cognition-memory. While sucking on a peppermint disk won't replace studying, why not experiment with this relatively easy idea that seems to be gaining some scientific traction?

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. Consider this example: 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 prior to the day of the test if you have questions about testing accommodations.



Figure 9.2 Part of preparing for a test is understanding the testing environment, which materials will be required, and which will be prohibited. For example, if you are not allowed to have your phone with you during a test, you may need to leave it in a secure place. Any approved accommodations you need should be indicated to the instructor ahead of time. (Credit: Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Malaysia / flickr Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

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. You can read more about time management in Managing Your Time and Priorities.

GET CONNECTED

Which apps can help you study for a test, increase your memory, and even help you overcome test anxiety?

Personal 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 website.

Study Hall 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 is created by expert instructors across a number of course areas.

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.

Consider this example: 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.

Test Anxiety



Figure 9.3 Test anxiety can be a common occurrence, but you can use strategies to manage it. (Credit: CUBoulder / flickr Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Test anxiety is very real. You may know this firsthand. Almost everyone gets a little nervous before a major exam, in the same way most people get slightly anxious meeting a new potential date or undertaking an unfamiliar activity. We second-guess whether we're ready for this leap, if we prepared adequately, or if we should postpone this potentially awkward situation. And in most situations, testing included, that reasonable level of nervous anticipation can be a good thing—enhancing your focus and providing you with a bit of bravado to get you through a difficult time.

Test anxiety, however, can cause us to doubt ourselves so severely that we underperform or overcompensate to the point that we do not do well on the exam. Don't despair; you can still succeed if you suffer from test anxiety. The first step is to understand what it is and what it is not, and then to practice some simple strategies to cope with your anxious feelings relative to test taking. Whatever you do, don't use the label *test anxiety* to keep you from your dreams of completing your education and pursuing whatever career you have your eyes on. You are bigger than any anxiety.

Understanding Test Anxiety

If someone tries to tell you that test anxiety is *all in your head*, they're sort of right. Our thinking is a key element of anxiety of any sort. On the other hand, test anxiety can manifest itself in other parts of our bodies as well. You may feel queasy or light-headed if you are experiencing test anxiety. Your palms may sweat, or you may become suddenly very hot or very cold for no apparent reason. At its worst, test anxiety can cause its sufferers to experience several unpleasant conditions including nausea, diarrhea, and shortness of breath. Some people may feel as though they may throw up, faint, or have a heart attack, none of which would make going into a testing situation a pleasant idea. You can learn more about symptoms of test anxiety from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America that conducts research on this topic.

Back to our minds for a minute. We think constantly, and if we have important events coming up, such as exams, but other significant events as well, we tend to think about them seemingly all the time. Almost as if we have a movie reel looping in our heads, we can anticipate everything that may happen during these events—both sensational results and catastrophic endings. What if you oversleep on the test day? What if you're hit by a bus on the way to campus? What if you get stung by a mysterious insect and have to save the world on the very day of your exam?

How about the other way? You win the lottery! Your screenplay is accepted by a major publisher! You get a multimillion-dollar record deal! It could happen. Typically, though, life falls somewhere in between those two extremes, unless you live in an action movie. Our minds, however, (perhaps influenced by some of those action movies or spy novels we've seen and read) often gravitate to those black-and-white, all-or-nothing results. Hence, we can become very nervous when we think about taking an exam because if we do really poorly, we think, we may have to face consequences as dire as dropping out of school or never graduating. Usually, this isn't going to happen, but we can literally make ourselves sick with anxiety if we dwell on those slight possibilities. You actually may encounter a few tests in your academic careers that are so important that you have to alter your other life plans temporarily, but truly, this is the exception, not the rule. Don't let the most extreme and severe result take over your thoughts. Prepare well and do your best, see where you land, and then go from there.

Using Strategies to Manage Test Anxiety

You have to work hard to control test anxiety so it does not take an unhealthy hold on you every time you face a test situation, which for many of you will last well into your careers. One of the best ways to control test anxiety is to be prepared for the exam. You can control that part. You can also learn effective relaxation techniques including controlled breathing, visualization, and meditation. Some of these practices work well even in the moment: at your test site, take a deep breath, close your eyes, and smile—just bringing positive thoughts into your mind can help you meet the challenges of taking an exam without anxiety taking over.

The tests in the corporate world or in other career fields may not look exactly like the ones you encounter in college, but professionals of all sorts take tests routinely. Again, being prepared helps reduce or eliminate this anxiety in all these situations. Think of a presentation or an explanation you have provided well numerous times—you likely are not going to feel anxious about this same presentation if asked to provide it again. That's because you are prepared and know what to expect. Try to replicate this feeling of preparation and confidence in your test-taking situations.

Many professions require participants to take frequent licensing exams to prove they are staying current in their rapidly changing work environments, including nursing, engineering, education, and architecture, as well as many other occupations. You have tools to take control of your thinking about tests. Better to face it head- on and let test anxiety know who's in charge!

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2.10: Placement Assessment

Alise Lamoreaux and Dave Dillon

"Great ideas need landing gear as well as wings."

– C.D. Jackson

Congratulations! You are accepted into college. Now what? Before you can begin signing up for classes, most colleges will require you to take placement tests.

Some Things to Think About:

1. What are the purpose of the placement tests?
2. Can a student fail the placement tests?
3. Where are the placement tests given?
4. What does a student need to do to sign up to take the placement tests?
5. How much does it cost to take the placement tests?
6. Can a student re-take the placement tests if they are not happy with the score?
7. How long are the placement test scores valid?
8. Can a student study for the placement tests?

Community colleges tend to rely on placement testing because students entering these colleges have a variety of backgrounds and skill levels. The test results may mean a student can skip introductory level classes or that students need to refresh or build skills in a specific area. However, if students get a low score on the tests, they may need to take extra classes to be able to register for a certain class in a specific program.

Across the college campus, in many different classes, a student will be asked to read and write on a daily basis as part of the class activities. Even a speech class will require writing! As a result, many classes have a prerequisite requirement for writing.

Many students have not taken a math class recently, or been using more than basic math in their daily lives, and may need to refresh or build their skills to be able to handle the course requirements of college. Also, certain programs emphasize specific math skills in order for students to be successful in those programs of study. Culinary arts students must be proficient with the math skills needed for menu planning and food cost analysis. Those are different skills than a nursing student. A nurse needs to be proficient in math related to dosage and other measurements. The purpose of the placement tests is to help students identify their abilities. It is important for students to take the placement tests seriously since the test scores will influence course selection. Scoring well on placement tests can save a student time and money.

Which Student in the Video Reflects Your Attitude About College Placement Tests?

Video: *College Placement Test Video*, Golden West College.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=58#oembed-1

Can a Student Study for College Placement Tests?

Students often wonder if they should study for assessment tests. Studying and becoming familiar with the type of test you will be taking is a good idea. Many college assessment websites include sample questions. If a student is unhappy with their assessment score, retesting options sometimes exist, but vary from college to college. Check the policy of the college you are choosing to attend before you take the test! Poor performance on a placement tests may end up costing you extra time and money. If the you haveto take extra classes to build the skills needed for college that may change the timeline for your goal and target completion.

If you do poorly on a placement test, you might end up placed in a remedial math or English class. These classes are designed to help students learn the basic skills necessary for more complex classes, but they rarely count towards a degree. Spending time and money to take these classes can be frustrating, especially at the beginning of your college experience. Fortunately, community colleges often have free or low-cost options for improving a student's skill level for college courses. If you are at a university, check to see if you can take these classes at a local community college instead. If you are a community college student, check to see if there are free or low-cost options for taking these classes. These classes, called Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes can be

very helpful for getting ready for the rigors of college expectations. Along with improving academic skills, a student can also become familiar with the culture of the college before becoming a full-time student.

It is possible to study for placement tests and to become familiar with the format of the tests. Some college websites may have study resources listed to help students prepare for the placement tests. Check with the college you select to see if resources are suggested.

Some placement tests use an "adaptive" model. It gives students one question at a time. You must answer every question it presents. When you get a question correct, the computer adapts by giving a harder question worth more points for the next question. A wrong answer gives you an easier question worth fewer points for the next question.

Many colleges also use "multiple measures" to determine a students' placement level. Sometimes high school grades for English and math are used along with other indicators a college has approved. If you have difficulty reading, writing, or listening, or if you have a documented disability, you may be eligible for special accomodations or exceptions on placement tests. Check with your academic advisor or the testing center at your college to make sure that you have the appropriate support and preparation when you take your placement tests.

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Adaptions: Reformatted, chapter title changed back to Placement Testing, changed references back to College Testing Placement from Assessment Test, some content edited for broader audience, Kelly McGonigal: How to Make Stress Your Friend TED Talk relocated to Health unit.

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2.11: Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking

Amy Baldwin

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 11.1 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.

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 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?

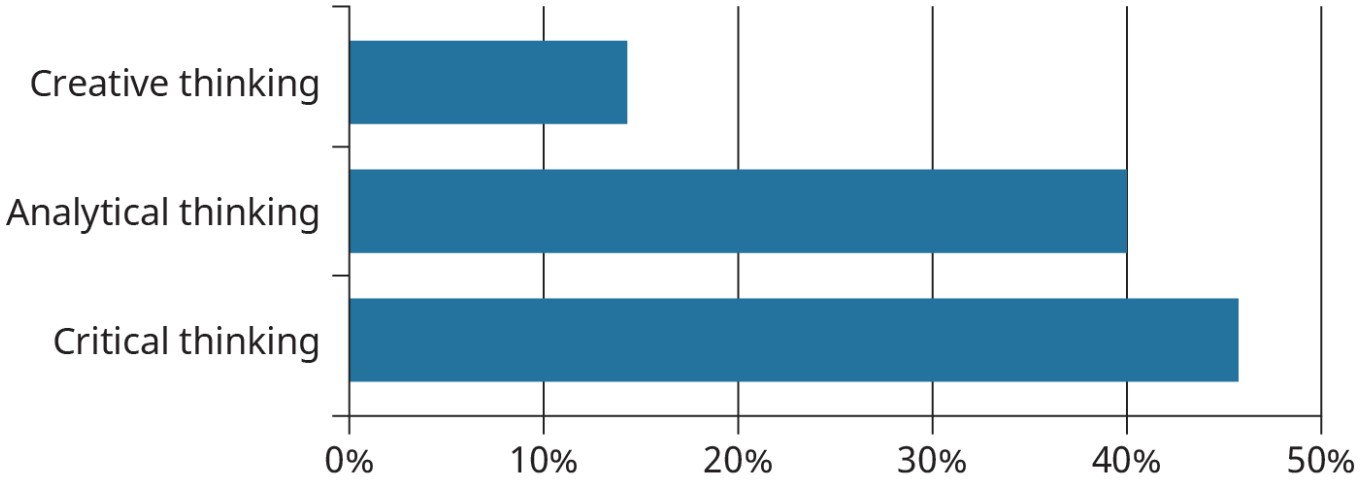


Figure 11.2

In which area do you have the most difficulty being creative?

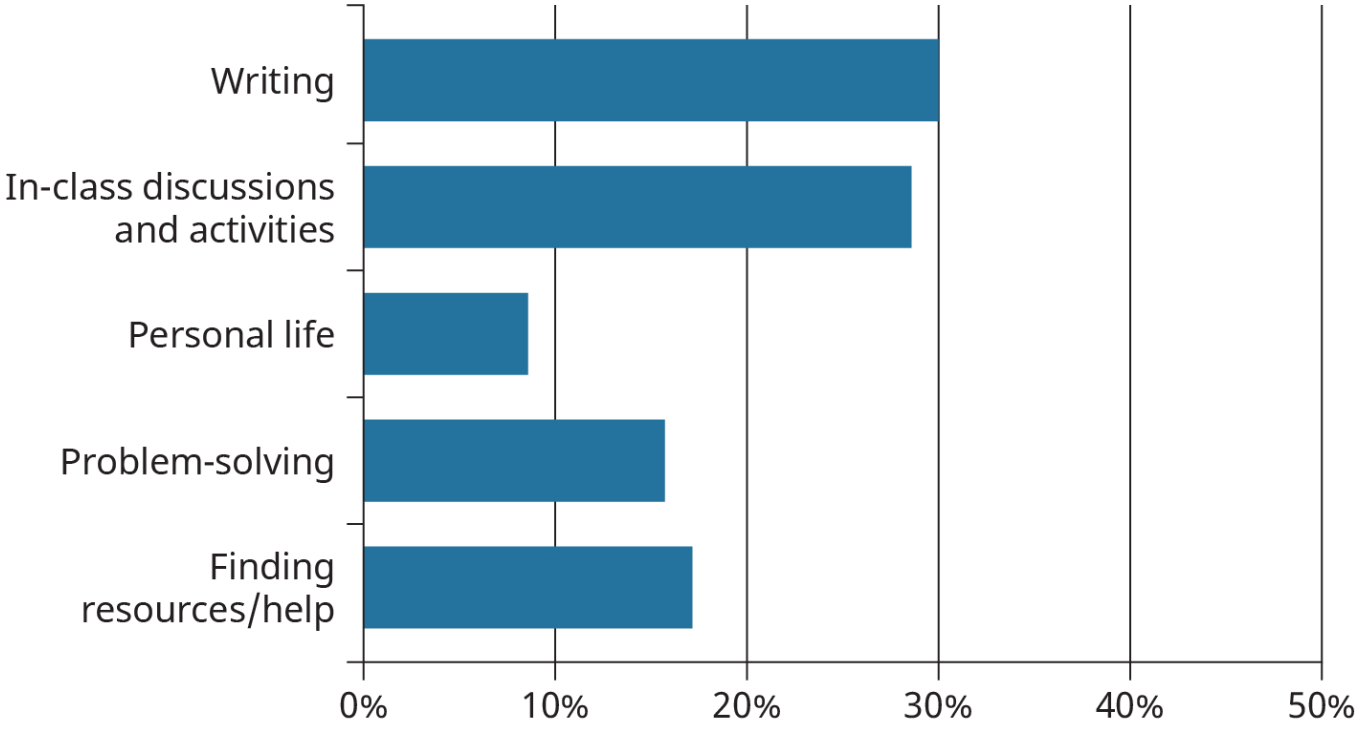


Figure 11.3

In which course areas or activities do you make the most use of problem-solving skills?

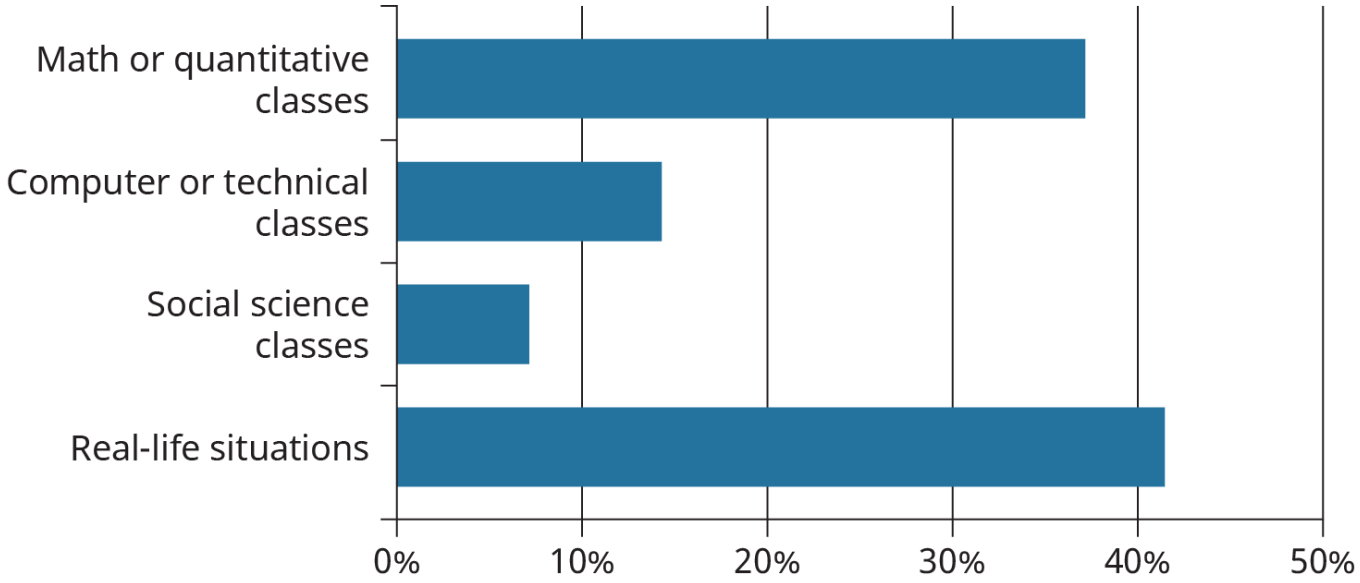


Figure 11.4

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.

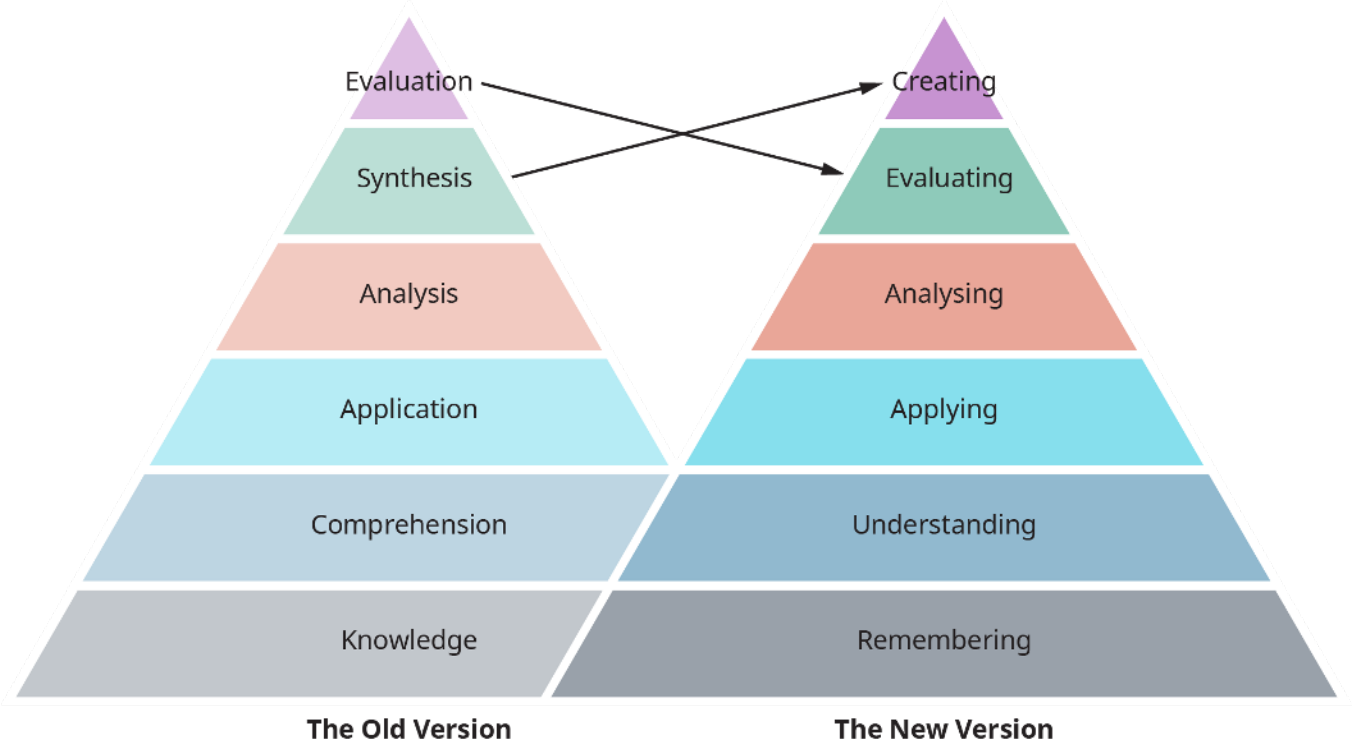


Figure 11.5 Bloom's Taxonomy is an important learning theory used by psychologists, cognitive scientists, and educators to demonstrate levels of thinking. Many assessments and lessons you've seen during your schooling have likely been arranged with Bloom's in mind. Researchers recently revised it to 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 11.6 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 Katherine 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 11.7 Denton Cooley (Credit: Texas Children's Hospital / Public Domain), Stephanie Kwolek (Credit: Chemical Heritage Foundation / Attribution 3.0), Katherine 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 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 11.8 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.

Activity

What is one of your favorite creative projects that you've recently accomplished? What made it creative? Ask at least one other person that same question and see if his or her answer inspires your own creative thinking on how to handle these situations:

- living with roommates who have different priorities or interests
- breaking away from family and old friends without severing ties all together
- determining if the major you initially chose really fits your personality
- scheduling your time for study, campus activities, work, and personal interests
- ensuring your assignments, presentations, or class artifacts show your best work

Think of ways you may approach these situations.

Creative Process Applied to a Sample Campus Activity

Creative Process Step	Description and Notes
Problem to Solve or Item/Work to Create	**Create a new logo for our Commuter Student Association**

Creative Process Step	Description and Notes
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.

Table 11.1 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.

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Baldwin, A. (2020). Critical Thinking. In *College Success*. OpenStax.

OpenStax College Success Chapter 7.2. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/7-2-creative-thinking

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Modifications: Figures and tables renumbered.

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2.12: Fact Checking

Walter Butler; Aloha Sargent; and Kelsey Smith

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Identify effective strategies for fact-checking sources
2. Investigate a source of information to determine reliability
3. Find better coverage for a source of information
4. Trace claims, quotes, and media to their original context

When you find a source of information, how do you know if it's true? How can you be sure that it is a reliable, trustworthy, and effective piece of evidence for your research? This chapter will introduce you to a set of strategies to quickly and effectively verify your sources, based on the approach taken by professional fact-checkers. Fact-checking is a form of information hygiene—it can minimize your own susceptibility to misinformation and disinformation, and help you to avoid spreading it to others.

As an introduction, please watch the following video [3:13], which discusses the results of a very interesting study of Stanford students, historians, and professional fact-checkers (Wineburg and McGrew). Which group do you think did the best job of identifying reliable sources?

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=630#oembed-1

Note: Turn on closed captions with the "CC" button or use the text transcript if you prefer to read.

Mike Caulfield, Washington State University digital literacy expert, has helpfully condensed key fact-checking strategies into a short list of four moves, or **things to do** to quickly make a decision about whether or not a source is **worthy of your attention**. It is referred to as the "SIFT" method:



Stop



When you initially encounter a source of information and start to read it—**stop**. Ask yourself whether you know and trust the author, publisher, publication, or website. If you don't, use the other fact-checking moves that follow, to get a better sense of what you're looking at. In other words, don't read, share, or use the source in your research until you know what it is, and you can verify it is reliable.

This is a particularly important step, considering what we know about the attention economy—social media, news organizations, and other digital platforms purposely promote sensational, divisive, and outrage-inducing content that emotionally hijacks our attention in order to keep us "engaged" with their sites (clicking, liking, commenting, sharing). Stop and check your emotions before engaging!

Investigate the Source



You don't have to do a three-hour investigation into a source before you engage with it. But if you're reading a piece on economics, and the author is a Nobel prize-winning economist, that would be useful information. Likewise, if you're watching a video on the many benefits of milk consumption, you would want to be aware if the video was produced by the dairy industry. This doesn't mean the Nobel economist will always be right and that the dairy industry can't ever be trusted. But knowing the expertise and agenda of the person who created the source is **crucial** to your interpretation of the information provided.

When investigating a source, **fact-checkers read "laterally"** across many websites, rather than digging deep (reading "vertically") into the one source they are evaluating. That is, they don't spend much time on the source itself, but instead they quickly **get off the page** and see what others have said about the source. They open up many tabs in their browser, piecing together different bits of information from across the web to get a better picture of the source they're investigating.

Please watch the following short video [2:44] for a demonstration of this strategy. Pay particular attention to how Wikipedia can be used to quickly get useful information about publications, organizations, and authors.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=630#oembed-2

Note: Turn on closed captions with the "CC" button or use the text transcript if you prefer to read.

Find Better Coverage



What if the source you find is low-quality, or you can't determine if it is reliable or not? Perhaps you don't really care about the source—you care about the **claim that source is making**. You want to know if it is true or false. You want to know if it represents

a consensus viewpoint, or if it is the subject of much disagreement. A common example of this is a meme you might encounter on social media. The random person or group who posted the meme may be less important than the quote or claim the meme makes.

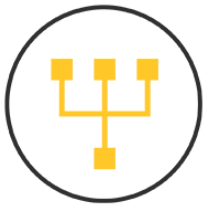
Your best strategy in this case might actually be to find a **better source altogether**, to look for **other coverage** that includes trusted reporting or analysis on that same claim. Rather than relying on the source that you initially found, you can trade up for a higher quality source.

The point is that you're not wedded to using that initial source. We have the internet! You can go out and find a better source, and invest your time there. Please watch this video [4:10] that demonstrates this strategy and notes how fact-checkers build a library of trusted sources they can rely on to provide better coverage.

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Note: Turn on closed captions with the "CC" button or use the text transcript if you prefer to read.

Trace Claims, Quotes, and Media to the Original Context



Much of what we find on the internet has been stripped of context. Maybe there's a video of a fight between two people with Person A as the aggressor. But what happened before that? What was clipped out of the video and what stayed in? Maybe there's a picture that seems real but the caption could be misleading. Maybe a claim is made about a new medical treatment based on a research finding—but you're not certain if the cited research paper actually said that. The people who re-report these stories either get things wrong by mistake, or, in some cases, they are intentionally misleading us.

In these cases you will want to trace the claim, quote, or media back to the source, so you can see it in its original context and get a sense of whether the version you saw was accurately presented. Please watch the following video [1:33] that discusses re-reporting vs. original reporting and demonstrates a quick tip: going "upstream" to find the original reporting source.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=630#oembed-4

Note: Turn on closed captions with the "CC" button or use the text transcript if you prefer to read.

"To tell students not to use Wikipedia is to deprive them of one of the most useful tools on the Internet. Instead of teaching them to avoid it, we should be teaching students how to use Wikipedia wisely" ("How to Use Wikipedia Wisely").

Misconceptions & Benefits

Wikipedia—the world's largest reference website—is broadly misunderstood. Because it is written by thousands of anonymous volunteers around the world, Wikipedia generates uncertainty or skepticism in many. If just *anyone* can change Wikipedia, won't there be inaccuracies? Won't people potentially abuse that power?

The open, collaborative approach of Wikipedia means that it is susceptible to vandalism, unverified information, or subtle viewpoint promotion. However, that same open approach also *increases* the chances that factual errors and misleading statements will be quickly corrected, and that articles will be consistently improved and updated. Indeed, an often-cited 2005 study (Giles), as well as a follow-up study in 2012 (Casebourne et al.), found no significant differences in accuracy between Wikipedia and Encyclopaedia Britannica articles.



Additionally, the Wikipedia community has strict rules about providing citations or references for facts and claims, and authors must adopt a neutral point of view. Because of this, Wikipedia articles are often the **best available introduction to a subject**. If you are researching a complex question, starting with the resources and summaries provided by Wikipedia can give you a substantial **running start** on an issue. For more information about this, see the section on Background Reading. The requirement for Wikipedia authors to cite their sources has another beneficial effect. If you can find a claim expressed in a Wikipedia article, you can almost always follow the footnotes to reliable sources for further research and evidence.

Areas for Caution

Not all Wikipedia articles are useful. Some articles are incomplete or contain "citation needed" warnings. You may find very short "stub" articles that are awaiting either further expansion, or deletion. You should avoid using these types of articles for your research.

Another known concern is systemic bias in Wikipedia, including gender and racial bias. For example, of the over 130,000 active editors of Wikipedia, only 8.5% to 16% are female; of the over 1.5 million biographies on Wikipedia, only 18% are about women (Kantor). Wikipedia has launched numerous initiatives to encourage more women to become editors and to improve their coverage of women; even so, the gender gap persists. With Wikipedia as well as other, more traditional forms of publishing, we must be aware of who creates the information we consume, and understand how that impacts our knowledge about research topics and the world around us. For more on bias, see the page on Information Sources: Bias.

Using Wikipedia Wisely

With an awareness of these benefits and concerns, you can more effectively use Wikipedia for fact-checking and to find background information on a topic. Please watch the following video [2:41] that addresses some of the common misconceptions about Wikipedia and demonstrates how you can **use this tool wisely, as professional fact-checkers often do**.

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Note: Turn on closed captions with the "CC" button or use the text transcript if you prefer to read.

Find Trusted Coverage

Often, claims or stories will come to you in the form of images and memes. How do you know if images have been digitally altered (Photoshopped) or if they are being shared out of context (misrepresented)?

If you want to find trusted coverage of the issue, claim, or photo, you have two options:

1. You can search the relevant text from the image
2. You can use "reverse image search"

Reverse Image Search Using Google

On your Computer

Using Chrome as your browser, right-click the image and select "Search Google for image." Note: On a Mac, use Control-click. On a Chromebook, use Alt-click.

In the example below, we can do a reverse image search on this meme that suggests space lasers were responsible for the California wildfires.



Figure 12.1 This is a screenshot of a meme claiming that the California wildfires were caused by “powerful lasers.” We can try to check this claim with a reverse image search.

On your Phone

Using Chrome (app), touch and hold the image, then select “Search Google for This Image” Note: You may first have to click a menu option to “Open in Chrome”

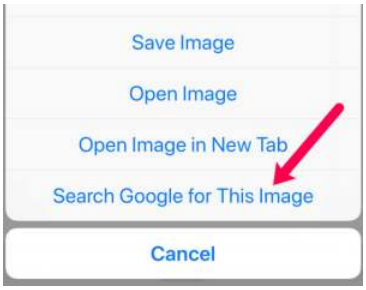


Figure 12.2 Although it is a bit more difficult, you can also conduct a reverse image search on your phone.

The Results

You will get a list of any other websites where the image has been used, including previous fact-checks of the image, and perhaps even a link to the real version of the photo.

In our example, we see that this meme has appeared in many other places, and that it has already been shown to be false by a reputable fact-checking organization.

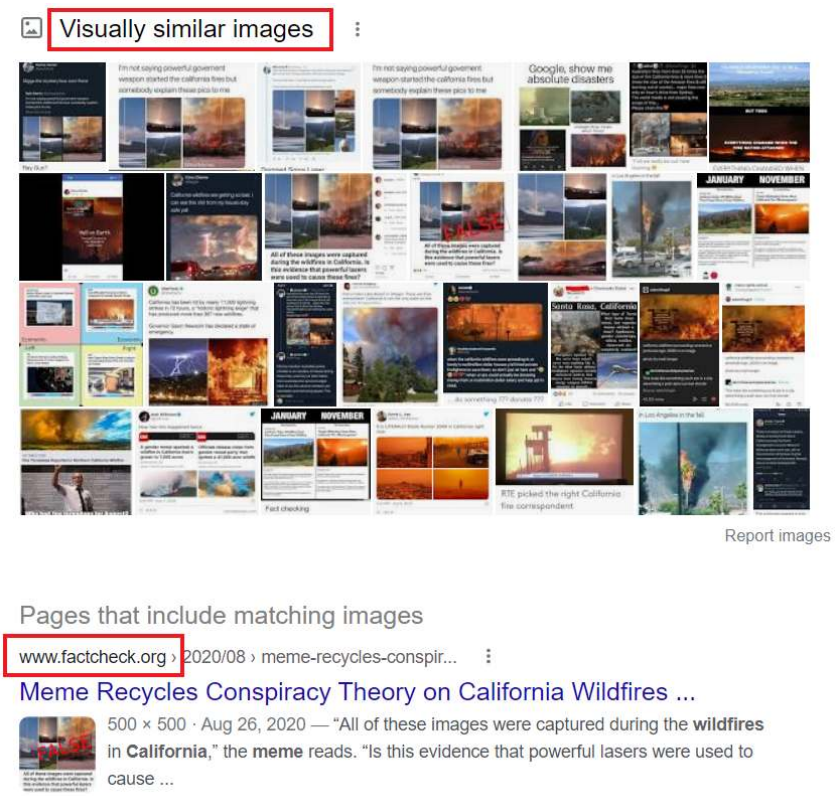


Figure 12.3 Our reverse image search results show that factcheck.org has already found this conspiracy theory meme to be false.

The results of this fact-checking led to some of the actual images, in context. In the screenshot below from the Twitter account for SpaceX, we see that the first image from the meme was actually an image of a SpaceX rocket launch, not a laser beam hitting California.



Figure 12.4 A Tweet from the official Twitter account for SpaceX shows the origin of one of the supposed "laser" images.

There's a theme that runs through all of these fact-checking moves: They are about reconstructing the necessary context to verify, understand, and interpret sources of information that we may encounter in academic, professional, and personal research.One piece of context is the author or publisher. What's their expertise? What's their agenda? This will require investigating the source.When it comes to claims, a key piece of context includes whether they are accepted or contested. By scanning for other coverage, you can see what the consensus is on a claim and perhaps find a better source.Finally, when evidence is presented through a certain lens—whether a quote or an image or a scientific finding—sometimes it helps to reconstruct the original context in which the evidence was presented.In some cases these techniques will show you that claims are false, or that sources are misleading or even deceptive. But in the majority of cases they do something just as important: They reestablish the context that the web so often strips away, allowing for more meaningful engagement with information.

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2.13: Using Library Databases

Walter Butler; Aloha Sargent; and Kelsey Smith

Scenario

Your English professor has assigned the class an argumentative essay. Your assigned topic for the essay is artificial intelligence. You are required to find evidence to support your argument from scholarly journals, magazines, newspapers, and books. You have to cite at least seven sources, at least one of each type, and you also have the option to use a video for one of your sources. Your professor states that she doesn't want you to use websites for your essay; you must use library databases and format your citations according to MLA. You are familiar with searching for books in the library, but unsure how to find the other resources.

Why Library Databases?

Although the internet houses great resources, some websites are not appropriate for college-level research, and sometimes professors have concerns over the information that students might encounter online. In a previous chapter we explored Fact-Checking, and in a later chapter, we will discuss Web Search Strategies to find relevant and reliable resources. Unfortunately, you can't find everything through a Google search, which is one reason why you'd want to use a library database.

Most library databases provide access to resources that you would normally subscribe to or pay for, such as a newspaper. You can access some newspaper articles for free online, but websites often limit the amount of articles you can view freely. For example, if you visit the *Los Angeles Times* online you might be able to view one or two articles. After that point, you will need to purchase a subscription to read more. But a library database will provide free access for students and professors at your college.

Another advantage of using a library database is that the resources are secured and safe to access. Some websites require you to accept additional considerations and agreements before accessing materials. But what are you agreeing to? Websites, by their nature, are dynamic resources; their content can change without warning. A resource in a database typically will not change and will often come with a permanent link (sometimes called a "permalink") so that you can find and share the resource in the future.

Please watch the following video [2:34] for a concise summary of the key differences between using library databases and the Web for your research:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=896#oembed-1

Note: Turn on closed captions with the "CC" button or use the text transcript if you prefer to read.

Additional Database Features

Library databases tend to come with additional tools to support your research. These tools can include help with writing citations, easy-to-use filters to limit your search results, and options to save the article for later use. Whenever you use a library database, you will want to become acquainted with these additional features that will streamline and support your research process.

Takeaways: Library Databases vs. Websites

Table 13.1 Library Databases and Websites

	Library Databases	**Websites**
Cost	Always free for students to access.	Varies. Sometimes you can access resources freely, other times you can't.
Privacy & Security	Exposure of students' information is limited through the databases.	You often must "agree to terms" before accessing content on a website.
Reliability	Information in a library database will not change unless the subscription changes.	Websites are dynamic, and content can change daily.

	Library Databases	Websites
Features	Databases typically come with a range of tools to help you find relevant resources. You have more control over the results you want to see.	Search engines online have limited features to narrow down results. You have less control over the results you want to see.

Critical Thinking: Databases or Websites?

Sometimes instructors will say: “Don’t use online sources—use library sources only!”

“But library databases are online,” you say to yourself. But you also understand that your instructor is referring to public websites or sources you can easily find using Google.

So, despite your instructor’s requirements, how would you decide when to use a library database versus a public website? What are a few of the advantages and disadvantages of each?

Many Options

If you look at your library’s database list, you might feel overwhelmed and confused. Why are there so many databases to choose from, and which one should you use? The first thing to realize is that library databases are each unique and specialized. Because of this, libraries tend to subscribe to multiple library databases to provide access to a range of materials that support the curriculum of the college. To choose a database, you need to know what each library database provides access to.

EBSCO, ProQuest, Gale

There are three big companies in the world of library databases: EBSCO, ProQuest, and Gale. Most likely, your library will have access to library databases that are owned by at least one of these, if not all three. Their library databases will generally provide you access to digital versions of resources: ebooks, newspaper articles, magazine articles, and scholarly journal articles. These companies also provide access to multimedia resources, such as streaming video and audio files. Some of the most common library databases from these companies are EBSCO’s Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, and Gale’s Academic OneFile. Any of these three library databases will connect you to the full range of resource types.

These three companies (EBSCO, ProQuest, and Gale) own so many library databases that they each also offer an aggregator search tool, which your library might or might not have access to depending on what they subscribe to. An aggregator search tool allows you to search across all of the library databases that your library subscribes to, owned by a single company. So, instead of searching in each of EBSCO’s library databases individually, you can do a single search using EBSCOhost. Likewise, you can use the ProQuest Platform to search across most ProQuest resources, and Gale’s PowerSearch to search across most Gale library databases. These aggregators also allow you to customize which library databases you want to search within. Note, however, that additional features are often available when library databases are searched one at a time.

Beyond these three companies are many others that your library might subscribe to that can be just as or maybe even more resourceful than the databases already discussed. Speaking to one of your librarians to understand which databases are the most appropriate for your research topic is always strongly recommended.

Scenario

Using the scenario for this chapter, and knowing that I need to find resources about artificial intelligence, I might want to focus on library databases that hold science articles (including general, multidisciplinary choices that cover science as well as many subjects). After looking at my library’s database list, I determine that I will start with EBSCOhost and choose EBSCO’s Science Full Text, Academic Search Complete, and MasterFILE. By using EBSCOhost, I’ll be able to search all three of these library databases at the same time.

Critical Thinking: Choosing a Database

Thinking back to the scenario for this chapter that asks you to find resources about artificial intelligence:

- Which library databases would you use?
- Why would you use those specific library databases?

- Are there any library databases that you would avoid? Why?

Your go-to databases for finding scholarly journal articles, newspaper articles, and magazine articles will probably come from EBSCO, ProQuest, and Gale. But what about videos, ebooks, and other special resources? Finding these types of resources will require you to become familiar with specialized databases that your library might subscribe to. Below are charts categorized by resource type listing some of the more popular databases. Your library may subscribe to only a few of these databases or even other databases not listed here, so make sure to always check with a librarian about what resources are available to you.

Table 2 Library Databases with Videos and their Types

LIBRARY DATABASES WITH VIDEOS	TYPES OF VIDEOS
Films on Demand	Mostly documentary and instructional
Academic Video Online	Mostly documentary and instructional
Swank	Popular movies
Kanopy	Mostly documentary, with some popular arthouse films
Intelecom	Mostly instructional

Table 3 Library Databases with Ebooks and their Types

LIBRARY DATABASES WITH EBOOKS	TYPES OF EBOOKS
Gale Ebooks	Reference (such as subject-specific encyclopedias and dictionaries) and other non-fiction
EBSCO Ebooks	Non-fiction and fiction
Ebook Central (ProQuest)	Non-fiction and fiction
Salem Ebooks	Reference

Table 4 Specialized Library Databases

SPECIALIZED LIBRARY DATABASES	TYPES OF RESOURCES
Artstor	Images
JSTOR	Scholarly Journals and ebooks
Project Muse	Scholarly Journals and ebooks
Statistical Abstract of the United States	Statistics, Demographics
OverDrive	Audio books, ebooks, magazines
Mango Languages	Language instruction
CQ Researcher	Reports on social issues
Opposing Viewpoints	Articles and resources focused on social issues
SIRS	Articles and resources focused on social issues
Facts on File	Articles and resources focused on social issues

Identifying Different Types of Articles

In our scenario, you have to identify and find different types of articles. As pointed out already, the library databases often come with filters that allow you to separate out these different types of resources. There are even some library databases, such as JSTOR,

that specialize in scholarly journal articles, or ProQuest's US Major Dailies, which specializes in newspapers. But what if you're using an aggregator, such as EBSCOhost, and you aren't using a filter to limit your search? How will you be able to differentiate a newspaper article from a magazine article or from a scholarly journal article? And why does it matter? There is a separate chapter that goes into the differences between information resources in more depth, but for quick reference consider the following characteristics of these resource types.

Scholarly Articles



Scholarly journal articles are usually long. They are also written with academic language that can sometimes be very technical. Especially in the sciences and social sciences, you will notice predictable sections within them, with subheadings like introduction, literature review, methodology, results/findings, and discussion/conclusion. They'll have a list of references or works cited, and are often authored by more than one person (especially in the sciences and social sciences). Scholarly journal articles focus on research topics and questions, which means that they may not be reflecting on specific events happening at the moment of publication; rather, they tend to reflect on trends and larger issues.

Magazine Articles



Magazine articles will generally be shorter than scholarly journal articles, written so that they can be understood easily by non-experts, and may or may not have different sections within the article. If they do, the subheadings will not be as predictable as they are in a scholarly journal article from the sciences or social sciences, and the section headings will probably relate back to the topic of the article. A magazine article in PDF format will probably be colorful and have images. You probably won't find a list of references or works cited at the end of a magazine article. In contrast to scholarly journal articles, magazine articles tend to look at specific events occurring at or around the time of publication, and the authors try to analyze that event to explain why it's important.

Newspaper Articles



Newspaper articles are usually the shortest of all three article types. Like magazine articles, they are written in simple language to be understood easily by the general public, but because they are shorter, they don't usually have different subsections within the article. While a printed newspaper article may have some images, there will be fewer than in magazines; newspaper articles in library databases are typically only available as HTML (i.e., no images). They also tend to describe events that are occurring at the moment the article was published, with very little analysis of importance other than the fact that the event happened. First-hand accounts from people who experienced an event are often reported in newspaper articles. Exceptions to this would be editorials and "op-ed" pieces, which are opinion-based articles about an issue.

Options



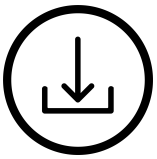
Most library databases give you the option to save, download, or email the resources that you find. You will want to get familiar with how the library databases present these options to you. For example, some library databases allow you to create your own free account within them. The advantage of creating an account (for example, with EBSCO, or ProQuest) is that you may be able to create folders to store links to resources you can easily find again later. You might also be able to save searches, so that you do not have to remember which keywords you entered. You can sometimes set up alerts attached to those searches, so if new resources are added to the library database (which can happen daily), you will be notified about those new relevant resources.

Emailing Sources



But maybe you do not want to set up an account. Not a problem! Many library databases allow you to send an email to yourself with the article or a link back to the article, without ever creating an account for the company that makes that database (You will, however, have to log in to your college library's website to access library databases from off campus, so the database knows you are a student there. If you're unsure how to do this, ask a librarian at your college.) This is where you will need to explore what options the library database offers. Sometimes, the email option is simple; sometimes you will have to fill out a form. If you see a form that needs to be filled out, review it carefully. The library database might be offering some great ways to save you time later, such as an option to include the citation of the article in the email. You can also send the article to other people: If you're working on a group project and everyone needs to look at the same resources, you might want to include your group members on the email form.

Downloading Sources



Some people prefer not to email the resource and they just want to download it. This is sometimes an option, depending on the library database and the resource. If it's available as a download, you might want to keep notes about the resource, so that you remember which library database you found it within, and any publication details you might need to build a proper citation for the resource.

One of the main tasks that you will do within library databases is find articles, often scholarly journal articles. Fortunately, many library databases include filters that limit your results to just scholarly journal articles. This is especially helpful when using the big aggregator search tools from EBSCO, ProQuest, and Gale. But there are often other considerations to take into account when finding resources. As a reminder, always check your assignment requirements and ask yourself these questions:

Assignment Guiding Questions

1. How many resources am I required to find?
2. What types of resources am I required to find?
3. Are there any types of resources that I am not allowed to use?
4. Is there a requirement related to the publication date of the resources?
5. Are there any other requirements that might be helpful to remember (due dates, citation styles, etc.)?

Let's look at our scenario for this chapter to answer these questions:

Your English professor has assigned the class an argumentative essay. Your assigned topic for the essay is artificial intelligence. You are required to find evidence to support your argument from scholarly journals, magazines, newspapers, and books.You have to cite at least seven sources, at least one of each type, and you also have the option to use a video for one of your sources. Your professor states that she doesn't want you to use websites for your essay; you must use library databases and format your citations according to MLA.

According to the Scenario, we can answer the guiding questions as follows:

Answers to Assignment Guiding Questions

1. Seven resources.
2. At least one scholarly journal article, one magazine article, one newspaper article, and one book. That's only four out of the seven. You must find more of those resources to equal seven, and you can also use videos. All resources must come from library databases.
3. You can't use websites.
4. No publication date restrictions were provided.
5. MLA citation style must be used.

Having this information outlined for yourself will help you stay focused as you search through the library databases. After identifying some keywords to seek resources related to your topic, you can then use filters to limit your results to specific resource types (depending on the library database you are using). You should also be able to limit to a publication date when necessary.

Full Text Options

You might also see an option to limit your results to full text. Full text means that you will have full access to the resource. If you want to be able to read the article or view the resource, make sure that the full text option is selected. If you see search results that only bring back a summary, an abstract, or a citation for an article, it's most likely because you didn't select the "full text" option in your search filters.

Sometimes, there may be different ways to read the full text of an article or ebook. You might see HTML, PDF, or ePUB presented as options, and each format has strengths and weaknesses. In the end, it's up to you to decide which one to use. But you will want to be familiar with each type, because sometimes the resource you want to use will only be available in one of them.

HTML



HTML stands for Hypertext Markup Language. This is the basis for all text online. When you see HTML as an option to access the full text of an article or an ebook, it means the article will be presented as text only—much like text on a website, but without any flashy graphics or images. Just the text. What's great about this is that the text can be manipulated by the library database—manipulated in a good way. It can be converted into other languages, or the library database can read the text aloud or generate a file for you to download an audio version of the resource. HTML full text also tends to load rather quickly, and you can easily copy, highlight, and search through the text using keyboard shortcuts such as CTRL+F or Command+F. There are also disadvantages: Because there are no graphics or images (or when they are available, they are often separate from the text), you can lose context and vital information. Page numbers may be missing, and the text itself may have been loaded with errors from the original source. These can all be very problematic if you will be citing the resource.

PDF



PDF stands for “portable document format” and describes a document that retains or reflects the formatting of a formally published, printed document, with all the images and charts, page numbers, and publication information. In some PDFs, it is possible to select and copy the text, and the text can be recognized by screen readers and other accessibility software. Other PDFs are a scanned image of an original printed document, and the file may not be readable as text by your computer—it might just see an image. This makes it hard to copy and highlight text, and nearly impossible for the computer to translate it into a different language. Depending on the file size and the speed of your internet connection, some PDFs might take longer to load. But you can download them and save the file to read offline later, which is not always possible or easily done with HTML-based resources. Overall, though, PDFs are preferable when doing academic research, and are highly recommended to use because they preserve the look of the original source.

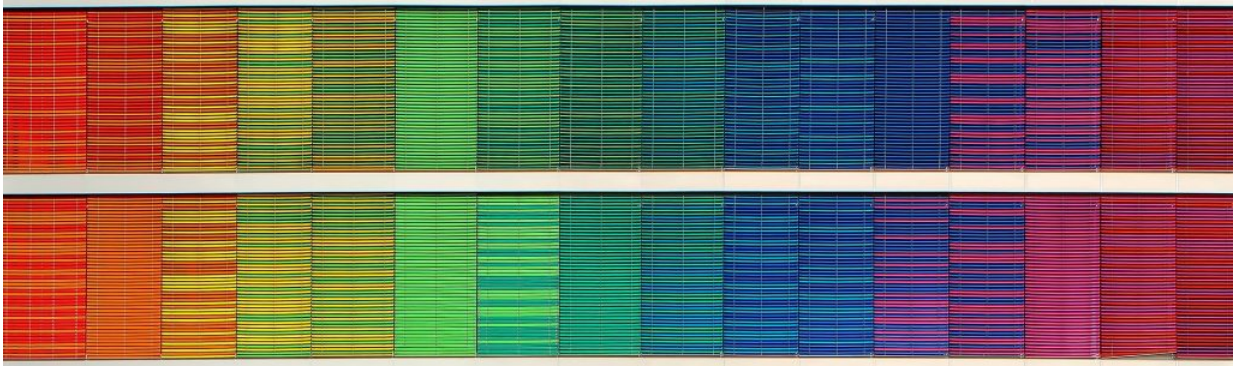
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EPUB can be described as a cross between PDF and HTML. This is a file type that you can download and access offline, that will have images embedded within it. But like HTML, the text can be manipulated by the computer or device. EPUBs are adaptable to screen size; text can be reformatted to be easily read on various devices, such as a smartphone or tablet. A PDF doesn’t have that flexibility. The text in EPUBs can be recognized by screen readers and other accessibility software more easily than in PDFs. Disadvantages are that you will find EPUBs almost exclusively with ebooks, and you will need a separate EPUB reader software to read the resource offline; whereas most devices come equipped with PDF readers, not all devices have an EPUB reader installed.

Critical Thinking: What Type of Resource is it?

You come across an article that is available in both PDF and HTML format. You’re unsure if it’s a magazine or scholarly article. What are some key indicators you will look for to assist you in determining which one it is? And then will you download it, email it, or save it for later? Why would you choose one of these ways over the other?



In this chapter you were introduced to library databases. Library databases are collections of resources that are selected by your college library to support your academic endeavors. Sometimes the databases specialize in a specific type of resource like streaming videos—other times, they provide you with a wide range of resources such as scholarly journal articles, magazine articles, and newspapers. Library databases can assist you in making your research efforts much more efficient, effective, and organized; and as a student at your college, you will have free access to use your library databases that connect you to content that is not typically free on the Web.

Recommended Reading:

Modern Blueprint for College and Career Success contains two units from the Introduction to College Research OER book. It is recommended to read it in its entirety: https://pressbooks.pub/introtocollegeresearch/.

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Butler, D., Sargent, A., Smith, K. Fact Checking. In *Introduction to College Research*.

Modifications: Tables numbered and titles added, recommended reading added.

Sources:

"What Are Databases and Why You Need Them." *YouTube*, uploaded by Yavapai College Library, 29 Sept. 2011.

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3: College Majors

The Low-Down on College Majors

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who'll decide where to go."

– Dr. Seuss

Your Major

In the United States and Canada, your academic major—simply called "your major"—is the academic discipline you commit to as an undergraduate student. It's an area you specialize in, such as accounting, chemistry, criminology, archeology, digital arts, or dance. In United States colleges and universities, roughly 2,000 majors are offered. And within each major is a host of core courses and electives. When you successfully complete the required courses in your major, you qualify for a degree.

Where did the term major come from? In 1877, it first appeared in a Johns Hopkins University catalogue. That major required only two years of study. Later, in 1910, Abbott Lawrence Lowell introduced the academic major system to Harvard University during his time as president there. This major required students to complete courses in a specialized discipline and also in other subjects. Variations of this system are now the norm in higher education institutions in the U.S. and Canada.

Why is your major important? It's important because it's a defining and organizing feature of your undergraduate degree. Ultimately, your major should provide you with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or behaviors you need to fulfill your college goals and objectives.

In this section we look at how to select your major and how your college major may correlate with a career. Does your major matter to your career? What happens if you change your major? Does changing your major mean you must change your career? How do community college majors work? Read on to find out!

Understanding College Majors at a Community College

One of the most important decisions students make during college is selecting a major. A major is a specific area of study that allows students to develop knowledge and skills related to a particular career field or academic interest. Your major helps determine the courses you take, the credentials you earn, and the career or transfer opportunities available after graduation.

At community colleges like Johnson County Community College (JCCC), students can choose from a wide variety of majors and programs designed to meet different educational goals. Some students select a major that prepares them to transfer to a four-year college or university, while others choose career-focused programs that prepare them to enter the workforce immediately after earning a degree or certificate.

Types of Programs Available

JCCC offers programs leading to associate degrees and certificates in many fields, including business, health care, information technology, education, engineering technologies, skilled trades, graphic design, hospitality, public safety, and the arts. Students can pursue transfer-oriented degrees such as the Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), and Associate of Fine Arts (AFA), or career-focused degrees such as the Associate of Applied Science (AAS).

Examples of majors available at JCCC include:

- Business Administration
- Computer Information Systems
- Cybersecurity
- Nursing
- Dental Hygiene
- Elementary Education
- Graphic Design
- Hospitality Management
- Interior Design
- Marketing Management
- Respiratory Care

- Welding Technology and Metal Fabrication
- Web Development and Digital Media
- General Sciences
- Liberal Arts

How to Choose a Major

Choosing a major should be based on a combination of your interests, strengths, values, and career goals. Students should consider questions such as:

- What subjects do I enjoy studying?
- What skills do I naturally possess?
- What careers interest me?
- Do I plan to transfer to a four-year institution?
- What level of education is required for my desired career?

Many students begin college without a clear major in mind. Community colleges provide an excellent opportunity to explore different subjects while completing general education requirements. Academic advisors, career counselors, and career assessment tools can help students identify majors that align with their goals and interests.

Majors and Career Planning

Your major does not necessarily determine your entire career path, but it can influence the opportunities available to you after graduation. Some careers require specific majors, while others value transferable skills such as communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork. Students should research potential careers, job outlooks, salary expectations, and educational requirements when evaluating possible majors.

Selecting a major is an important step in creating an educational plan. By exploring available programs and understanding how majors connect to career opportunities, students can make informed decisions that support both their academic success and long-term professional goals.

How to Select Your College Major

Selecting your major is one of the most exciting tasks (and, to some students, perhaps one of the most nerve-wracking tasks) you are asked to perform in college. So many decisions are tied to it. But if you have good guidance, patience, and enthusiasm, the process is easier. Two videos, below, present lighthearted looks undertaking this task. In the first one, the following five tips are discussed:

1. Seek inspiration
2. Consider everything
3. Identify talents and interests
4. Explore available resources
5. In-depth career exploration

Video: *How to Pick a Major*

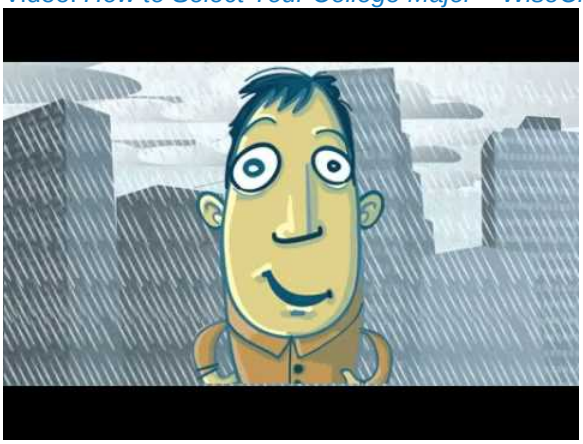


A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: How to Pick a Major [press.rebus.community]

The next video shares nine tips:

1. Narrow your choices by deciding what you don't like.
2. Explore careers that might interest you. Ask questions.
3. Use your school's resources.
4. Ask your teacher, counselor, and family about your strengths.
5. Sixty percent of students change their majors.
6. Your major isn't going to define your life. But choosing one that interests you will make your college experience much more rewarding.
7. Go on informational interviews with people in careers that interest you.
8. There's no pressure to decide now.
9. Take new classes and discover your interests.

Video: *How to Select Your College Major – WiseChoice*



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: press.rebus.community/blueprint3/?p=42

Does Your College Major Matter to Your Career?

There are few topics about college that create more controversy than "Does your major really matter to your career?" Many people think it does; others think it's not so important. Who is right? And who gets to weigh in? Also, how do you measure whether something "matters"—by salary, happiness, personal satisfaction?

It may be difficult to say for sure whether your major truly matters to your career. One's college major and ultimate career are not necessarily correlated. Consider the following factoids:

- Fifty to seventy percent of college students change their major at least once during their time in college.
- Most majors lead to a wide variety of opportunities rather than to one specific career, although some majors do indeed lead to specific careers.
- Many students say that the skills they gain in college will be useful on the job no matter what they major in.
- Only half of graduating seniors accept a job directly related to their major.
- Career planning for most undergraduates focuses on developing general, transferrable skills like speaking, writing, critical thinking, computer literacy, problem-solving, and team building, because these are skills that employers want.
- College graduates often cite the following four factors as being critical to their job and career choices: personal satisfaction, enjoyment, opportunity to use skills and abilities, and personal development.
- Within ten years of graduation, most people work in careers that aren't directly related to their majors.
- Many or most jobs that exist today will be very different five years from now.

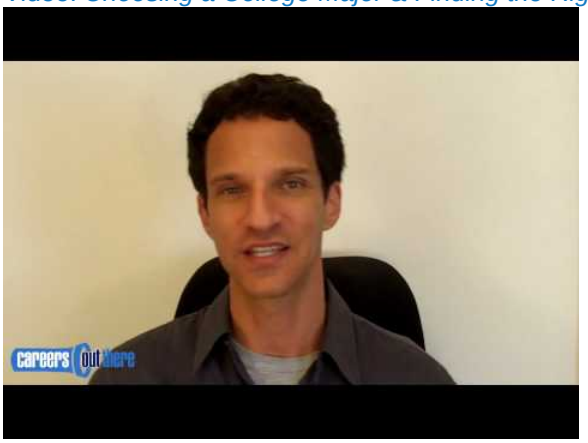
It's also important to talk about financial considerations in choosing a major.

- Any major you choose will likely benefit you because college graduates earn roughly $1 million more than high school graduates, on average, over an entire career.
- Even though humanities and social sciences students may earn less money right after college, they may earn more by the time they reach their peak salary than students who had STEM majors.
- Students who major in the humanities and social science are also more likely to get advanced degrees, which increases annual salary by nearly $20,000 at peak salary.

So where will you stand with regard to these statistics? Is it possible to have a good marriage between your major, your skills, job satisfaction, job security, and earnings?

Here to share a personal story about selecting your college major and finding the right career fit is Marc Luber, host of Careers Out There. Enjoy his insights, which he sums up with, “Focus on what makes you tick, and run with it.”

Video: *Choosing a College Major & Finding the Right Career Fit*



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: VIeo [press.rebus.community]

The best guidance on choosing a major and connecting it with a career may be to get good academic and career advice and select a major that reflects your greatest interests. If you don’t like law or medicine but you major in it because of a certain salary expectation, you may later find yourself in an unrelated job that brings you greater satisfaction—even if the salary is lower. If this is the case, will it make more sense, looking back, to spend your time and tuition dollars studying a subject you especially enjoy?

Resources

“Success doesn’t come to you . . . you go to it.”

– Dr. Marva Collins

This quote really sets the stage for the journey you’re on. Your journey may be a straight line that connects the dots between today and your future, or it may resemble a twisted road with curves, bumps, hurdles, and alternate routes.

To help you navigate your pathway to career success, take advantage of all the resources available to you. Your college, your community, and the wider body of higher-education institutions and organizations have many tools to help you with career development. Be sure to take advantage of the following resources:

- **College course catalog**: Course catalogs are typically rich with information that can spark ideas and inspiration for your major and your career. See catalog.jccc.edu!
- **Faculty and academic advisors at your college**: Many college professors are also practitioners in their fields, and can share insights with you about related professions.
- **Fellow students and graduates**: Many of your classmates, especially those who share your major, may have had experiences that can inform and enlighten you—for instance, an internship with an employer or a job interview with someone who could be contacted for more information.
- **Students who have graduated**: Most colleges and universities have active alumni programs with networking resources that can help you make important decisions.
- **Your family and social communities**: Contact friends and family members who can weigh in with their thoughts and experience.

- **A career center**: Professionals in career centers have a wealth of information to share with you—they're also very good at listening and can act as a sounding board for you to try out your ideas.

Many organizations have free materials that can provide guidance, such as the ones in the table, below:

Website options

	WEB SITE	DESCRIPTION
1	List of College Majors (MyMajors)	A list of more than 1,800 college majors—major pages include description, courses, careers, salary, related majors and colleges offering major
2	Take the College Major Profile Quiz (About.com)	Quiz is designed to help students think about college majors, personality traits, and how they may fit within different areas of study
3	Choosing a College Major Worksheet (Quint Careers)	A six-step process to finding a college major
4	Common Mistakes Students Make in Choosing a Major (Wayne State University)	Lists common misperceptions about choosing a major and explains how these misperceptions can cloud future plans
5	Best college majors for your career 2015-2016 (Yahoo.com)	Explore a detailed list of the top ten majors that give students the greatest potential for success in the workplace, good incomes, and ample job opportunities
6	Explore Careers (BigFuture/The College Board)	Explore careers by selecting "Show me majors that match my interests," "Show me new career ideas," and "Show me how others made their choices"
7	The College Major: What It Is and How To Choose One (BigFuture/The College Board)	When to choose a major, how to choose a major, "you can change your mind," majors and graduate school, and majors and professions

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3.1: Major and Career Selection

Graciela Martinez and Elizabeth Shaker

Choosing your Major and Educational Planning

In Chapters 25 and 26, we covered self-discovery through engaging in different career assessments and researching career information that may be a good fit based on personal strengths, interests, values, skills, and personality. At this time, our goal is for you to be getting closer to deciding on a career path that will be a good fit for you. Once you know what career path or industry you are interested in, you are a step closer to choosing your major. Having a general idea of what career path interests you will help you determine which major is the best fit for you.

In the United States and Canada, your academic major—simply called "your major"—is the academic discipline you commit to as an undergraduate student. It's an area you specialize in, such as accounting, chemistry, criminology, archeology, digital arts, or dance. In United States colleges and universities, roughly 2,000 majors are offered. And within each major is a host of core courses and electives. When you successfully complete the required courses in your major, you qualify for a degree.

Why is your major important? It's important because it's a defining and organizing feature of your undergraduate degree. Ultimately, your major should provide you with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or behaviors you need to fulfill your college goals and objectives.

In this section, we will look at how to select your major and how your college major may correlate with a career. Does your major matter to your career? What happens if you change your major? Does changing your major mean you must change your career? Read on to find out!

Choosing a college major can have a big impact on your career choices, especially if you are following a technical or vocational program of study. After all, it is hard to become a pharmacist if you study computer networking. Students often get too anxious about choosing a major or program of study. Certainly, many two-year students have a very clear idea of what they are studying and the job they expect to land after completing their degree, and you probably feel confident enough in your choice of major to make the investment for tuition in that program. But there is no need to panic over your choice of major or program of study:

- Your choice of major or program will be important only for your first job after college; most people change careers (not just jobs, but careers) five times or more in their lifetime, so there is no possible major that will cover that level of flexibility.
- Many majors and programs share foundation courses with other majors, so you can usually change your major without having misused your time in courses that will be unrelated to your new major. Chances are, if you change your major, it will be to something similar, especially if you have completed an occupational interest survey as recommended earlier in this class.
- Most students change their major at least once, and many will change majors two or three times before they graduate.

While these thoughts might remove some of the stress of making the choice, there is no doubt that it is not always easy to make your choice. The following tips may make it a little easier…and perhaps fun!

- **Follow your dreams.** Your first instinct in choosing a field of study is probably based on your dreams and life experience. Make sure you base your choice on your own dreams and interests and not those of a parent, spouse, or friend.
- **Make it fun.** What do you like to do for fun? What kinds of magazines do you read? What websites are bookmarked on your computer? What kinds of volunteer work have you done? What do the answers to these questions tell you about the kind of career you would enjoy?
- **Build on your skills.** A good choice of a program of study is not based exclusively on your likes; it should also consider your skills. What courses did you "ace" in high school? Consider also courses that you found challenging in which you learned and enjoyed (it is hard to keep a level of determination to tackle a tough subject if you do not enjoy it). What do these courses tell you about what you are skilled at studying?
- **Ask around.** Find people who are following the courses of study you are considering. Ask them what they like and dislike about their majors. If you can find recent graduates with that major, ask them about the value of their major.
- **Two is better than one.** Talk to your counselor about potentially double majoring, as this can be an effective way of preparing yourself for the uncertainties and options of future employment. You may want to consider declaring a minor after you transfer to a four-year university. A minor is a sub-specialty are in a discipline outside your major

- **What makes you unique?** If you have a major that you would like to pursue that is not offered at your college, find out if you can plan your own major. This option is especially attractive if you want to combine two seemingly different disciplines into a major (Dance and athletics? Sociology and film? Women's studies and economics?). This may be an option when you transfer to the four-year university.
- **Be open to change.** Once you have selected a major, do not panic if it turns out to be the wrong choice; consider it a step toward finding the right program for *you*. Repeat the major selection process, but carefully consider what you learned from your original major choice. Why was it not the right major? (Did it not match your interests? Was the workload too heavy? Were the courses too tough?) What do you know now that you did not know when you made your first selection that you should consider in making a new choice?

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.

Resources to Help You Learn More about Choosing a Major

> "Success doesn't come to you . . . you go to it." – —Dr. Marva Collins, civil rights activist and educator

This quote really sets the stage for the journey you are on. Your journey may be a straight line that connects the dots between today and your future, or it may resemble a twisted road with curves, bumps, hurdles, and alternate routes.

To help you navigate your pathway to career success, take advantage of all the resources available to you. Your college, your community, and the wider body of higher-education institutions and organizations have many tools to help you with career development. Be sure to take advantage of the following resources:

College course catalog: Course catalogs are typically rich with information that can spark ideas and inspiration for your major and your career.

The college catalog consists of college policies, procedures and programs. Detailed descriptions of each major, degree requirements and course descriptions are outlined.

Instructional and counseling faculty and academic advisers at your college: Many college professors are also practitioners in their fields, and can share insights with you about related professions. Counselors and academic advisers may also share information about different majors and how they connect to careers – they're also very good at listening and can act as a sounding board for you to try out your ideas.

Fellow students: Many of your classmates, especially those who share your major, may have had experiences that can inform and enlighten you—for instance, an internship with an employer or a job interview with someone who could be contacted for more information.

Students who have graduated: Most colleges and universities have active alumni programs with networking resources that can help you make important decisions.

Your family and social communities: Contact friends and family members who can weigh in with their thoughts and experience.

There are many online resources with free materials that can provide guidance, such as the ones in the table below.

Table 27.1 – Major Guidance

Website	Description
Majors at College of the Canyons	Lists current majors at COC with an AA/AS or AA-T/AST. A brief description of each major is highlighted along with required courses and number of units necessary for the degree.
List of College Majors (MyMajors)	A list of more than 1,800 college majors—major pages include description, courses, careers, salary, related majors and colleges offering major
Take the College Major Profile Quiz (About.com)	Quiz is designed to help students think about college majors, personality traits, and how they may fit within different areas of study

Choosing a College Major Worksheet (Quint Careers)	A six-step process to finding a college major
Common Mistakes Students Make in Choosing a Major	Lists common misperceptions about choosing a major and explains how these misperceptions can cloud future plans
What can I do with this major?	Lists majors and how they connect with careers, provides information about common career areas, typical employers and strategies designed to maximize career opportunities. Additional links are listed to connect to professional association and other resources related to the major.
Explore Careers (BigFuture/The College Board)	Explore careers by selecting “Show me majors that match my interests,” “Show me new career ideas,” and “Show me how others made their choices”
The College Major: What It Is and How To Choose One (BigFuture/The College Board)	When to choose a major, how to choose a major, “you can change your mind,” majors and graduate school, and majors and professions

As you narrow down your career choice and major choice, you can now make a decision in regards to what program you may want to pursue while attending college. As you progress, make note of which program or programs are of interest to you.

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Career and Life Planning – An Open Educational Resource Publication by College of the Canyons Unit 4 Decision Making and Goal Setting. Access for free at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kTVzQ6mKcTPEVnK_YUl6UkZLd1mn7wa4

Martinez, G., & Shaker, E. (2019). Decision Making and Goal Setting. In *Career and Life Planning*. College of the Canyons.

Modifications: minor formatting edits, table renumbered, How to Pick a Major video removed (required sign in), CoC catalog and CoC references removed for broader audience.

Footnotes from Career and Life Planning:

Career/Life Planning and Personal Exploration by Lumen Learning references College Majors by Linda Bruce (licensed under CC BY) and Foundations of College Success: Words of Wisdom by Thomas C. Priester (licensed under CC BY-NC-SA)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Unit 3 - Career Development

4.1: Planning Your Degree Path
4.2: Effective Planning
4.3: Using the Career Planning Cycle
4.4: Life Plan
4.5: Career Assessments
4.6: Career Research and Exploration
4.7: Educational Planning
4.8: Job Search
4.9: Networking
4.10: Cover Letter and Resume
4.11: Interviewing Skills for Success
4.12: Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

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4.1: Planning Your Degree Path

Amy Baldwin

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

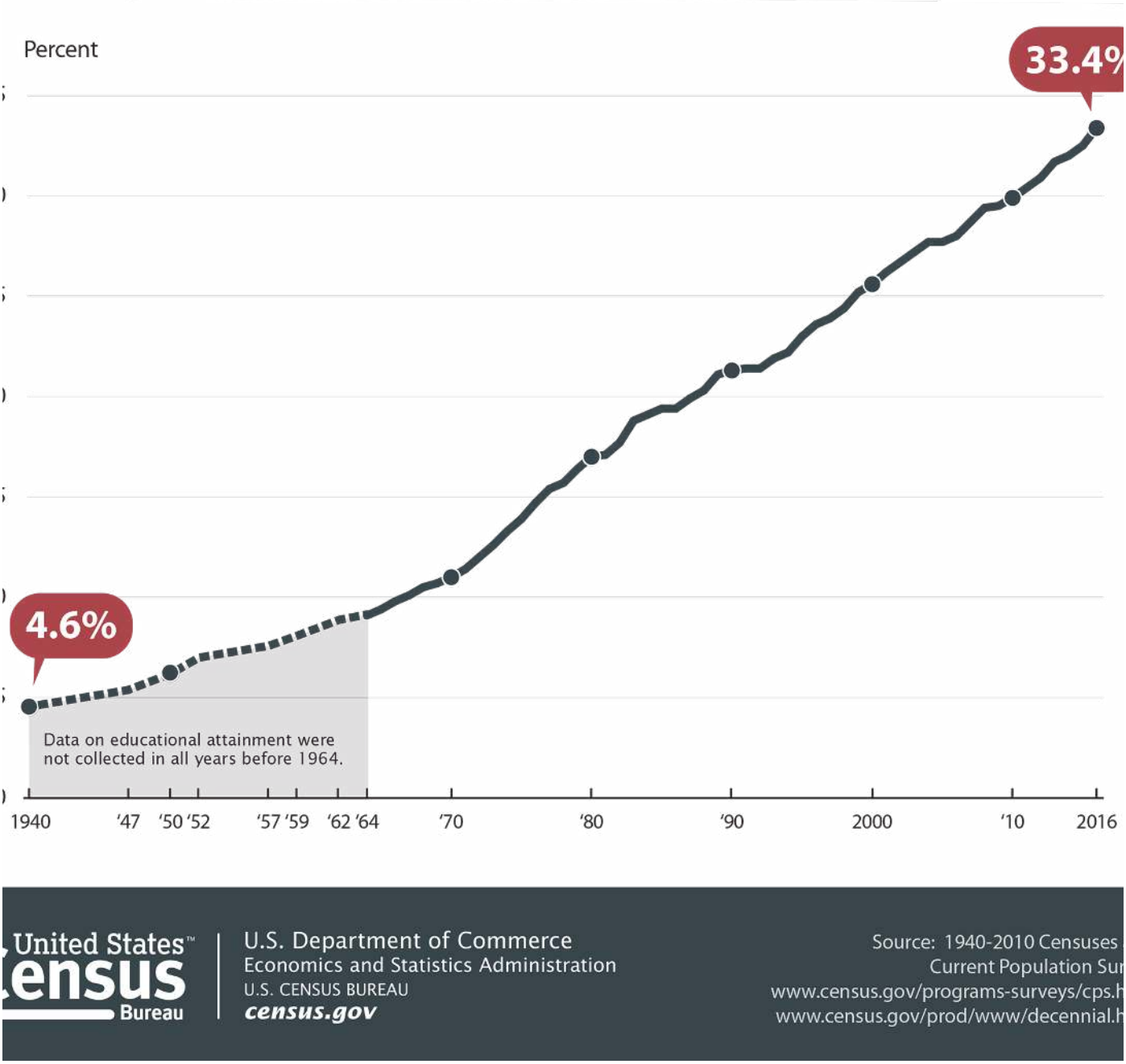
Whereas in most states high school attendance through the 12th grade is mandatory, or *compulsory*, a college degree may be pursued voluntarily. There are fields that do not require a degree. Bookkeeping, computer repair, massage therapy, and childcare are all fields where certification programs—tracks to study a specific subject or career without need of a complete degree—may be enough.

However, many individuals will find that an associate 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.



Highest Educational Attainmer Levels Since 1940

Adults 25 Years and Older With a Bachelor's Degree or Highe



United States Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Source: 1940-2010 Censuses
Current Population Sur
www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.h
www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.h

umber 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

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 21.1 Example Jobs by Minimum Degree Qualification

Require Associate Degrees	Require Bachelor's Degrees	Require Additional Certifications	Require Graduate Degrees
Radiology Technician	Nurse	Public School Teacher	Lawyer
Dental Hygienist	Computer/Information Systems Manager	Accountant	College or University Professor
Web Developer	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 or guidance office to meet with a counselor to guide you through this process. These services are free to students while they are enrolled in school, but can be pricey if used outside a school setting, 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 identifies your motivations by having you rank different aspects of work, then creating a ranked list of different possible jobs.
- MAPP Test 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 is a quick tool to let you create career clusters based on personal qualities and school subjects and activities you especially enjoy.

Associate Degrees

To enter an associate degree program, students must have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Associate 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 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 degrees may be called Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS), or other titles, depending on the focus of study.



Figure 21.2 Air traffic controllers are extremely important and well-paid jobs that typically require an associate degree. (Credit: Expert Infantry / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

An associate 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 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 degrees. Most associate degrees are offered by community or junior colleges, or by career and technical colleges.

ACTIVITY 21.1

What to Ask

If you're planning your associate degree, here are some specific questions you may want to research.

If you intend to enter a technical career that requires special certification:

- Does the college prepare you to take a certification exam, or will you be meeting those requirements through offered courses?
- Does the 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 the college regionally accredited?
- Does the 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 degree, to enter a bachelor's degree program a student must have completed a high school diploma or its equivalent. Both associate degrees and bachelor's degrees are considered *undergraduate degrees*, thus students working toward these degrees are often called *undergraduates*. A student with an associate degree may transfer that degree to meet some (usually half) of the requirements of a bachelor's degree; however, completion of an associate 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 degree has been transferred, the number of credits from that degree usually counts toward the 120 credits. For example, if an associate 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 21.2 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.

Graduate Degrees

According to United States Census data published in 2018, 13.1 percent of the U.S. adult population have completed advanced degrees. Whereas associate 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.

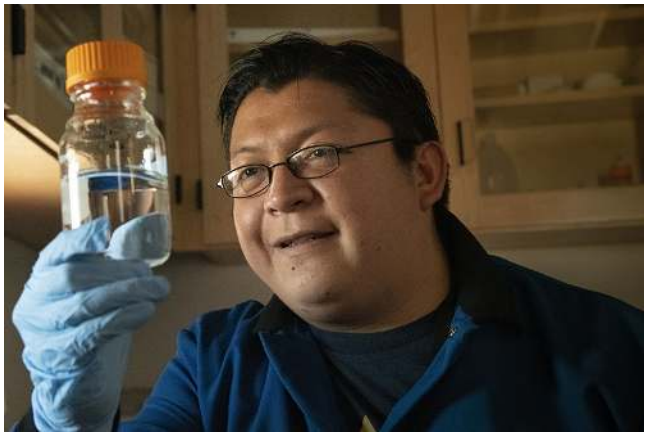


Figure 21.3 Pharmacists and related scientific or medical careers require graduate degrees. (Credit: US Department of Agriculture / Flickr / Public Domain)

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.

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 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.

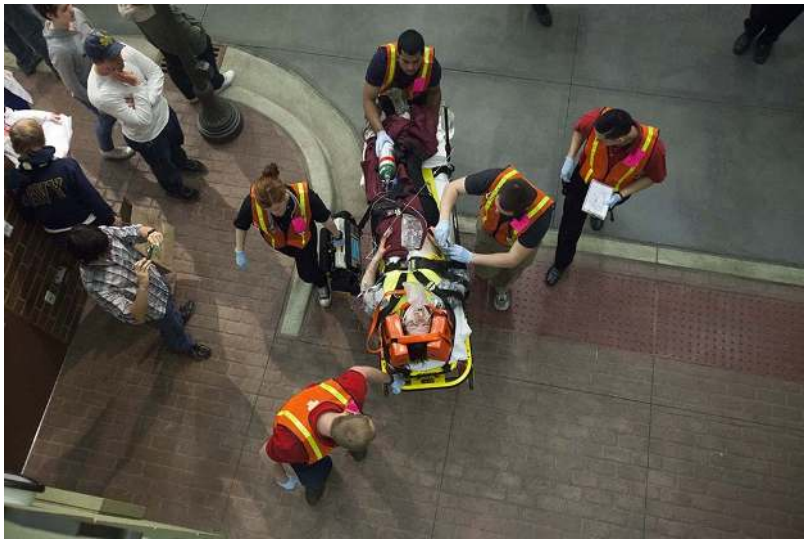


Figure 21.4 Many majors, such as nursing, allied health, and emergency medical technician, may include simulations and other activities to expose students to the real-world activities of their field. (Credit: COD Newsroom / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

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 21.5 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.

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OpenStax College Success Concise Chapter 8.2. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/8-2-planning-your-degree-path

Baldwin, A. (2023). Planning Your Degree Path. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

Modifications: Renumbered figures and tables.

Footnotes

Minimum degree qualifications may vary by state.

United States Census Bureau. (2019, February 21). Number of People with Master's and Doctoral Degrees Doubles Since 2000. Retrieved from: https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/02/number-of-people-with-masters-and-phd-degrees-double-since-2000.html

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4.2: Effective Planning

Amy Baldwin

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 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 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

Counselors and Academic Advisors

All colleges and universities provide resources such as counselors or academic advisors to assist you with your academic planning. Regardless of what your college calls this role, counselors and 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.

A counselor or 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 Counselors and Academic Advisors

Counselors and 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

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 22.1

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.

mple Semester # 1 : Fall 20 __ __	Example Semester # 2 : Spring 20 __ __
your planned courses here:	***List your planned courses here:***
sh Composition 1 (3 credits)	English Composition 2 (3 credits)
ral Biology 1 + lab (4 credits)	General Biology 2 + lab (4 credits)
onmental Science (4 credits)	Principles of Sustainability (3 credits)
ry of Western Civilization (3 credits)	Pre-Calculus Mathematics (4 credits)
Year Success Seminar (2 credits)	Total semester credits – 14
semester credits – 16	Total first year credits planned – 30
your planned activities here:	***List your planned activities here:***
Meet with my advisor to review my plan. Attend an environmental science student club meeting.	• Visit with Career Services Office early to ask about summer volunteering related to my major

mple Summer Plans:

your planned courses here: None this summer

your planned activities here: Volunteer for local road or park clean-up days or start one if none exist in my area, and read that blog I found about becoming an environmental policy advocate, and research possible internships for my r 3rd year.

Figure 22.1 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.

mple Semester # 1 :	Example Semester # 2 :
your planned courses here:	*List your planned courses here:*
your planned activities here:	*List your planned activities here:*
mple Summer Plans:	
your planned courses here:	
your planned activities here:	

mple Semester # 1 :	Example Semester # 2 :
your planned courses here:	*List your planned courses here:*
your planned activities here:	*List your planned activities here:*
mple Summer Plans:	
your planned courses here:	



Figure 22.2 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.)

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OpenStax College Success Concise Chapter 8.3. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/8-3-making-a-plan

Baldwin, A. (2023). Making a Plan. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

Modifications: Renumbered figures. Minor edits to include counselors title.

Footnotes:

Brookdale Community College Office of Career and Leadership Development. (2016). *Your Career Checklist*. Retrieved from: https://www.brookdalecc.edu/career

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4.3: Using the Career Planning Cycle

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- What steps should I take to learn about my best opportunities?
- What can I do to prepare for my career while in college?
- What experiences and resources can help me in my search?

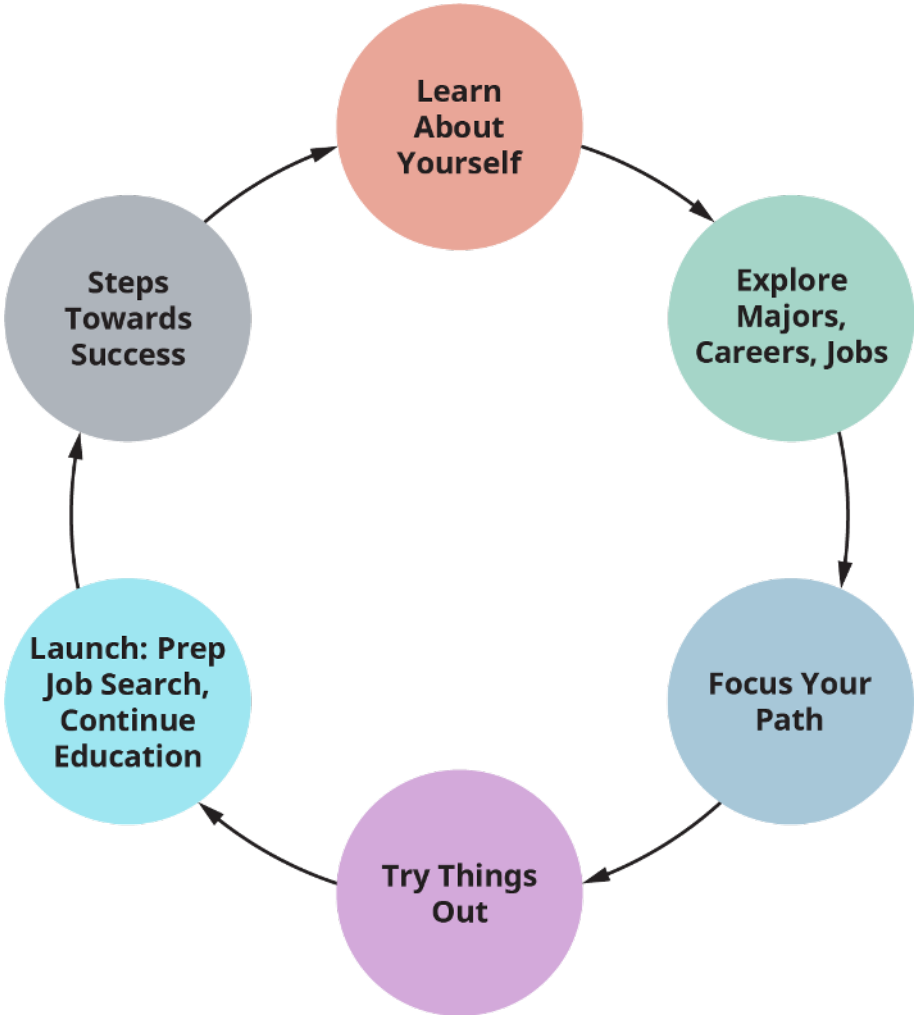


Figure 23.1 You can use the Career Planning Cycle to consider and reconsider your approach and progress in choosing and moving toward a career. (Credit: Based on work by Lisa August.)

The Career Planning Cycle helps us apply some concrete steps to figuring out where we might fit into the work world. If you follow the steps, you will learn about who you truly are, and can be, as a working professional. You will discover important knowledge about the work world. You will gain more information to help you make solid career decisions. You will get experience that will increase your qualifications. You will be more prepared to reach your professional goals. And the good news is that colleges and universities are set up nicely to help you utilize this process.

Learn About Yourself

To understand what type of work suits us and to be able to convey that to others to get hired, we must become experts in knowing who we are. Gaining **self-knowledge** is a lifelong process, and college is the perfect time to gain and adapt this fundamental information. Following are some of the types of information that we should have about ourselves:

- **Interests:** Things that we like and want to know more about. These often take the form of ideas, information, knowledge, and topics.
- **Skills/Aptitudes**: Things that we either do well or can do well. These can be natural or learned and are usually skills—things we can demonstrate in some way. Some of our skills are “hard” skills, which are specific to jobs and/or tasks. Others are “soft” skills, which are personality traits and/or interpersonal skills that accompany us from position to position.
- **Values:** Things that we believe in. Frequently, these are conditions and principles.
- **Personality:** Things that combine to make each of us distinctive. Often, this shows in the way we present ourselves to the world. Aspects of personality are customarily described as qualities, features, thoughts, and behaviors.

In addition to knowing the things we can and like to do, we must also know how well we do them. What are our strengths? When employers hire us, they hire us to do something, to contribute to their organization in some way. We get paid for what we know, what we can do, and how well or deeply we can demonstrate these things. Think of these as your Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs). As working people, we can each think of ourselves as carrying a “tool kit.” In our tool kit are the KSAs that we bring to each job. As we gain experience, we learn how best to use our tools. We gain more tools and use some more often than others, but all the tools we gather during our career stay with us in some form.

Formal Assessments

Formal assessments are typically referred to as “career tests.” There are thousands available, and many are found randomly on the Internet. While many of these can be fun, “free” and easily available instruments are usually not credible. It is important to use assessments that are developed to be reliable and valid. Look to your career center for their recommendations; their staff has often spent a good deal of time selecting instruments that they believe work best for students.

Here are some commonly used and useful assessments that you may run across:

- **Interest Assessments:** Strong Interest Inventory, Self-Directed Search, Campbell Interest and Skill Survey, Harrington-O'Shea Career Decision-Making System
- **Personality Measures:** Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, CliftonStrengths (formerly StrengthsQuest), Big Five Inventory, Keirsey Temperament Sorter, TypeFocus, DiSC
- **Career Planning Software:** SIGI 3, FOCUS 2

Informal Assessments

Often, asking questions and seeking answers can help get us information that we need. When we start working consciously on learning more about any subject, things that we never before considered may become apparent. Happily, this applies to self-knowledge as well. Some things that you can do outside of career testing to learn more about yourself can include:

Self-Reflection:

- Notice when you do something that you enjoy or that you did particularly well. What did that feel like? What about it made you feel positive? Is it something that you'd like to do again? What was the impact that you made through your actions?
- Most people are the "go to" person for something. What do you find that people come to you for? Are you good with advice? Do you tend to be a good listener, observing first and then speaking your mind? Do people appreciate your repair skills? Are you good with numbers? What role do you play in a group?
- If you like to write or record your thoughts, consider creating a career journal that you update regularly, whether it's weekly or by semester. If writing your own thoughts is difficult, seek out guided activities that help prompt you to reflect.
- Many colleges have a career planning course that is designed to specifically lead you through the career decision-making process. Even if you are decided on your major, these courses can help you refine and plan best for your field.

Explore Jobs and Careers

Many students seem to believe that the most important decision they will make in college is to choose their major. While this is an important decision, even more important is to determine the type of knowledge you would like to have, understand what you value, and learn how you can apply this in the workplace after you graduate. For example, if you know you like to help people, this is a value. If you also know that you're interested in math and/or finances, you might study to be an accountant. To combine both of these, you would gain as much knowledge as you can about financial systems and personal financial habits so that you can provide greater support and better help to your clients.

The four factors of self-knowledge (interests, skills/aptitudes, values, and personality), which manifest in your KSAs, are also the factors on which employers evaluate your suitability for their positions. They consider what you can bring to their organization that is at once in line with their organization's standards and something they need but don't have in their existing workforce.

Along with this, each job has KSAs that define it. You may think about finding a job/career as looking like the figure below.

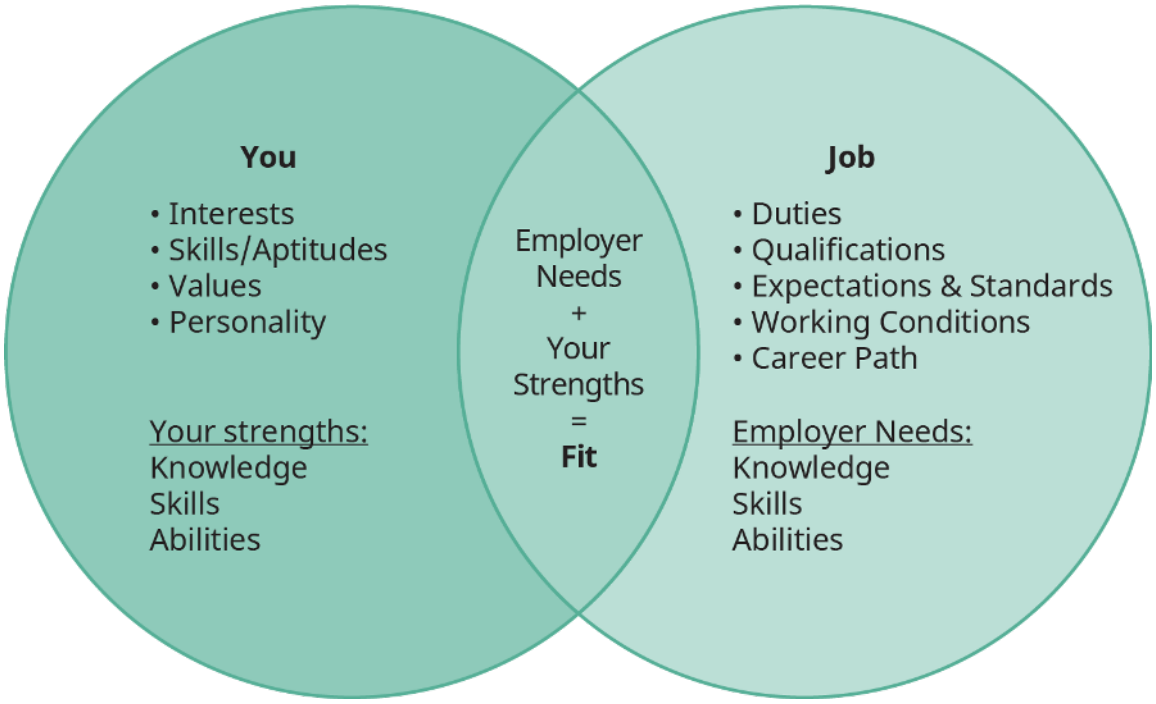


Figure 23.2 Your fit for a job lies at the intersection of your attributes and the elements of the position. When your strengths align with the employer needs, both can mutually benefit.

The importance of finding the right fit cannot be overstated. Many people don't realize that the KSAs of the person and the requirements of the job have to match in order to get hired in a given field. What is even more important, though, is that when a particular job fits your four factors of self-knowledge *and* maximizes your KSAs, you are most likely to be satisfied with your work! The "fit" works to help you not only get the job, but also enjoy the job.

So if you work to learn about yourself, what do you need to know about jobs, and how do you go about learning it? In our diagram, if you need to have self-knowledge to determine the YOU factors, then to determine the JOB factors, you need to have workplace knowledge. This involves understanding what employers in the workplace and specific jobs require. Aspects of workplace knowledge include:

- **Labor Market Information:** Economic conditions, including supply and demand of jobs; types of industries in a geographic area or market; regional sociopolitical conditions and/or geographic attributes.
- **Industry Details:** Industry characteristics; trends and opportunities for both industry and employers; standards and expectations.
- **Work Roles:** Characteristics and duties of specific jobs and work roles; knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the work; training and education required; certifications or licenses; compensation; promotion and career path; hiring process.

This "research" may sound a little dry and uninteresting at first, but consider it as a look into your future. If you are excited about what you are learning and what your career prospects are, learning about the places where you may put all of your hard work into practice should also be very exciting! Most professionals spend many hours not only performing their work but also physically being located at work. For something that is such a large part of your life, it will help you to know what you are getting into as you get closer to realizing your goals.

There are many and varied types of experiential learning opportunities that can help you learn more about different career opportunities. The table below provides a brief overview.

Internship and Experiential Learning Terminology

Table 23.1

Internship	A period of work experience in a professional organization, in which participants (interns) are exposed to and perform some of the tasks of actual employees. Internships are usually a relatively high commitment, and may be paid and/or result in college credit.
Externship/Job Shadowing	Usually a briefer and lower-commitment experience than internships, in which participants observe work activities and perhaps undertake small projects. Unpaid and not credit-bearing.
Fieldwork	A period or trip to conduct research or participate in the "natural environment" of a discipline or profession. Fieldwork may involve visiting a work site, such as a hospital or nursing home, or being a part of a team gathering data or information.
Apprenticeship	A defined period of on-the-job training in which the student is formally doing the job and learning specific skills. Unlike most internships, apprenticeships are usually formal requirements to attain a license or gain employment in skilled trades, and they are growing in use in health care, IT, transportation, and logistics.
Undergraduate Research	Even as an undergrad, you may find opportunities to partake in actual research in your field of study. Colleges often have strict guidelines on types and levels of participation, and you will likely need to apply. The benefits include firsthand knowledge of a core academic activity and exposure to more people in your field.
Related Employment	It may be possible to get a regular, low-level paying job directly in your field of study or in a related place of work. While it's not essential, simply being around the profession will better inform and prepare you.
Clinicals, Student Teaching, and Related Experiences	Health care, education, and other fields often have specific requirements for clinicals (learning experience in health care facilities) or student teaching. These are often components of the major and required for both graduation and licensure.
Service Learning	Students learn educational standards through tackling real-life problems in their community. Involvement could be hands-on, such as working in a homeless shelter. Students could also tackle broad issues in an indirect manner, such as by solving a local environmental problem.

What to Do to Get Ready

Being prepared to find a job means putting evidence of your KSAs together in a way that employers will understand. It is one thing to say you can do something; it is another to show that you can. The following are things that you will want to compile as a part of your college career.

Resumes and Profiles: The College Version

You may already have a resume or a similar profile (such as LinkedIn), or you may be thinking about developing one. Usually, these resources are not required for early college studies, but you may need them for internships, work-study, or other opportunities. When it comes to an online profile, something that is a public resource, be very considerate and intentional when developing it.

Resume

A resume is a summary of your education, work experience, and other accomplishments. It is not simply a list of what you've done; it's a showcase that presents the best you have to offer for a specific role. While most resumes have a relatively similar look and feel, there are some variations in the approach. Especially when developing your first résumé or applying in a new area, you should seek help from resources such as career counselors and others with knowledge of the field. Websites can be very helpful, but be sure to run your resume by others to make sure it fits the format and contains no mistakes.

A resume is a one-page summary (two, if you are a more experienced person) that generally includes the following information:

- Name and contact information
- Objective and/or summary
- Education—all degrees and relevant certifications or licenses
  - While in college, you *may* list coursework *closely related* to the job to which you're applying.
- Work or work-related experience—usually in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent and working backward. (Some resumes are organized by subject/skills rather than chronologically.
- Career-related/academic awards or similar accomplishments
- Specific work-related skills

While you're in college, especially if you go to college directly after high school, you may not have formal degrees or significant work experience to share. That's okay. Tailor the resume to the position for which you're applying, and include high school academic, extracurricular, and community-based experience. These show your ability to make a positive contribution and are a good indicator of your work ethic.

If you have significant experience outside of college, you should include it if it's relatively recent, relates to the position, and/or includes transferable skills (discussed above) that can be used in the role for which you're applying. Military service or similar experience should nearly always be included. If you had a long career with one company quite some time ago, you can summarize that in one resume entry, indicating the total years worked and the final role achieved. These are judgment calls, and again you can seek guidance from experts.

Henry Townsend
htownse@stlu.mi.edu

2438 McNair Avenue, Apartment 3
St. Louis, Missouri

Summary

Highly organized audiology major with excellent communication skills and extensive customer service background. Currently focused on gaining clinical experience and leadership skills.

Education

St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri
Major: Communication Disorders, Focus on Audiology; Expected Graduation 2024
Activities: Pep Band, Concert Band, Comms Club

Spring Lakes High School, Crimson, Virginia, 2020
Cumulative G.P.A: 3.6
Rotary Public Service Award
Founder and President, Hip Hop Health -- hospital patient music program

Experience

Student Relations Coordinator
St. Louis Children's Hospital 2021-Present

Circulation Clerk
St. Louis University Library 2020-Present

Service Desk Representative
Forte Equipment Rental, Virginia Beach 2019-2021

Skills

American Sign Language, Near Fluent
Google Sheets and Slides, Highly Proficient
Zendesk and Salesforce, Highly Proficient

Figure 23.3 Resumes summarize your accomplishments, education, skills, and experience.

Digital Profiles

An online profile is a nearly standard component of professional job seeking and networking. LinkedIn is a networking website used by people from nearly every profession. It combines elements of résumés and portfolios with social media. Users can view, connect, communicate, post events and articles, comment, and recommend others. Employers can recruit, post jobs, and process applications. Alternatives include Jobcase, AngelList, Hired, and Nexxt. These varying sites work in similar ways, with some unique features or practices.

Some professions or industries have specific LinkedIn groups or subnetworks. Other professions or industries may have their own networking sites, to be used instead of or in addition to LinkedIn. Industry, for example, is a networking site specifically for culinary and hospitality workers.

As a college student, it might be a great idea to have a LinkedIn or related profile. It can help you make connections in a prospective field, and provide access to publications and posts on topics that interest you. Before you join and develop a public professional profile, however, keep the following in mind:

- **Be professional.** Write up your profile information, any summary, and job/education experience separately, check for spelling and other errors, and have someone review *before* posting. Be sure to be completely honest and accurate.
- **Your profile isn't a contest.** As a college student, you may only have two or three items to include on your profile. That's okay. Overly long LinkedIn profiles—like overly long resumes—aren't effective anyway, and a college student's can be brief.
- **Add relevant experience and information as you attain it.** Post internships, summer jobs, awards, or work-study experiences as you attain them. Don't list *every* club or organization you're in if it doesn't pertain to the professional field, but include some, especially if you become head of a club or hold a competitive position, such as president or member of a performance group or sports team.
- **Don't "over-connect."** As you meet and work with people relevant to your career, it is appropriate to connect with them through LinkedIn by adding a personal note on the invite message. But don't send connection invites to people with whom you have no relationship, or to too many people overall. Even alumni from your own school might be reluctant to connect with you unless you know them relatively well.
- **Professional networking is not the same as social media.** While LinkedIn has a very strong social media component, users are often annoyed by too much nonprofessional sharing (such as vacation/child pictures); aggressive commenting or arguing via comments is also frowned upon. As a student, you probably shouldn't be commenting or posting too much at all. Use LinkedIn as a place to observe and learn. And in terms of your profile itself, keep it professional, not personal.
- **LinkedIn is not a replacement for a real resume.**

Building Your Portfolio

Future employers or educational institutions may want to see the work you've done during school. Also, you may need to recall projects or papers you wrote to remember details about your studies. Your portfolio can be one of your most important resources.

Portfolio components vary according to field. Business students should save projects, simulations, case studies, and any mock companies or competitions they worked on. Occupational therapy students may have patient thank-you letters, summaries of volunteer activity, and completed patient paperwork (identities removed). Education majors will likely have lesson plans, student teaching materials, sample projects they created, and papers or research related to their specialization.

Other items to include in your portfolio:

- Evidence of any workshops or special classes you attended. Include a certificate, registration letter, or something else indicating you attended/completed it.
- Evidence of volunteer work, including a write-up of your experience and how it impacted you.
- *Related* experience and work products from your time prior to college.
- Materials associated with *career-related* talks, performances, debates, or competitions that you delivered or took part in.
- Products, projects, or experiences developed in internships, fieldwork, clinicals, or other experiences (see below).
- Evidence of "universal" workplace skills such as computer abilities or communication, or specialized abilities such as computation/number crunching.

A portfolio is neither a scrapbook nor an Instagram story. No need to fill it with pictures of your college experience unless those pictures directly relate to your career. If you're studying theology and ran a religious camp, include a picture. If you're studying theology and worked in a food store, leave it out.

Certain disciplines, such as graphic design, music, computer science, and other technologies, may have more specific portfolio requirements and desired styles. You'll likely learn about that in the course of your studies, but be sure to proactively inquire about these needs or seek examples. Early in your college career, you should be most focused on gathering components for your portfolio, not formalizing it for display or sharing.

Preparing to Network

Throughout this chapter, we have discussed how important relationships are to your career development. It can sometimes be a little intimidating to meet new people in the professional environment. But with preparation and understanding, these encounters can be not only helpful, but also rewarding. Here are some ideas to consider when meeting new people who can be helpful to your career:

- **Be yourself.** You're your own best asset. If you're comfortable with who you are and where you come from, others will be, too.
- **Remember, you're in college and they know it.** Don't try to impress everyone with what you *know*; alumni or faculty know more. Instead, talk about what you're *learning*—your favorite class, the project you're most proud of, or even the ones by which you've been most challenged.
- **Be polite, not too casual.** If your goal is to become a professional, look and sound the part.
- **Listen.**
- **Think of some questions ahead of time.** Don't aim for difficult questions or anything too personal, but asking people how they got into their career, with whom they studied in college, what their job is like, and similar questions will both start conversations and provide you with meaningful insight.
- **Don't stress.** Remember, if alumni, even highly successful ones, are speaking to you, it's usually because they want to. An encounter over finger food or a brief meetup in the Rad Tech department office isn't going to make or break your job prospects.
- **If appropriate and timely, ask if you can keep in touch.** Be prepared with a polished email address and phone number. For example, if your current address is "fortnitefan@gmail.com," consider creating a second account that's more professional.
- **Say thank you.** No need to go on and on, but thank them for any advice they give or simply for taking the time to talk with you

> ***While you're in college, don't try to impress everyone with what you know. Instead, talk about what you're learning.***

Making Your Case through the Words of Others: Letters of Recommendation

Whether you go on to graduate school or directly into the workforce (or both at the same time), decision makers will want to learn more about you. Your grades, interviews, test scores, and other performance data will tell them a lot. But sometimes they'll want to hear from others.

Letters of recommendation are often a standard component of convincing people you're the right person to join their organization. Some positions or institutions require a certain quantity of letters and may have specific guidance on who should write them. Other companies will accept them as additional evidence that you're a great candidate. Either way, gathering such letters or having a few people whom you can ask for them will put you in a better position. Note that internships, especially competitive ones, may also require letters of recommendation.



Figure 23.4 When you ask someone to write you a letter of recommendation, be prepared to share information about your goals, your accomplishments, and why you are asking the person in particular. Don't assume that they know which strengths or experience of yours to highlight. (Credit: US Embassy Jerusalem / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

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OpenStax College Success Concise Chapter 8.4. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/8-4-using-the-career-planning-cycle

Baldwin, A. (2023). Using the Career Planning Cycle. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

Modifications: Renumbered figures and table.

Footnotes:

Writing@CSU. "Organizing Your Resume." https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/page.cfm?pageid=1517&guideid=77

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4.4: Life Plan

Graciela Martinez and Elizabeth Shaker

Getting Started: Creating Your Career & Life Planning Vision

Learning Objectives

Apply the career exploration and planning process.

Describe the stages of career development and identify the stage you are currently in.

Identify and apply important factors related to mindset such as a positive mental outlook, self-confidence and the power of positive thinking.

Differentiate between a job and a career.

Brainstorm ideas for your personal and career vision.

A Journey Begins…

"If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else." This popular saying attributed to Yogi Berra, an American professional baseball catcher, suggests that we should have a pretty clear picture of where we are headed. And college, for most of us, is an important step toward a fulfilling and exciting career. But the fact is that the employment market and job-seeking techniques have changed significantly over the past ten years and will continue to change; it is not as easy as it once was to map out a clear career path. However, a clear direction can still provide enough flexibility to respond to the changing needs of today's job market. In fact, building flexibility into your career plans is a requirement for achieving a successful career.

Consider the ways in which the job market has changed—and what it may mean to your planning:

You will likely be employed by many organizations in your lifetime. The idea of working for a single employer is no longer the rule but rather the exception. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor found that on average, people hold close to eleven jobs between the ages of eighteen and forty-two. This trend means today's graduates need to be very flexible in their career plans and that they should make an effort to identify and develop transferable skills in order to navigate the changing employment market.

Five years from now, you may be working in a job that does not even exist in the present. As new technology accelerates and national and global priorities (such as going green or national security) take on a new sense of urgency, new needs are identified and new jobs will be created to fill those needs. Think about this: five years ago, a search engine optimization (SEO) specialist was a job in only a handful of Web-centric companies. With the meteoric growth of Google, SEO is now a common role in just many marketing departments—and a job in relatively high demand. In the same way, the aging population has created new opportunities in elder care, the events of 9/11 has created a whole new category of jobs in homeland security, and new discoveries and approaches in science have created fields like biotechnology and nanotechnology. Today's students and job hunters must become lifetime learners to keep up with new trends.

The physical location of a job is no longer as important as it once was. Other than jobs that require you to serve customers in a specific location or region or jobs that require specialized equipment (as in manufacturing facilities), companies increasingly have off-site employees who stay connected via the Internet. This means that students and job hunters should be able to demonstrate the ability to work independently and produce results without consistent, direct personal supervision.

The growth of job posting sites online has created a glut of applicants for most posted positions. You have access to millions of job opportunities via the Web, but so do hundreds or thousands of other job seekers. Each employer must go through hundreds of resumes received for each job posted on the Web. Strategies for standing out in this crowded field become very important.

These factors combine to create a job environment that is different from what most people might expect. The way you prepare for a career needs to be more flexible and more personalized. Technology will play an important role in your career development. Linking your demonstrable skills to the needs of a job will be the key to your success.

Overview of Career & Life Planning

"The Department of Labor defines 840 occupations in its Standard Occupation Classification system[1]—and new occupations are being created at an ever-faster rate. Just ten years ago, would anyone have imagined the job of a social media marketing specialist?

How about the concept of a competitive chef? As new careers develop and old careers morph into almost unrecognizable versions of their original, it's OK if you aren't able to pinpoint exactly what occupation or career will be your lifetime passion. However, it is important to define as best you can what field you will want to develop your career in, because that will help dictate your major and your course selections."

The process of career exploration can be a lot of fun, as it allows you to discover a world of possibilities. Even those students who have a pretty clear idea of what they want to do should go through this process because they will discover new options as backups and occasionally a new direction even more attractive than their original choice. The career exploration process involves four phases addressing four important questions:

- **Phase 1: Who Am I?**
- **Phase 2: What's Out There?**
- **Phase 3: What Factors Might Affect My Choice?**
- **Phase 4: Where Do I Go From Here?**

Phase 1: Who Am I?

This phase involves getting to know who you are. Understanding who you *really* are—is the first step of career exploration. You will have the opportunity to engage in many different career assessments in Unit 2 to allow you to learn more about your values, character strengths, personality preferences, interests, skills, and abilities. Each assessment will help you gain a better understanding of who you are and where you may fit best in the world of work.

Phase 2: What's Out There?

Phase 2 involves doing career research. Once you have taken time to research yourself and gain a stronger understanding of who you are, you can begin to explore what types of careers might be best suited to you. This phase involves online research, talking to professionals in the field and gaining hands on exposure through volunteer work, internship experience, and networking. This phase also includes researching industry expectations and understanding minimum qualifications for employment. The more information you gather and the more you learn about the world of work will help you make well-informed decisions about your future career.

Phase 3: What Factors Might Affect My Choice?

In phase 3, you will take time to explore factors that may affect your choice and start making some decisions. It is important to use your creative thinking skills to come up with alternative "right" answers to factors that may present an obstacle to pursuing the right career.

- **Timing.** How much time must I invest before I actually start making money in this career? Will I need to spend additional time in school? Is there a certification process that requires a specific amount of experience? If so, can I afford to wait?
- **Finances.** Will this career provide me with the kind of income I need in the short term and the security I'll want in the longer term? What investment will I need to make to be successful in this field (education, tools, franchise fees, etc.)?
- **Location.** Does this career require me to relocate? Is the ideal location for this career somewhere I would like to live? Is it somewhere my family would like to live.
- **Family/personal.** How will this career affect my personal and family life? Do friends and family members who know me well feel strongly (for or against) about this career choice? How important is their input?

Taking time to research, these factors will help you with the decision making process and allow you to plan and prepare for your future. The decision making process will be discussed in detail in unit 4 along with internal and external factors that influence decision-making.

Phase 4: Where Do I Go From Here?

It may seem odd to be thinking about life after school if you are just getting started. But you will soon be making decisions about your future, and regardless of the direction you may choose, there is a lot you can do while still in college. You will need to focus your studies by choosing a major. You should find opportunities to explore the careers that interest you. You can ensure that you are building the right kind of experience on which to base a successful career. These steps will make your dreams come to life and make them achievable. In Unit 4, the educational planning process will be introduced. You will take time to learn about the career certificate programs, associate degree, and transfer programs at COC and gain a good understanding of what program you'd like to pursue while developing your comprehensive student educational plan.

Keep in mind that deciding on and pursuing a career is an ongoing process. The more you learn about yourself and the career options that best suit you, the more you will need to fine-tune your career plan. Do not be afraid to consider new ideas. Keep an open mind, apply careful consideration as you narrow down your choices, and solidify your career plan. Career planning is exciting: learning about yourself and about career opportunities, and considering the factors that can affect your decision, should be a core part of your thoughts while in college.

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Career and Life Planning – An Open Educational Resource Publication by College of the Canyons Unit 1 Getting Started: Creating Your Career & Life Planning Vision and 1.1 Overview of Career and Life Planning. Access for free at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kTVzQ6mKcTPEVnK_YUl6UkZLd1mn7wa4

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Modifications: Minor edits for broader audience.

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4.5: Career Assessments

Graciela Martinez and Elizabeth Shaker

Career Assessments

Learning Objectives:

- Use valuable career assessments to help you gain a better understanding of yourself and visualize where you fit best in the world of work.
- Define and clarify your values and how they relate to your career choices.
- Identify your own personality type and how your preferences connect to choice of major and career.
- Distinguish your interests, confirm your skills, and character strengths and link them to potential major and career choices.

Getting Started With Career Assessments

If you do not know yourself, how can you possibly know what you want to do for a career? In this unit, you will be taking several career assessments to better understand yourself and make choices that are more informed when it comes to researching your career options. These assessments will help pinpoint your personality preferences, workplace strengths and direct you toward professions that best compliment your unique personality. You will also identify your values, underlying needs and motivations and make connections to how these play into your future career vision.

The first phase of career and life planning involves answering the question, “Who Am I?” This phase entails taking time to study yourself in depth and understanding things such as:

- What motivates you?
- What do you like doing?
- What do you *not* like doing?
- What work environments energize you and what environments drain you?
- What are your character strengths and what skills do you have or can you acquire that employers will pay you for?

Your answers to these questions will help you find “*Your Meaningful Work*.” Certified Dream Coach and Dream Coach Group Leader, Bill Johnson, has created a powerful diagram that illustrates this point. The center of the diagram where all components intersect is where “*Your Meaningful Work*” lies. Keep this in mind as we explore each of these components through the different career assessments.

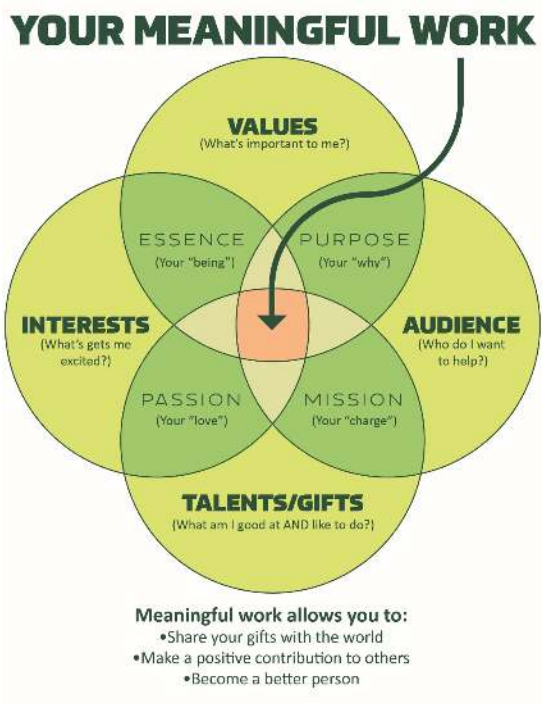


Figure 25.1 – Finding meaningful work (Image by Ian Joslin is licensed under CC BY 4.0).

No assessment can possibly know more about you than you know about yourself. You are your own expert, however, these career assessments will help give you a frame of reference. They will help you make connections to your past experiences and help you apply them to your future career goals. Be sure to keep an open mind throughout this process. Ask questions and explore areas of uncertainty. You only know what you know, and the more time and energy you invest in self-exploration, the more informed you will be as you make decisions that impact your future career goals. This journey can be fun and exciting and at times a bit overwhelming, however the more you put into it, the more you will gain!

Values

Values are the characteristics that are most important to you. They make up your core belief system and serve as motivators that guide you in what you do and decisions you make. It is important to consider your values as you select a career. You will enjoy the work you do more if it aligns with your core values. If the work you choose conflicts with your values, you will most likely struggle with the position and this may create tension and discomfort in your life. It is important to consider your personal values along with your work related values.

For example, if you value good health and are assigned to market a product that may cause serious health concerns, you will likely find it difficult to market this item. If you are asked to do this on a continual basis, you will internally struggle with the role you play as this job forces you to go against your core values.

Let's Take a Look at Work Values

According to the Occupational Information Network (O*NET), the nation's primary source of occupational information, work values are defined as the "global aspects of work that are important to a person's satisfaction." Below is a screenshot of the six work values to take into consideration while researching career options. O*NET allows you to do a *Work Values Search* by entering your top three Work Values to see which occupations match your choices. https://www.onetonline.org/explore/workvalues/Achievement/

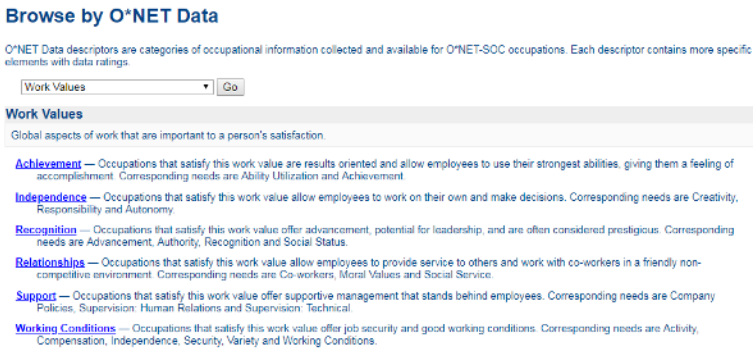


*Figure 25.2 – Browse by O*Net Data (Screenshot from https://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/Work_Values/)*

You will have an opportunity to complete a values assessment activity in class using the values card sort along with other online resources such as:

- ***Work Values Search*** through O*NET: this assessment allows you to match your chosen work values with occupations that match. https://www.onetonline.org/explore/workvalues/Achievement/
- ***Kuder Journey***: an online tool, which provides reliable inventories to assess your interests, skills confidence, and work values, and suggests occupations and majors that match your assessment results. Kuder Journey also includes resources like a resume builder and online portfolio, to prepare you for the job search and connect you to today's jobs! Your instructor will distribute login instructions with an activation code. You will have the opportunity to take the three assessments: interests, skills confidence, and work values.
- ***Work Importance Profiler***: this assessment helps you determine what values are important to you and how they line up with different careers. To complete the ***Work Importance Profiler*** go to the California Career Zone site at: https://www.cacareerzone.org/wip/. Below is a screenshot.

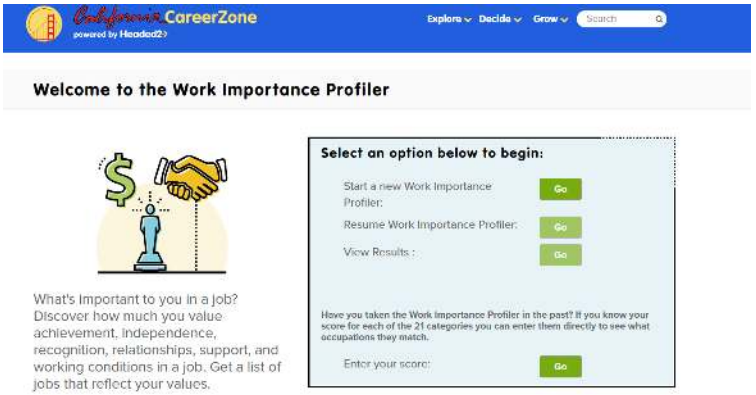


Figure 25.3 –California Career Zone (Screenshot from https://www.cacareerzone.org/wip/).

Your values will play an important role in each phase of the career and life planning process; therefore, it is important to take time to assess what is most important to you. When your values align with the work you do, you will feel more satisfied and invested in your career.

Activity 25.1 – Identify Your Work Values

Complete the following three activities to review the work values that are most important to you.

- Read about six core work values developed by the U.S. Department of Labor's O*NET program. Click on the ones that best describe you to see careers that highlight that value. Record your findings:
- The Values Card Sort Activity:
- Your instructor may have you participate in this activity in class if you are taking an on ground/face to face class. If you are completing this course online, you may do it yourself by downloading and printing O*NET's work values cards (pdf). Cut your own cards and sort them into three piles, identifying whether each is "essential," "important," or "not important" for your career needs. Make a note of the values that ranked high for you. Record your findings:
-
-
- Take the California CareerZone Work Importance Profiler and get a list of jobs that reflect your values. Record your findings:

After you have identified your top values, explore careers that would allow you to express your values. Do you see a common theme amongst these careers? Explain:

VIA Character Strengths

We all have strengths and weaknesses and that is what makes us different and unique. Oftentimes it is easier to focus on weaknesses and in doing so strengths get neglected.

During counseling appointments with undeclared students, the counselor will generally start by asking if the student has any career ideas in mind. We oftentimes get responses such as, "Well, definitely nothing related to math and science, those are not my strong areas." It is important to recognize our weaknesses; however, we do not want to neglect our strengths. The VIA Institute on Character has developed a FREE VIA Survey Character Strengths assessment you will complete. This assessment will rank your character strengths, which you can use to help explore career options, problem solve, improve relationships and enhance your overall well-being.

The VIA Institute on Character

The mission statement of the Via Institute on Character states:

"The VIA Institute on Character is a non-profit organization, based in Cincinnati, Ohio, dedicated to bringing the science of character strengths to the world through supporting research, creating validating surveys of character, and developing practical tools for individuals and practitioners".

Take time to explore their website and learn more about the character strengths.

View the YouTube Video "The Science of Character" for an introduction to the VIA Character Strengths.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=356#oembed-1

Activity 25.2 – Identify Your Character Strengths

After viewing the YouTube video clip introducing "The Science of Character," go onto the VIA Institute on Character website and take the ***Free Character Strengths Survey*** online at: https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register.
This will take about 15-20 minutes and entails answering 120 questions. After completing the survey, download your free VIA character strengths profile and read the report summary. The report rank orders your character strengths from highest to lowest based on 24 different character strengths.

- What were your top five character strengths generated from your report? Record your results:
- Do you agree or disagree with these results? Explain why you agree or disagree and give examples from your life experiences at work, school, or home to support each character strength.

Keep your character strengths in mind as you research career options. Learn to put your strengths to work for you.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a personality assessment that was developed by Katherine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers based on the framework of personality theory by Carl C. Jung. The MBTI is a personality assessment that measures the psychological preferences that influence how people perceive the world and make decisions. This assessment is widely used across the world and has been translated into two dozen plus languages. Many companies use the MBTI with their staff to help employees learn more about themselves and how they can strengthen their department team efforts and increase overall productivity for the company. Many colleges and universities use the MBTI to help with career exploration.

The MBTI will help you gain a better understanding of your preferences and work environments that best fit you. The MBTI does *not* measure abilities, skills, values or interests. It assesses your personality preferences. The MBTI instrument indicates preferences on four pairs of opposites called dichotomies.

Watch the following video to get an introduction of four facets that comprise the 16 possible personality types.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=356#oembed-2

Personality Theory: The 4 Facets

- Extroversion-Introversion (EI): *how you get your energy and where you prefer to focus your attention*
- Sensing-Intuition (SN): *how you take in information about the world around you*
- Thinking-Feeling (TF): *how you like to make decisions*
- Judging-Perceiving (JP): *how you prefer to organize your life*

These four preferences make up your type, which results in 16 rich, complex, highly differentiated whole types. You will have an opportunity in class to self-identify your preferences and this will be your "**Self-estimated" type**. Your instructor will give you more information on taking the MBTI personality assessment.
Once the assessment is completed, your instructor will generate a career report and distribute your results to you. The results of this assessment will be your **"Reported" type.** After learning more about the MBTI and reviewing your self-estimated type and your reported type, you will confirm your **"Best-fit" type.** This will be addressed in more detail in class.

Activity 25.3 – What's Your Type?

Read descriptions for the four facets. Pick which is more like you.

- E (Extraversion) or I (Introversion)?
- S (Sensing) or N? (Intuition)?
- T (Thinking) or F? (Feeling)?
- J (Judging) or P? (Perceiving)?

Table 25.1 Personality Type Examples

Could be described as:	Could be described as:
• Talkative, outgoing • Like to be in a fast-paced environment • Tend to work out ideas with other, think aloud • Enjoy being the center of attention Then you prefer (E) Extraversion	• Reserved, private • Prefer a slower pace with time for contemplation • Tend to think things through inside your head • Would rather observe then be the center of attention Then you prefer (I) Introversion
• Focus on the reality of how things are • Pay attention to concrete facts and details • Prefer ideas that have practical applications • Like to describe things in a specific, literal way Then you prefer (S) Sensing	• Imagine the possibilities of how things could be • Notice the big picture, see how everything connects • Enjoy ideas and concepts for their own sake • Like to be describe in a way figurative, poetic Then you prefer (N) Intuition
• Make decision in an impersonal way, using logical reasoning • Value justice, fairness • Enjoy finding the flaws in an arguments • Could be described as reasonable, level-headed Then you prefer (T) Thinking	• Base you decision on personal values and how our actions affect others • Value harmony, forgiveness • Like to please others and point out the best in people • Could be described as warm empathetic Then you prefer (F) Feeling
• Prefer to have matters settled • Think rules and deadlines should be respected • Prefer to have a detailed step-by-step instructions • Make plans, want to know what you're getting into Then you prefer (J) Judging	• Prefer to leave your options open • See rules and deadlines as flexible • Like to improvise and make things up as you go • Are spontaneous, enjoy surprise and new situations Then you prefer (P)Perceiving

What is your 4-letter personality type? __ __ __ __

The following are brief descriptions of the 16 personality types from Humanmetrics. Click on your personality type or a similar type to see which describes you best.

Table 25.2 Personality type descriptions

ESTJ	ISTJ	ENTJ	INTJ
ESTP	ISTP	ENTP	INTP
ESFJ	ISFJ	ENFJ	INFJ
ESFP	ISFP	ENFP	INFP

Each type is unique and presents its own strengths and challenges. No one type is better than the other. Any type can do anything if motivated!

Your instructor will generate your career report based on your responses to the online MBTI assessment. The career report will help you:

- Identify job families or broad occupational categories to help you get started in your career search.
- Choose a specific job or career.
- Select a college major or course of study.
- Identify strengths and potential weaknesses of your type for the career search process.
- Increase your job satisfaction.
- Make a career transition or shift.
- Plan your career development strategy and action steps.

John Holland's classifications of work environments

Video: RIASEC at Work Matching Your Personality to Career

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=356#oembed-3



Figure 25.4 – The RIASEC Model (Holland Codes by QVhighschool01 is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0)

You will have an opportunity to complete the Strong Interest Inventory in class. Your instructor will give you more detailed information on completing this assessment. Once you complete the assessment, your instructor will generate a career report and distribute your results to you.

Read over the different RIASEC work environments below and consider your first, second and third choice interests.

- **Realistic**: These people describe themselves as honest, loyal, and practical. They are doers more than thinkers. They have strong mechanical, motor, and athletic abilities; like the outdoors; and prefer working with machines, tools, plants, and animals. Realistic occupations frequently involve work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. They often deal with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery. Many of the occupations require working outside, and do not involve a lot of paperwork or working closely with others.
- **Investigative:** These people love problem solving and analytical skills. They are intellectually stimulated and often mathematically or scientifically inclined; like to observe, learn, and evaluate; prefer working alone; and are reserved. Investigative occupations frequently involve working with ideas, and require an extensive amount of thinking. These occupations can involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally.
- **Artistic**: These people are the "free spirits." They are creative, emotional, intuitive, and idealistic; have a flair for communicating ideas; dislike structure and prefer working independently; and like to sing, write, act, paint, and think creatively. They are similar to the investigative type but are interested in the artistic and aesthetic aspects of things more than the scientific. Artistic occupations frequently involve working with forms, designs and patterns. They often require self-expression and the work can be done without following a clear set of rules.
- **Social**: These are "people" people. They are friendly and outgoing; love to help others, make a difference, or both; have strong verbal and personal skills and teaching abilities; and are less likely to engage in intellectual or physical activity. Social occupations frequently involve working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

- **Enterprising:** These people are confident, assertive risk takers. They are sociable; enjoy speaking and leadership; like to persuade rather than guide; like to use their influence; have strong interpersonal skills; and are status conscious. Enterprising occupations frequently involve starting up and carrying out projects. These occupations can involve leading people and making many decisions. Sometimes they require risk taking and often deal with business.
- **Conventional**: These people are dependable, detail oriented, disciplined, precise, persistent, and practical; value order; and are good at clerical and numerical tasks. They work well with people and data, so they are good organizers, schedulers, and project managers. Conventional occupations frequently involve following set procedures and routines. These occupations can include working with data and details more than with ideas. Usually there is a clear line of authority to follow.

Activity 25.4 – What's Your Occupational Type

Using the descriptions above, choose the three types that most closely describe you and list them in order in the following table. Most people are combinations of two or sometimes three types. Then list the specific words or attributes that you feel describe you best. After determining your primary, secondary, and tertiary occupational types, take the first initial for each type, in order, to establish your occupational code.

Table 25.3 Occupational Types

Occupational Type	Word and Attributes That Closely Describe Me
Primary type (the one I identify with *most closely*)	
Secondary type	
Tertiary type	

Note: Your occupational code is made up of the initials of the three personality types you selected, in order.

My occupational code: ___ ___ ___

(For example: if Social, Enterprising, and Conventional are your top three occupational types, your occupational code would be: S E C)

Exploring Careers and Your Occupational Type

Now that you have determined your top three occupational types, you can begin to explore the types of careers that may be best suited for you. Holland studied people who were successful and happy in many occupations and matched their occupations to their occupational type, creating a description of the types of occupations that are best suited to each personality type. Just as many individuals are more than one personality type, many jobs show a strong correlation to more than one occupational type.

This is a rough beginning to finding your occupational type, but you will soon be seeking out more detailed results from the Strong Interest Inventory assessment as a part of this course.

Use the top thee occupation types you defined in the exercise, "What's Your Occupational Type?" to help identify careers you may want to consider from the table below.

Table 25.4 – Occupational Options by Type

Type	Ideal Environments	Sample Occupations
Realistic	• Structured • Clear lines of authority • Work with things and tools • Casual dress • Focus on tangible results or well-thought-out goals	• Contractor • Emergency medical technician (EMT) • Mechanic • Military career • Packaging engineer

Investigative	• Nonstructured • Research oriented • Intellectual • Work with ideas and data	• Pharmacist • Lab technician • Nanotechnologist • Geologist • College professor
Artistic	• Nonstructured • Creative • Rewards unconventional and aesthetic approaches • Creation of products and ideas	• Collaborative • Collegial • Work with **people** and on people-related problems/issues • Work as a team or community
Social	• Collaborative • Collegial • Work with people and on people-related problems/issues • Work as a team or community	• Teacher • Geriatric counselor • Correctional officer • Coach • Nurse
Enterprising	• Typical business environment • Results oriented • Driven • Work with people and data • Entrepreneurial • Power focused	• Sales manager • Banker • Lawyer • Business owner • Restaurant manager
Conventional	• Orderly • Clear rules and policies • Consistent processes • Work with systems to manipulate and organize data • Control and handling of money	• Auditor • Insurance underwriter • Bank teller • Office manager • Database manager

You can use the Department of Labor's O*Net (**http://online.onetcenter.org/find**) to get a deeper understanding of your occupation. For each occupation, O*Net lists the type of work, the work environment, the skills and education required, and the job outlook for that occupation. This is a truly rich resource that you should get to know.

You will have the opportunity to complete an interest assessment using one of the following online resources:

- ***Careeronestop:*** http://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/assessments/self-assessments.aspx (go to "Interest Assessment")
- ***California Career Zone***: https://www.cacareerzone.org/ (go to "Assess Yourself – Interest Profiler")
- ***O*NET Interest Profiler***: https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip
- ***iStartStrong*** – your instructor will provide you with login instructions for this assessment. Once completed, your instructor will generate a customized career report based on your responses. Your results will give you a great deal of information to help you make informed decisions about your future including:
- careers that reflect your interest
- possible education and training programs
- satisfying work environments
- enjoyable activities for your free time

Skills

Skilled Labor

Employers seek skills. Many of the skills you will need are career specific: we call those specific skills **hard skills** or **technical 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 technical skills.

These are not the only skills you will need to be successful. The second set of skills you must have are called **soft skills** or **transferable skills**, which contribute to success in any number of occupations because they can be used in almost all occupations. Some soft skills include thinking skills, communication skills, listening skills and leadership skills. 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. Search on O*Net (http://online.onetcenter.org/find) to determine which skills you need to demonstrate to potential employers you have mastered based on your career interest.

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 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.

In this section, you will look at ways of identifying and building particular hard and soft skills that will be necessary for your career path.

Table 25.5 – Transferable Skills Inventory

Active listening	Decision making	Negotiating	Researching
Active learning	Editing	Observing	Selling
Analyzing	Evaluating	Organizing	Speaking a 2nd language
Budgeting	Forecasting	Perceiving Feelings	Supervising
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

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. Transferable/Soft skills are a big part of your "total me" package.

So, identify the transferable/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.

You will have the opportunity to complete skills assessments using different online resources such as:

- ***Kuder Journey***: an online tool, which provides reliable inventories to assess your interests, skills confidence, and work values, and suggests occupations and majors that match your assessment results. Kuder Journey also includes resources like a resume builder and online portfolio, to prepare you for the job search and connect you to today's jobs! Your instructor will distribute login instructions and you will have the opportunity to take the three assessments: interests, skills confidence, and work values.

- ***Skills Matcher***: an online "Skills Assessment" through Careeronestop. The *Skills Matcher* helps you identify your skills. Use the *Skills Matcher* to create a list of your skills and match them to careers that use those skills. Click here to complete the *Skills Matcher*: https://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/Skills/skills-matcher.aspx
- ***Skills Profiler***: an online skills assessment through the California Career Zone. This tool that allows you to identify skills you have acquired through your jobs and other activities. The *Skills Profiler* can help you explore occupations that require your skill set. https://www.cacareerzone.org/index – go to the "Explore" tab at the top right hand corner, then go to *Skills Profiler* listed under the "*Assess Yourself*" heading.

21st Century Skills

Due to the rapid changes in the global economy and the advancement of technology, the workplace has changed dramatically. As a student it is important for you to gain the knowledge and skills employers are seeking. To help train the new generation entering the workforce, a team of educators came together with employers, workforce development boards, and research organizations across the country to build college/career-ready, 21st Century Employability Skills Program called New World of Work (NWoW) 21st Century Skills Training.

Watch the Part 1 21st Century Skills video:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=356#oembed-4

New World of Work (NWoW) was developed under the Doing What MATTERS for Jobs and the Economy framework of the California Community Colleges system, which is the largest higher education system in the nation with 72 districts and 115 colleges serving over 2.1 million students each year.

Starting in 2012, the New World of Work team began tracking futurist projections, economic reports, and national research related to the correlation between education and employment.

The group conducted a series of Skills Panels to gather feedback from employers, entrepreneurs, human resources specialists, educators, and students to determine the essential employability skills required in our emerging global economy.

From the research gathered, NWoW established their "Top 10" list of 21st Century Employability Skills. They worked closely with expert curriculum developers, including the NWoW Co-Creators, video crews, college faculty across disciplines, and digital badging teams then created lessons and badges to go along with each of the skills.

They identified the following "Top 10" list of 221st Century Employability Skills:



Figure 25.5 – Essential 21st Century Skills (Image by New World of Work is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0)

For more information about NWoW, read the Executive Summary report titled "Community Colleges and 21st Century Skills: Skills Panels to Assist Student Career Success."

What is a Digital Badge?

Preview the short video by the MacArthur Foundation to get an overview of what a Digital Badge is and how it can be used.

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The New World of Work awards "**Learner Badges**" for all 10 of the 21st Century Skills. This is available to you for FREE! The **NWoW Learner Badges** are based on the NWoW High School/opportunity youth video series paired with multiple-choice questions. These can be used with high school, post secondary, adult learners or the general public to provide an introduction to the 21st Century Skills and the process for earning badges. Assessment pages launch directly from NWoW website by clicking on the Learner Badge icons. Below is a screenshot of the Learner Badges series.



Figure 25.6 – 21st Century Skills Learner Badges (Image by New World of Work is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

In addition to the Learner Badges, College of the Canyons is proud to provide the NWoW curriculum and award digital badges through the Continuing Education Department Career Skills Program. For more information, reach out to the Continuing Education Department – Career Skills program. The Career Skills Courses offered through Continuing Education are FREE and available in an on ground and online format to meet the needs of diverse learners and all courses are open to the community! Completing the Career Skills training is a great way to show employers you are equipped with the skills necessary to be successful in today's workforce and allows you to earn digital badges you may post on your LinkedIn and social media profile.

One other benefit of the NWoW – 21st Century Skills Curriculum, is the **LinkedIn Crosswalk,** that provides the following:

- Partnership with LinkedIn to provide suggested next steps after each skill lesson
- Instructors and students can utilize the LinkedIn Learning/Lynda.com videos that have been crosswalked with NWoW skills to take a deeper dive into the traits of that skill
- Completion of these video courses generates certificates that can be hosted on LinkedIn profiles along with skills badges, school/alumni information.
- Also, Career Education students at COC who participate in the Continuing Education FREE Career Skills courses receive free Lynda.com access.

View the YouTube PBS News Hour video titled " Giving students a leg up with job skills a resume won't show" to learn more about digital badges and how they can help you be more marketable.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=356#oembed-6

Activity 25.5 – Identifying Your Skills

Self-identify your Top 5 transferable (soft) skills, skills you are good at, and those skills you wish to learn or develop further.

Review the list of transferable skills list and additional checklist of transferable skills above to complete the chart below. Describe specific ways in which you have used each skill successfully. This will come in handy when we discuss interviewing strategies. Consider skills important to your career that you have not yet mastered and how you plan to master them. Give examples.

Table 25.6 My Transferable Skills

Number	Top 5 Skills I Enjoy Using	Top 5 Skills that Come Naturally	Top 5 Skills that I Want to Learn
1			

2			
3			
4			
5			

Putting It All Together

You have actively engaged in Phase 1- "Who Am I?" of the career exploration process and now, it is time to take a snapshot view of your assessment results. Take a moment and summarize your findings from the different career assessments you have completed in this unit. Record your findings in the chart below:

Activity 25.6 – Putting It All Together: My Snapshot View of Phase 1: Who Am I?

My Top 3 Work Values: • • • Name 2 career titles that you are most interest in that will allow you to express your values: • •	**My Occupational Code** based on Holland Codes (RIASEC Model – refer to your iStartStrong assessment results): ____ ____ ____ Name 2 career titles you are most interested in that will allow you to express your interests: • •
My top 5 Character Strengths: • • • • • How will your character strengths contribute to your career success?	**My Top 5 Transferable Skills** • • • • • Name 2 career titles that you are most interested in that will allow you to utilize your skills**.** • •
My MBTI 4 Letter Personality Type: ____ ____ ____ ____ Name 2 career titles that you are most interested in that fit with your personality type. • •	**My Additional Notes/Reflections:** Common Themes…. Of all the career titles you have explored, which career would you be interested in researching more in-depth?

Take a moment and reflect on your findings:

- Did anything surprise you? Explain.
- Do you see any overlapping themes from your assessment results?
- How do your results confirm what you already know about yourself? Explain.
- How will this information guide you as you move into exploring Phase 2: "What's Out There?" conducting career research, and researching industry expectations?

Chapter Summary

Now that you have completed Chapter 25, let's revisit the learning objectives. In this unit, you have:

Used valuable career assessment tools to help you gain a better understanding of yourself and visualize where you fit best in the world of work.

Defined and clarified your values and how they relate to your career choices.

Identified your own personality type preference and how your preferences connect to choice of major and career.

Distinguished your interests, confirmed your skills, and character strengths and linked them to potential major and career choices.

Each of the assessments you completed is an important piece of the puzzle of you and what you have to offer the world of work! Now that you have completed these assessments, you are better equipped to answer the question, "Who Am I?" While self-discovery can take a lifetime, you now have information that perhaps you did not have before. Some of the results may change slightly over time depending on experiences and life circumstances. The key here is "knowing thyself." You are off to a great start and we are hopeful you have enjoyed learning more about yourself in the process of self-discovery!

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4.6: Career Research and Exploration

Graciela Martinez and Elizabeth Shaker

Conducting Career Research

Learning Objectives:

- Inventory online resources to research career information.
- Recognize current labor market trends and the changing workplace.
- Use informational interviews as a way to research careers.
- Explored professional associations as a means to collect career research and network with industry professionals.
- Examine diversity in the workplace.

Welcome to Phase 2 – "What's Out There?" This phase entails conducting career research. Engaging in career research will provide you with additional information and resources to assist you in better understanding the world of work and where you see yourself fitting in. This unit will require online research and self-discipline to navigate several career resources. Engaging in the career research process will help you outline your career ideas and help organize the process.

As you research career information, make note of tasks, work environment, skills, job outlook, necessary training, and salary information. Analyze this information with the results you gathered from Unit 2 in regards to your interests, skills, personality, values and strengths and make connections. Start asking yourself, "Where do I see myself fitting in within the world of work?" As you research career information, you will also want to research industry expectations. This entails researching the job market and looking for open job applications and learning what the minimum qualifications are for employment. The more you know about industry expectations, the more prepared you will be to meet industry demands.

Online Resources to Research Career Information

Researching the internet for career information can be fascinating. You have so much information at the touch of your fingertips. This can be exciting, yet overwhelming at the same time. In this section, we will explore some common online tools used in career counseling. Keep a notepad nearby as you explore the different online career resources. Take notes of your findings and record information that stands out to you. At the end of this unit, you should be able to start putting the pieces together and getting closer to making some career decisions.

Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) – The Occupational Outlook Handbook is a nationally recognized source of career information, designed to provide valuable assistance to individuals making decisions about their future work lives. Revised every two years, the Handbook describes what workers do on the job, working conditions, the training and education

needed, earnings, expected job prospects in a wide range of occupations, and links to professional associations. (link: https://www.bls.gov/ooh/)

O*Net Online – O*Net Online has detailed descriptions of the world of work for use by job seekers, workforce development and HR professionals, students and more. Making occupational information interactive and accessible to everyone. This site contains both summary and detailed information on occupations in the US economy as well as the ability to search for information by various criteria such as job family, industry, skills, knowledge, interests, green jobs, bright outlook occupations and several others. It is produced by the federal government, is updated frequently, and contains state and national wage information, occupational projections, related occupations and opportunities for more information from professional and trade associations. (link: http://www.onetonline.org/)

CareerOneStop – Sponsored by the U.S Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, this site provides tools to help job seekers, students, business and career professionals. Career OneStop is a comprehensive site to explore careers, find training, search for jobs, connect with community resources, and additional resources for special populations including: career changers, military and veterans, laid-off workers, workers with a criminal conviction, workers with disabilities, entry level workers, older workers, young adults, self-employed and credential seekers. (link: http://www.careeronestop.org/)

Orange County Career Cafe – A virtual career center designed to walk you through self-exploration, career research, getting experience and job search preparation. This site also includes a professional association database organized by career pathways. Full of videos, information, and tips on how to be successful in your search for a career. (link: http://www.cacareercafe.com/)

California CareerZone – A career exploration and planning site powered by Headed2, a secure career exploration and coaching platform which can be accessed from anywhere to connect learning with earning. Headed2 is an educational technology company focused on career and transition planning. Their mission is to help people explore, plan for and pursue careers that reflect their passions, skills and life goals. You may create a free account where you can save your information and come back at any point. The site allows you to discover possibilities, explore industry sectors and access personalized recommendations about opportunities for you through The Career Hub. (link: https://www.cacareerzone.org/index)

Path2Careers Pathways Pathways to Emerging Careers – This site contains career tools used to help with important life decisions – choosing a meaningful and successful career. Connecting students to resources and job market information, career fact sheets, 15 pathways to careers critical to California's economy, jobs of the future, and YouTube Career Videos and other resources. (link: http://fcmtest.com/path2careers/student_tools.asp)

CandidCareer.com – This site provides career information and career planning help through video. The video interviews are filmed without narration or actors – just real people speaking form the heart about their career experiences. Candid Career currently features a video library of 6,000 + clips. You may search the video library by industry, career title, or major. (link: https://www.candidcareer.com/)

Careers.org – This site contains information regarding employment, job search and career education. It includes detailed information about over 1000 occupations, including wages, skills and links to corresponding college programs and career, job and educational resources for states, cities and counties in the USA as well as Canadian Provinces and international countries.

Career Coach – This site is supported through the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. Career Coach allows students to discover majors, and in-demand careers and education based on their interests. The site contains career assessments, career information and programs offered in the California Community College System.

(link: https://ccc.emsicc.com/)

MY NEXT MOVE – This is an interactive tool for job seekers and students to learn more about their career options. My Next Move has tasks, skills, salary information, and more for over 900 different careers. Users can find careers through keyword search; by browsing industries that employ different types of workers; or through the O*NET Interest Profiler, a tool that offers personalized career suggestions based on a person's interests and level of work experience. (link: https://www.mynextmove.org/)

SalarySurfer – This site is sponsored by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. It is designed to help students and their families make important decisions about investing time and money in a college education. Salary Surfer provides comparative information about the earnings of recent California community college graduates who received an award in a specific program of study. Salary Surfer uses the aggregated earnings of graduates from a five-year period to provide an estimate on the potential wages to be earned two and five years after receiving a certificate or degree in certain disciplines. This tool also provides information on which colleges offer programs in those specific disciplines. (link: https://salarysurfer.cccco.edu)

Activity 26.1 – My Career Research Log

Take your time and explore each of the online resources introduced in section 3.1 to help you gather career information. What are your top two or three careers that seem to be the most interesting to you at this time?
Take notes as you conduct your research and consider researching the following questions:

- How do these careers match with your assessment results from unit 2?
- What part of these careers do you like?
- What part of these careers do you have concerns about?
- What kind of educational training/certification do you need for these careers?
- Where can you find the training for these careers?

Log your findings here:
Career Title # 1:_____
Career Title #2: _____
Career Title #3: _____

The more you learn about the world of work, the better equipped you are to make more informed decisions about the career path that best fits you and your needs!

Current Labor Market Information and Trends

Take a minute and view the YouTube video titled “How the World of Work is Changing” to get an idea of some of the changes that have taken place within the last twenty years. Understanding these changes can help you learn more about preparing for your future career.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=358#oembed-1

It is clear that the world of work is changing. As you conduct career research, it is important to be aware of the current labor market trends. Understanding information, such as jobs in demand, potential job growth and changes in the workplace will help you better prepare for your future career. To research current labor market information and trends, visit the State of California Employment Development Department (EDD) site.

State of California Employment Development Department (EDD) – The California Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Division is the official source for California Labor Market Information (LMI). LMID promotes California’s economic health by providing information to help people understand California’s economy and make informed labor market choices. This site provides statistical data and reports on California’s labor force, industries, occupations, employment projections, wages, and other important labor market and economic data. (link: https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/)

Activity 26.2 – Labor Market Research

Familiarize yourself with the State of California Employment Development Site (link: https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/) and search current labor market trends. Go to the LMI by Customer – Job Seekers and Students tab.

- The EDD Labor Market Information Division provides data and links to resources that job seekers will find helpful to assist with searching for jobs.
- Use the Occupational Guides or Occupation Profile to locate wages, benefits, training, and other information as you explore career opportunities. Use the Occupation Profiles for similar state information geared more towards job search.

Informational Interviews

In addition to online career resources, informational interviews are another way to gather information about a career.

Informational interviews are meetings where you are the interviewer, and the person with whom you are meeting has information that you want—for example, about a specific job, organization, or industry. Informational interviews are a type of networking, but since the primary aim is to uncover information, we are including informational interviewing in the research unit.

Many job seekers treat informational interviews like an interrogation, with a long list of questions to extract information from the interviewee. We will take a more sophisticated approach to informational interviews. These interviews occur after some research is already completed, so the interview is not simply a series of questions to gain more information but rather a way to verify, refine, and test the information already researched. It is a two-way conversation, and you will be giving as well as receiving information.

View the brief YouTube video titled “Designing Your Career: The Informational Interview” for an introduction to informational interviewing.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=358#oembed-2

Informational Interviews Are Two-Way Exchanges of Information

Most job seekers see informational interviews as a shortcut to research. Why not find someone who does the job, works at the organization, or works in the industry so they can give you a summary of the job, organization, or industry, instead of plowing through secondary data yourself? There are several reasons it is a bad idea to jump right to informational interviews without conducting your own research first:

- It's harder to land good informational interviews without having done some research first. Potential interview targets are going to think it is not worth their time if you are just there to take information from them, rather than having an interesting two-way exchange.
- Just because someone does the job or is part of an organization or industry does not mean that they have an exhaustive command of the information for that job, organization, or industry. You will not get an objective, comprehensive view of your target just by talking to a few people.
- Unless your interview target is skilled at tailoring advice across a range of backgrounds, what they will share is based on **their** specific experience, skills, and personality. It may not be relevant to you or your situation.
- You get just the basic information because you do not know enough to ask probing questions or to confirm or refine information you gather beforehand. It is a wasted opportunity for you to get more nuanced information.
- You come across as knowing nothing about the job, organization, or industry. You wasted an opportunity to demonstrate your interest and knowledge, and therefore market yourself as a possible person to work in that job, organization, or industry.

The best informational interviews are two-way exchanges of information, more like a conversation than an interrogation. You are offering the information you have collected via your research and the interviewee is adding his or her thoughts and ideas. You come across not as the novice looking for a favor and more as a colleague brainstorming ideas. People are busy and do not always take the time to read business news, attend trade association meetings, or do the in-depth research you will be doing. They will appreciate you bringing to them the latest news. By being well researched and prepared, you do not have to feel like you are imposing on someone when asking for an informational interview. You will be giving back as well, in terms of information on breaking news, trends, or innovations.

Sample Informational Interview Questions

You want to get to know your interviewee by asking questions such as the following:

- How did you get involved in this job, organization, or industry?
- What do you like most about it? What has been most rewarding?
- What is most challenging? Was there anything that surprised you?
- What is a typical day, week, or month like?
- What skills are most critical to have, develop, and maintain to be successful?
- What personality types are most successful in this job, organization or industry?
- What do you know now that you wished you knew when you started?

Interest in their specific background establishes rapport because it shows you care about them specifically. It also gives you a foundation for questions to ask later because you know more about their experience. You want to get broader information about the industry, so you ask questions that reflect your research:

- According to my research, the top competitors are [name the competitors]. Am I missing anyone you think is significant? Is there a new player I should know about?
- According to my research, [name a trend, challenge, or innovation] is a major trend, challenge, or innovation. Is this affecting your job or organization? Is this overestimated in the media? Are there are other trends, challenges, or innovations I should be concerned about?

This is why research prior to the informational interview is so critical. You use your research findings as a springboard for conversation. You are not relying on the interviewee to think of everything and be the sole source of information. You are offering ideas, too. Informational interviews also enable you to dive deeper into what you previously researched.

Pick several research findings to test, and choose what to ask based on what level and type of experience your interviewee has. If your interviewee is very experienced and senior, you can ask broad strategy questions. If your interviewee is focused on a very specific area, say technology, focus on technology-related issues in the discussion.

You also want to get career-related information, such as salary and environment, and a candid sense of your chances in this job, organization, or industry:

- According to my research, it is customary for people in this job to make [name salary range] and experience [name lifestyle, travel, or work culture]. Is that accurate? Are there any nuances to this that are not publicized in general media?
- According to my research, the typical career trajectory is [name different titles you have seen for the job]. Is this accurate? Does this differ by company?
- How would you describe the culture of your organization? Does this vary greatly for companies in the industry?

- According to my research, it is customary for people in this job to have [name skills and experiences]. Is my background of [summarize your skills and experience] competitive? If you knew of an opening for this type of job, would you consider me or refer me?
- What about my background is most relevant to this job? What would I need to do to improve my chances?

These questions enable you to get information on the touchy issues of compensation and lifestyle, as well as candid feedback on your hiring prospects. By offering ideas, you take the pressure off the interviewee to reveal sensitive information. Instead, you give them something to react to. People will also appreciate that you have done some salary research, as they might not have time to see what is happening in the market, and they will want to reciprocate by sharing something they know.

Asking about the competitiveness of your skills and experience is not the same as asking for a specific job. You should never ask for a job in an informational interview. It is disingenuous because you asked for a meeting to focus on gathering information, not to ask for a job.

Be Polite: Common Rules of Etiquette Apply

Common rules of etiquette apply in the protocols of informational interviews. When asking for the interview, you can approach your interviewee by phone, mail, or email. There is no one right answer, but each has advantages and disadvantages:

Table 26.1 – Possible Ways to Ask for an Informational Interview and Advantages and Disadvantages

Approach By	Advantages	Disadvantages
Phone	• Potential for immediate response • For people who are difficult to reach, you cut through a lot of back and forth if you happen to reach them right away	• Disruptive to the interviewee • You have very little time to introduce yourself and make your request
Mail	• Potential to stand out. Few people take the time to send mail anymore	• Slow to arrive • Cannot confirm that the recipient receives or reads it
E-mail	• Fast but still gives you the opportunity to refine your draft • Recipient can respond right away or wait until later • Enables you to include hyperlinks for more information about you	• Cannot confirm that the recipient receives or reads it

E-mail has the most advantages and fewest disadvantages and should work for most job seekers. If you are more confident in your phone approach or mail campaign, then you may want to try that as well. You might also tailor your approach to the recipient. If you get referred to someone and they tell you to call them, then call them, even if you would prefer to e-mail. You want to approach interviewee based on what their preference is.

The content of your approach, whether by phone, mail, or e-mail, should include who you are and why you are making contact. If someone refers you, mention that right away. Regarding who you are, make your introduction compelling but brief.

An elegant way to share your resume is to put your online profile hyperlink in your email signature. This way, the interviewee can easily get more information about you without having to search, but it is shared in one line rather than a paragraph or more of detail. This is a key advantage of an e-mail approach.

Sample Informational Interview E-mail Approach

Subject: Request for an Informational Interview Meeting
Hello Ms. Barkley,
My name is Joe Cougar and I am a first year college student at College of the Canyons. I am enrolled in a career exploration course and I am currently considering business marketing as my major. I have been researching this field and I am interested in learning more about the profession. I would like an opportunity to meet with you to learn more about what you do as VP of International Marketing at MPL Incorporated.
I understand you have a busy schedule; however, I would appreciate any amount of time you can share with me. I am available M-F any time after 1 p.m. Please let me know your availability.
I look forward to hearing back from you soon. Thank you for your time.
Regards,
Joe Cougar
College of the Canyons Student
http://www.linkedin.com/in/joesample
(661) 123 – 4567

Common etiquette applies during and after the informational interview as well. Be on time, and do not take too much time. Ask for fifteen to thirty minutes, be mindful of the time, and offer to end the interview right after the agreed amount of time. Only stay longer if invited. Send a thank-you note—email is fastest, handwritten by mail is a classy addition, but definitely send at least an e-mail so you know it arrives promptly.

Sample Informational Interview Thank You Email

Subject: Thank you for your time!
Dear Ms. Barkley:
Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to speak with me about your work at MPL Incorporated. Your job sounds fascinating! You seem to enjoy your work very much, which, as we discussed, will be important in my own career choice.
I am very intrigued by the work that you do at MPL. The aspect of your work that I find most interesting is your ability to market one product to several different cultures. Your involvement in the different stages of marketing a product captivated me as well.
I appreciate your recommendations about interviews. I will be sure to know all about a company and its products before I interview with them. Your advice was well taken.
Once again, thank you for your time and expertise.
Sincerely,
Joe Cougar
College of the Canyons Student
http://www.linkedin.com/in/joesample
(661) 123 – 4567

Activity 26.3 – Preparing For My Informational Interview

Now that you have been introduced to informational interviewing, think of what careers you'd like to learn more about and who you may want to interview to help you gather more information.
List at least two careers you'd be interested in learning more about and potentially conducting an informational interview for?

-
-

Now think of professionals in the field you can arrange an informational interview appointment with. You can find people to interview by asking your friends, relatives, instructors, counselors or contacts through Professional Associations. Think of all your resources.
When you call to set up an appointment, it is important to be prepared, because what you say on the phone and how you say it can influence your ability to land an informational interview appointment. Prepare your phone script below:
Hello. My name is _____and I'm a (year in school)_____student attending College of the Canyons. My counselor, (Name of person} _____ suggested I give you a call because I am interested in (add your interest) _____ and would like to find out as much as I can about the
field. Would it be possible to schedule 20 or 30 minutes with you at your convenience, to ask you a few questions and get your advice on how best to prepare to enter the field?
Once the appointment is scheduled. Prepare a list of questions you'd like to ask.
After the interview, reflect on your experience. What information did you find particularly helpful. Is this a career you can see yourself pursuing? Do you have any reservations? Is there any advice that was given that you need to follow up on? Be sure to send a thank you note or email within 24 hours to show your appreciation.

Connecting with Professional Associations

View the YouTube Video titled "Career Cafe Students" to gain a student's perspective of how professional associations can help with career research and networking.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=358#oembed-3

Professional Associations are a great way for you to connect with professionals working in the industry you may be considering. These associations are organizations where people in the same profession come together engage and connect with each other to discuss current trends in the industry. The professional associations are a great way for you to make connections and network with professionals in the field you are considering. Most professional associations have membership fees and oftentimes have reduced fees for student membership. They usually host conferences. Check to see if the association you are interested in is hosting a conference nearby. Professional associations often list a job bank with current job openings in the industry. This is a great way for you to see what industry is demanding and what skills, qualifications, and training they are requiring. The more you know now, the better prepared you will be when it is time for you to enter the industry.

Some great online resources to help you locate professional associations are:

- Orange County Career Café – this site lists professional associations by pathway (link: https://www.occareercafe.com/associations/). Find your pathway and explore professional associations.
- CareerOneStop – this site has a professional association finder. This is a great resource where you can search by industry, occupation or association name. (link: https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-professional-associations.aspx)

Activity 26.4 – Researching Professional Associations

Consider your top occupational choice you are interested in at this time and search for professional associations linked to this industry.

- What is your top occupational choice at this time?
- Explore two Professional Associations linked to the industry.
- Give a brief description of the associations and how you think they may be helpful in your career exploration and development.

Find out what the fees are for signing up and if they provide any discounts for students.
Are there any upcoming conferences being sponsored by the association? If so, when, where, and how much is registration. Are you considering attending?

Changes in the Workplace

Since the global financial crisis in 2008, people have been looking at new ways of working that will not leave them so exposed to losing their income. Self-employment is not a new concept — tradespeople and creatives are old hands at obtaining work from various sources — but the emergence of centralized digital platforms selling services or products has led to the explosive growth of the gig economy. Workers are turning away from a 9 to 5 job in favor of independent work where there is no long-term relationship between buyer and seller.

To understand the scale and motivations of the growing independent workforce, the McKinsey Global Institute conducted a survey involving 8,000 workers across the US, the UK, Germany, Sweden, France, and Spain. McKinsey finds that independent work is becoming more mainstream with digital platforms creating large marketplaces that connect buyers and sellers who can communicate in real time. McKinsey's analysis of their survey data (2016) and existing data found 20 to 30 percent of the workforce across the US and EU-15 countries were involved in independent work. Buyers can search with keywords or scroll through seller listings to find a service or product to suit them.

Buyers can be instantly connected to an innovative solution. Uber, Lyft, and Deliveroo offer car-sharing and delivery services, Airbnb opens up homes for rental, and Etsy lets creatives sell their creations. For people looking for local services in the home or office, TaskRabbit and Airtasker make light work of everyday tasks.

For workers who can deliver via the internet, digital platforms have opened up global markets, creating a surge in home workers offering services to startups or businesses needing a more flexible workforce or specialized skills for one-off projects. On platforms like Upwork, Fiverr, and People Per Hour, freelancers provide creative services that include website design, content creation, coding, and consultancy. Even legal services are being transformed through platforms such as Lawyers on Demand and Lawpath, making the legal process of setting up a business easier and cheaper.

Why are more people choosing to join the gig economy?

Flexible working. Independent work offers flexibility to students funding tertiary education, to parents caring for young children, and to Millennials and Gen Y looking to swap a corporate career for a portfolio career. Freelancing also offers a top-up income for people already in part-time or full-time jobs.

Greater control

Freelancers control their work and pricing. They may also choose who they work with to match their skills, experience, interests, and values. This gives greater rewards, not limited to or even necessarily financially but in terms of job satisfaction.

Workplace freedom. Freelancers have greater choice over where they work. This flexibility helps provide an improved work-life balance, especially relevant in the U.S. where employees receive only two weeks annual leave and the corporate culture can involve long hours in the office to show commitment. This misguided culture breeds chronic stress with the potential for lower productivity, ill health, and sickness-related absence.

Protection from prejudice and politics. Home-based working environments give freelancers protection from office workplaces that can be toxic, especially in large corporations with a vertical hierarchy and one-way communication rather than an open, collaborative culture. Promotion can be influenced by favoritism in the form of the halo effect or by prejudice based on gender, sexuality, race, or disability.

Motivation from direct responsibility. In traditional workplaces, people can feel removed from the end user, which impacts job satisfaction. Freelancers deal directly with clients and on team projects, they collaborate with colleagues on an equal footing. Knowing that the outcome relates directly to their performance, independent workers can be more motivated to produce high-quality work.

McKinsey's survey found that workers who are choosing freelance work as their primary income reported higher levels of satisfaction than workers choosing traditional jobs. But while there are myriad benefits to be gained from the growing gig economy, the freelance marketplace is not without its problems.

What are the challenges of independent working and drawbacks of centralized platforms?

Gig workers face issues with income security, employment rights, and credit availability that can deter people from making the switch from permanent employment.

Financial insecurity

Self-employed workers have traditionally charged a higher rate to offset the lack of paid leave, paid sickness absence, pension contributions, and training provided by permanent employers, as well as to cover non-chargeable time. But some clients take a while to pay up or they do not pay up at all and legal proceedings are costly. Digital platforms provide a more secure option because the platform holds the buyer's payment in escrow until the seller completes the work satisfactorily, but it can take can take two weeks for a buyer's payment to be made available to the seller. If there is a dispute, sellers may not get paid.

With a low-cost, low-skill entry, the pool of workers competing for gigs on these platforms has swelled, causing a race to the bottom on pricing with workers often accepting below minimum wage rates. Fiverr now has a FiverrPro section that differentiates sellers who provide a professional service and charge a higher fee. Either way, earnings are unpredictable with gaps between gigs making it difficult to meet living costs. Self-employed workers may also be denied access to financial products, such as mortgages, personal loans, and personal pensions.

Data security

Centralized digital platforms are vulnerable to data breaches and cyber-attacks that could make order history, client communications, and outstanding work and payments unavailable.

Lack of transparency

Centralized digital platforms focus on maximizing short-term profit for the platform. While feedback from users is invited on some platforms, policy and process modifications are underpinned by corporate interests. For example, sellers are not given a clear indication of how to rank well in the search algorithm and seller status levels can be affected by order cancellation frequency (even if it is mutually agreed) and review ratings (fair or not).

High fees

Buyers and sellers contribute significantly to centralized freelancing platform success, yet some platforms charge sellers up to 20 percent in fees. While freelancers have a showroom for their business complete with user profile, gig, and administrative facilities, the lack of transparency and excessive control on these platforms is problematic.

Social isolation

Freelance working can be a lonely business with associated risks for mental health. Communication and relationships between buyers and sellers are often short-term and there is no workplace community.

Traditional employment platform

Glassdoor is not convinced by the gig economy takeover, saying that despite the millennial generation being identified as the group who will shape the way we work, only 10 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds and 9 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds believe the gig economy will become the "future of work".

By contrast, economist and author Linda Nazareth says the shift away from regular work is underway and governments, businesses, and individuals are not ready. "The transformation to a gig economy is happening at an astonishing speed in Canada. According to staffing company Randstad Canada, if you add up all the contingent workers, freelancers, independent contractors and consultants, you are talking about 20 to 30 percent of the Canadian workforce being "non-traditional workers" already. That percentage is only going higher. Eighty-five percent of the companies surveyed by Randstad figure that they will increasingly move to an 'agile workforce' over the next few years."

Similarly, Forbes reports an estimated 34 percent of the U.S. workforce worked independently in 2017 rather than as traditional 9 to 5 workers. By 2020, this could reach 43 percent. The Intuit 2020 Report on trends affecting consumers and small businesses around the world says over 80 percent of large corporations are planning to substantially increase their flexible workforce.

Blockchain technology will likely transform the freelance marketplace

Blockchain technology is hailed as the solution to a number of the gig economy challenges. By providing a distributed, transparent, and permanent history of transactions, including user profiles, gigs, orders, and payments, blockchain technology guarantees traceability, accountability, and security.

The Next Web explains how a faster, more transparent, and more secure buyer-seller interaction is facilitated on platforms using the blockchain, such as CanYa where experts and professionals can be hired locally and globally. Transaction data is held on the blockchain, a database that is distributed across individual platform user's computers, securing it from cyber-attacks or centralized data breaches. When buyers find a suitable service through direct communication with a seller, a smart contract logs the transaction details and performs a decentralized escrow. Funds are locked in the buyer's account until both buyer and seller agree the work has been completed satisfactorily.

Because there is no intermediary as there is with centralized platforms, CanYa'sfee is much lower at only 1 percentand the seller receives the funds immediately. In CanYa's case, funds are exchanged in the form of cryptocurrency, tokens issued by startups to raise funds to get their application up and running, as well as to future investors. This shared ownership means that users are highly motivated to ensure the platform is successful.

This decentralized process with the emphasis on collaboration contrasts with the controlling nature of existing centralized platforms. Sellers do not have their services controlled or find their business harmed by unfair reviews or algorithm penalties that force them to behave for corporate advantage. Buyers are given more transparency too and not simply fed the services a centralized platform selects as a match. If data needs to be modified, another block is created without the need for third-party intervention. Freelancers have the freedom to work in a professional manner and grow their business on their own terms.

In addition, blockchain-based platforms offering direct communication and social interaction via social media allow real connections to be made. This helps to address the problem of isolation for freelance workers. On centralized platforms, sellers can receive an order and work on it without knowing the real name of the buyer or even communicating with them. Forbes makes the case that "Through blockchain platforms that allow direct peer-to-peer interaction, buyers and sellers can conduct business in a more social setting while still maintaining security and transparency." Social interaction also creates trust — people prefer to do business with people they feel connected to.

Highlighted by The News Web as a unique benefit, the mutual ownership of blockchain-based platforms creates a distributed organization that replaces the top-down hierarchy of centralized platforms. The fluctuating prices of cryptocurrencies is a drawback, but CanYa uses a hedge fund to fix token value at the point the contract starts.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) envisions four workplace worlds that operate on a sliding scale from individualism to collectivism, and from fragmentation to integration. In their report Workforce of the future: The competing forces shaping 2030, PwC's 'Yellow World' is one where workers and companies look for greater meaning and relevance in their work. The working week is flexible and Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 is rare. In this world, "Like-minded workers gravitate towards each other, aided by technology platforms," and they collaborate on projects or ideas.

Much can change in the next decade, but the independent workforce is growing. Governments, businesses, and individuals would be wise to prepare for the possibility of a 'Yellow World' where "Technology creates and supports the open, honest, collaborative community". Unlike centralized platforms that create a culture of competitive individualism, blockchain-based platforms promote a culture of collaboration and co-operation for everyone's benefit.[19]

Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce

Diversity and inclusion in the workforce is important to understand as you prepare for your future career. Diversity is not simply a box to be checked; rather, it is an approach to business that unites ethical management and high performance. Business leaders in the global economy recognize the benefits of a diverse workforce and see it as an organizational strength, not as a mere slogan or a form of regulatory compliance with the law. They recognize that diversity can enhance performance and drive innovation; conversely, adhering to the traditional business practices of the past can cost them talented employees and loyal customers.

A study by global management consulting firm McKinsey & Company indicates that businesses with gender and ethnic diversity outperform others. According to Mike Dillon, chief diversity and inclusion officer for PwC in San Francisco, "attracting, retaining

and developing a diverse group of professionals stirs innovation and drives growth."

Living this goal means not only recruiting, hiring, and training talent from a wide demographic spectrum but also including all employees in every aspect of the organization.

Workplace Diversity

The twenty-first century workplace features much greater diversity than was common even a couple of generations ago. Individuals who might once have faced employment challenges because of religious beliefs, ability differences, or sexual orientation now regularly join their peers in interview pools and on the job. Each may bring a new outlook and different information to the table; employees can no longer take for granted that their coworkers think the same way they do. This pushes them to question their own assumptions, expand their understanding, and appreciate alternate viewpoints. The result is more creative ideas, approaches, and solutions. Thus, diversity may also enhance corporate decision-making.

Communicating with those who differ from us may require us to make an extra effort and even change our viewpoint, but it leads to better collaboration and more favorable outcomes overall, according to David Rock, director of the Neuro-Leadership Institute in New York City, who says diverse coworkers "challenge their own and others' thinking."

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), organizational diversity now includes more than just racial, gender, and religious differences. It also encompasses different thinking styles and personality types, as well as other factors such as physical and cognitive abilities and sexual orientation, all of which influence the way people perceive the world. "Finding the right mix of individuals to work on teams, and creating the conditions in which they can excel, are key business goals for today's leaders, given that collaboration has become a paradigm of the twenty-first century workplace," according to an SHRM article.

Attracting workers who are not all alike is an important first step in the process of achieving greater diversity. However, managers cannot stop there. Their goals must also encompass **inclusion**, or the engagement of all employees in the corporate culture. "The far bigger challenge is how people interact with each other once they're on the job," says Howard J. Ross, founder and chief learning officer at Cook Ross, a consulting firm specializing in diversity. "Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance. Diversity is about the ingredients, the mix of people and perspectives. Inclusion is about the container—the place that allows employees to feel they belong, to feel both accepted and different."

Workplace diversity is not a new policy idea; its origins date back to at least the passage of the **Civil Rights Act** of 1964 (CRA) or before. Census figures show that women made up less than 29 percent of the civilian workforce when Congress passed Title VII of the CRA prohibiting workplace discrimination. After passage of the law, gender diversity in the workplace expanded significantly. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the percentage of women in the labor force increased from 48 percent in 1977 to a peak of 60 percent in 1999. Over the last five years, the percentage has held relatively steady at 57 percent. Over the past forty years, the total number of women in the labor force has risen from 41 million in 1977 to 71 million in 2017.

The BLS projects that the number of women in the U.S. labor force will reach 92 million in 2050 (an increase that far outstrips population growth).

The statistical data show a similar trend for African American, Asian American, and Hispanic workers (Figure below). Just before passage of the CRA in 1964, the percentages of minorities in the official on-the-books workforce were relatively small compared with their representation in the total population. In 1966, Asians accounted for just 0.5 percent of private-sector employment, with Hispanics at 2.5 percent and African Americans at 8.2 percent.

However, Hispanic employment numbers have significantly increased since the CRA became law; they are expected to more than double from 15 percent in 2010 to 30 percent of the labor force in 2050. Similarly, Asian Americans are projected to increase their share from 5 to 8 percent between 2010 and 2050.

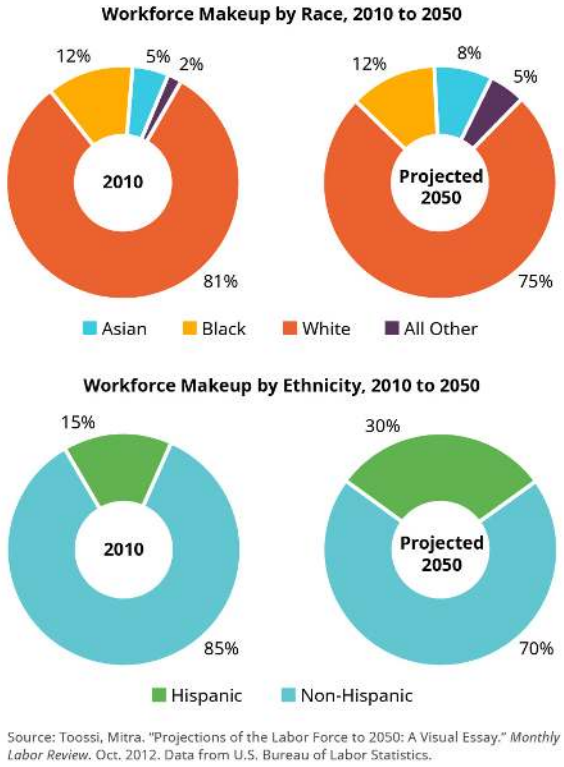


Figure 26.1 – There is a distinct contrast in workforce demographics between 2010 and projected numbers for 2050. (Image by OpenStax is licensed under CC BY 4.0)

Much more progress remains to be made, however. For example, many people think of the technology sector as the workplace of open-minded millennials. Yet Google, as one example of a large and successful company, revealed in its latest diversity statistics that its progress toward a more inclusive workforce may be steady but it is very slow. Men still account for the great majority of employees at the corporation; only about 30 percent are women, and women fill fewer than 20 percent of Google's technical roles (Figure below). The company has shown a similar lack of **gender diversity** in leadership roles, where women hold fewer than 25 percent of positions. Despite modest progress, an ocean-sized gap remains to be narrowed. When it comes to ethnicity, approximately 56 percent of Google employees are white. About 35 percent are Asian, 3.5 percent are Latino, and 2.4 percent are black, and of the company's management and leadership roles, 68 percent are held by whites.

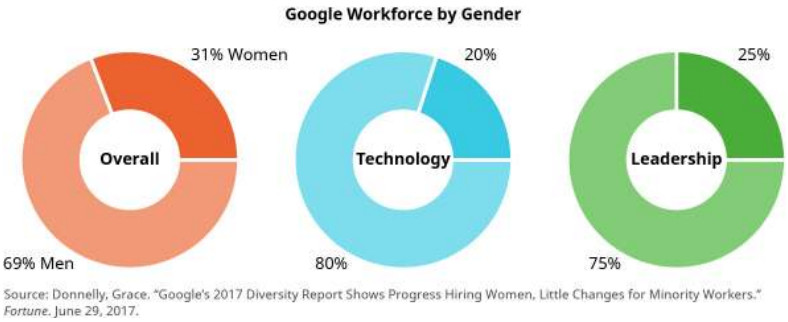


Figure 26.2 – Google is emblematic of the technology sector, and this graphic shows just how far from equality and diversity the industry remains. (Image by OpenStax is licensed under CC BY 4.0)

Google is not alone in coming up short on diversity. Recruiting and hiring a diverse workforce has been a challenge for most major technology companies, including Facebook, Apple, and Yahoo (now owned by Verizon); all have reported gender and ethnic shortfalls in their workforces.

The **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission** (EEOC) has made available 2014 data comparing the participation of women and minorities in the high-technology sector with their participation in U.S. private-sector employment overall, and the results show the technology sector still lags.

Compared with all private-sector industries, the high-technology industry employs a larger share of whites (68.5%), Asian Americans (14%), and men (64%), and a smaller share of African Americans (7.4%), Latinos (8%), and women (36%). Whites also represent a much higher share of those in the executive category (83.3%), whereas other groups hold a significantly lower share, including African Americans (2%), Latinos (3.1%), and Asian Americans (10.6%). In addition, and perhaps not surprisingly, 80 percent of executives are men and only 20 percent are women. This compares negatively with all other private-sector industries, in which 70 percent of executives are men and 30 percent women.

Technology companies are generally not trying to hide the problem. Many have been publicly releasing diversity statistics since 2014, and they have been vocal about their intentions to close diversity gaps. More than thirty technology companies, including Intel, Spotify, Lyft, Airbnb, and Pinterest, each signed a written pledge to increase workforce diversity and inclusion, and Google pledged to spend more than $100 million to address diversity issues.

Diversity and inclusion are positive steps for business organizations, and despite their sometimes slow pace, the majority are moving in the right direction. Diversity strengthens the company's internal relationships with employees and improves employee morale, as well as its external relationships with customer groups. Communication, a core value of most successful businesses, becomes more effective with a diverse workforce. Performance improves for multiple reasons, not the least of which is that acknowledging diversity and respecting differences is the ethical thing to do.[20]

Generational Differences in the Workforce

Today we have four different generations in the workforce and each generation differs in terms of values, communication style, and life experiences. Each group brings valuable contributions to the workplace.

Each generation is a subculture with a sense of reality based on formative world and national events, technological innovations and socio-cultural values. To understand how that experience impacts communication, it's instructive to consider how the different generations view technology and communications media. The following examples are based on an analysis of generational differences:

Table 26.2 – Examples of Generational Differences

	Traditionalists	**Baby Boomers**	**Generation X**	**Millennials**	**Generation Z**
Technology is . . .	Hoover Dam	The microwave	Internet	Hand-held devices	Virtual
Communicate via . . .	Rotary phones	Touch-tone phones	Cell phones	Internet & Text	Social Media

Every generation develops expertise with communication formats and media that reflect their situational reality. For example, Traditionalists tend to have a more formal communication style, with a strict adherence to written grammatical rules and a strong cultural structure. Baby Boomers tend to prefer a more informal and collaborative approach. Gen X communications tend to be more blunt and direct: just the facts. Millennial and Gen Z communication is technology-dependent. As an Ad Council article notes, these generations are driving a truncation of the English language, shortening words (e.g., *totally* becomes *totes*) and abbreviating phrases into one or two-syllable "words," which may or may not be spoken aloud (e.g., FOMO for "fear of missing out" and TIL for "today I learned").

For additional perspective, see McCrindle Research "How to Speak Gen Z" infographic. These clippings have their roots in texting language: a shorthand that's optimized for the communications media and immediate gratification expectations of mobile communication.

Texting

Texting is a cross-generational trend—something that nearly all adults in America participate in. For perspective on texting, read onereach.com's "45 Texting Statistics that Prove Businesses Need To Start Taking Texting Seriously." A few excerpts, for perspective:

- Over 80% of American adults text, making it the most common cell phone activity. (Pew Internet)
- The average adult spends a total of 23 hours a week texting (USA Today)
- The average Millennial exchanges an average of 67 text messages per day (Business Insider)

- On average, Americans exchange twice as many texts as they do calls (Nielsen)
- Only 43% of smartphone owners use their phone to make calls, but over 70% of smartphone users text (Connect Mogul)

Bridging the Generation Gap

Each generation brings not only a frame of reference but also a set of competencies—and expectations—based on how they view the world and their place in it. The challenge for both businesses and individuals is that we now have five generations in the workforce. Differences in generational communication style and media are, effectively, language barriers. To the extent that individuals can't translate, the communication gaps are a hindrance to effective collaboration and, by extension, achievement of critical goals and objectives. The communication disconnect can also affect employee morale and productivity.

The opportunity in this situation is to leverage specific generational strengths and decrease points of friction. The best case scenario is to create a culture and opportunities that encourage cross-generational sharing and mentoring. As Nora Zelevansky wrote in a piece for Coca-Cola: "In order to master intergenerational communication, it is necessary to understand some broad generalizations about the generations and then move beyond those to connect as individuals."

In a related trend, the model of talent management is changing. As discussed in a Sodexo report on 2017 Workplace Trends, we're moving to a model of shared learning, where workers of all ages contribute to each other's growth and development. Indeed, the researchers identified "intergenerational agility" as a critical aspect of the employee and employer value proposition. Business benefits of intergenerational learning include increased efficiency, productivity and competitive positioning. Two statistics that suggest the culture and communication gaps can be bridged:

- 90 percent of Millennials believe that Boomers bring substantial experience and knowledge to the workplace
- 93 percent of Baby Boomers believe that Millennials bring new skills and ideas to the workplace.

The diversity of the intergenerational workplace isn't just a development—it's a creative opportunity.

Professor Mariano Sánchez of the University of Granada in Spain sees the opportunity in cultivating "generational intelligence;" specifically, "organizing activities that raise generational awareness, connect generations and help them work better together—exchanging knowledge, ideas, skills and more to enhance the broad skill sets everyone needs in today's jobs."

According to Jason Dorsey, Millennial and Gen Z researcher and co-founder of The Center for Generational Kinetics, "The key is getting each person to recognize that everyone has different communication skills that can be harnessed to best support the organization." Incorporating multiple communication media in meetings and to facilitate ongoing discussion/collaboration allows members of different generations to share expertise and demonstrate the value of a particular medium. Selecting technology that supports multiple ways of communicating and collaborating can also leverage collective strengths and create fertile ground. For example, using a videoconferencing platform allows for participants to connect visually and participate virtually, with audio, screen sharing and recording capabilities.

Activity 26.5: Generational Differences in the Workplace

After reading the section on generational differences in the workplace, reflect on your experiences at school, work and in your community and answer the following questions:
What generation do you identify with?
How closely do you resemble some of the descriptors used to describe this generation? Explain and give examples.
Why do you think it is important to understand the generational differences in the workplace? Explain and give examples.
Understanding the broad generational generalizations are important to help understand different work styles and preferences, however it is essential to move beyond generalizations and connect as individuals.

Chapter Summary

Now that you have completed Chapter 26, we will revisit the Chapter objectives before moving on. In this chapter you have:

- Inventoried online resources to research career information and labor market information.
- Used informational interviews as a way to research careers.
- Explored professional associations as a means to collect career research and network with industry professionals.
- Recognized changes in the workplace and examined the value of diversity in the workplace.

Each part of this chapter was designed to help you complete Phase 2: “What’s Out There?” At this time, you should have a better understanding of the World of Work and should be able to start visualizing where you see yourself in regards to your future career.

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Martinez, G., & Shaker, E. (2019). Conducting Career Research. In *Career and Life Planning*. College of the Canyons.

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Zelevansky, Nora. “Bridging the Gap at Work: Improving Intergenerational Communication.” Coca Cola Journey, 01 Dec 2014. Web. 26 June 2018.

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Zelevansky, Nora. “Bridging the Gap at Work: Improving Intergenerational Communication.” Coca Cola Journey, 01 Dec 2014. Web. 26 June 2018.

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4.7: Educational Planning

Graciela Martinez; Elizabeth Shaker; Dave Dillon; and Linnea Spitzer

Educational Planning

Once you determine the goal(s) you wish to pursue, you are ready to declare your major/program of study and develop your educational plan. Many colleges offer educational planning online, connected through student portals and accessible anytime.

Your educational plan will allow you to track your progress toward your declared program and map out classes necessary to meet your goal. You are encouraged to discuss this plan with a counselor to ensure you have accounted for all necessary requirements! Because of the complexities and frequent changes with degree and transfer requirements, it is essential to review your educational plan with a counselor to ensure you are on the right track.

If you are not yet certain about your major, that is ok! Consider what program(s) may best suit you: a certificate, associate degree or transfer. If you have a general idea of what program you wish to pursue you can start focusing on your general education courses and consider taking some exploratory classes next semester to allow you to explore areas of interest.

Activity 28.1 – My Major And My Educational Plan(s)

After reading through Chapters 26-27 Career Research and Exploration and Major and Career Selection, it is time to make a decision. Take into account the research you have gathered about different majors using the online resources addressed earlier in this section and answer the following questions:

- What are your top two career fields you are considering at this time?
- What kind of entry level training/certification is needed to enter each field (industry certification, Associate Degree, Bachelor Degree or an advanced professional degree)?
- What kind of program do you need to complete at a community college (if applicable) to pursue the appropriate training to be competitive for each field (certificate, AA/AS, AA-T/AS-T and/or transfer)? Is this program offered where you are attending? If not, where is my program offered and what are their admission criteria?
- What majors are you considering at this time and how do they connect to your future career path?
- Explain how these potential majors are a “good fit” for you based on information you have gathered through your career assessment results completed in Chapter 25 (character strengths, work values, personality preferences, interests, and skills).
- If you plan to transfer, what four year universities are you considering and what are their transfer admission requirements?

The more you know about the requirements necessary to pursue the career field(s) you are considering, the better you can prepare and make yourself a competitive candidate!

Develop a Skills Based Educational Plan to Align with Your Academic Plan

In this section, we have discussed choosing your major and developing your educational plan to satisfy the necessary requirements for a certificate, AA/AS, AA-T/AS-T and/or transfer goal. At this time, you should have a general idea of what requirements are necessary to achieve your academic goal. Now, we want to further develop your plan through incorporating a skills based educational plan. To get a better understanding of what a “Skills Based Educational Plan” is, view the YouTube Video titled “The Insufficient Degree” and start developing your Skills Based Academic Plan.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=362#oembed-1

It is now time to develop your Skills Based Academic Plan. After viewing the YouTube Video above, think of the skill necessary for your desired career goal. Consider the knowledge you will need to know for this particular career and how you can start working on acquiring that knowledge now.

Table 28.1 My Career Goals

Knowledge Needed	Learning Method

Take a moment and review the “Counseling Roadmap” illustration on the following page.



Figure 28.1 – Counseling roadmap. (Image by Ian Joslin is licensed under CC BY 4.0)

Where are you on this roadmap? Are you at the start? Are you midway through your journey? Are you at the end of your journey? Your educational plan will help you determine how far along you are on your journey and how much further you have to go. Consider connecting with resources and services on campus as recommended below based on where you are in your journey.

Counseling Roadmap

	If you are at the **START** you will want to: Submit official transcripts from previous colleges/universities Declare your major Apply for financial aid Complete your math and English assessments if you have not yet done so
	If you have **Up to 15 units** you will want to: Meet with an academic advisor to develop a one-semester plan Familiarize yourself with student resources such as the Library, the Student Center/Student Services, Bookstore, Student Health & Wellness Center Consider joining a student club or organization
	If you have **15 Units or more** you will want to: Meet with a counselor to discuss academic major and goals leading to the development of a comprehensive educational plan Continue to network on campus and build relationships with faculty, staff and peers

	If you have **45 units or more** you will want to: Review transcripts with a counselor or advisor Connect with the Career Center Participate in an internship Petition for graduation
	If you are at the **FINISH LINE** you will want to: Receive and associate degree and/or certificate Enter the workforce or transfer to a four-year institution

Focusing on your educational plan can help you set priorities in how you balance your college, work, and family life.

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

Educational planning may appear to be easy: identifying the program of study and then figuring out which courses are required to complete it, as in the sequence below.



Figure 28.2. Graphics courtesy of Greg Stoup, Rob Johnstone, and Priyadarshini Chaplot of The RP Group

However, educational planning can often be extremely complex. Many students have multiple goals, with fluctuating priorities, and some goals might be better defined than others. A student might be interested in more than one of these goals: earn multiple degrees, transfer to a four-year college or university, prepare for graduate school, pursue a minor, or complete requirements for several transfer schools.

Students also have different strengths different interests, and different values. Some might be strong in English. Some students excel in math. Others might be strong in science, arts and humanities, or social sciences. Educational planning takes these strengths (and challenges) into consideration. Students are encouraged to take English and math early, as statistics show that those students will be more successful. But the order of courses taken for students with different strengths could vary even if the students have the same goal. Transcript evaluations (if students have attended previous colleges or universities), assessment of appropriate English or math levels and prerequisite clearance procedures may also contribute to the challenge of efficient educational planning.

Educational planning may be further complicated by availability of courses a college or university offers, the process in which a student may be able to register for those courses, and which sections (and modalities) fit into students' schedules. When you choose classes, consider choosing them in "blocks" so you may have longer chunks of time to work and study. For example, scheduling all your classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays so you can have full days free to go to your job, to write a paper, or to study for an exam may be helpful and efficient. You may also try to mix classes that require a lot of work with less intensive classes for balance. Ask your advisor or classmates about which classes or professors they recommend. Balancing easier and harder courses can be helpful in keeping a strong grade point average, which can help you requirements for your degree, transfer or specific programs are also considered in educational planning.

Finally, students have different priorities. Some students want to complete their goals in a certain amount of time. Other students may have to work full-time and take fewer credits each semester. Educational planning might also consider student interests, skills, values, personality, or student support referrals.

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

Due to the complicated nature of educational planning and "life" happening to. many students, the student road map often ends up looking like this:

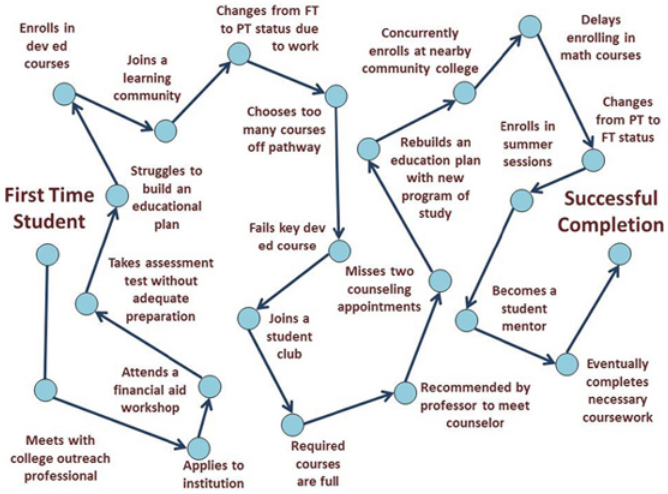


Figure 28.3 Graphics courtesy of Greg Stoup, Rob Johnstone, and Priyadarshini Chaplot of The RP Group

In summary, as you begin to consider your educational plan, think about these considerations:

- What are your short-term and long-term college goals?
- What classes do you need to take in order to reach these goals?
- How can you be strategic about your college schedule?
  - What days and times are your classes?
  - Are your classes on the same campus or different ones?
  - Do you have a good mix of easier and harder classes?
  - Are you mixing required and fun or exploratory classes?
- Have you built in time for other life requirements besides school?

There is a lot of support on campus to help you each step of the way. Take advantage of the resources available to you and ask for help when necessary.

Remember, you are not alone on this journey!

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Modifications: Videos embedded, minor formatting edits, figures/tables/activities renumbered, CoC references removed and minor edits for broader audience.

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Roadmap graphics used with permission, courtesy of Greg Stoup, Rob Johnstone, and Priyadarshini Chaplot of The RP Group.

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4.8: Job Search

Graciela Martinez and Elizabeth Shaker

Learning Outcomes

- Review the steps involved in creating a productive job search and the importance of networking while building your campaign.
- Create a strong resume and cover letter to make you stand apart from the crowd.
- Illustrate a professional presence through social media to support your campaign.
- Appraise your interviewing skills to help get you in shape for your next job or internship.

As you prepare for your selected career path it is important to make yourself stand out from the crowd. You will do this by designing your own personalized marketing campaign. It is important to understand the steps involved in creating a productive job search and the importance of networking as a framework to building your campaign.

The Job Search Process

Searching for a job requires patience and perseverance. The process may seem overwhelming at first, however if you treat it like a job and commit the necessary time and effort towards each step, the process will seem more manageable. There are five essential steps to creating a successful job search.

- Step 1: Focus on what you want.
- Step 2: Determine where you want to do it.
- Step 3: Develop your self-marketing campaign.
- Step 4: Build your network.
- Step 5: Take action and commit 100%.

Step 1: Focus on what you want

This step entails evaluating the information you have learned about yourself through self-exploration in unit 2. Taking into consideration your needs, values, interests, personality, strengths, skills and abilities and how you wish to apply them in terms of a career.

At the same time, you probably don't want just any job. You want a job for specific reasons. These reasons might be the following:

- Starting on your dream career path.
- Supporting yourself in a comfortable way.
- Fulfilling a specific mission or personal legacy.
- Working with people you like and respect.

When you know what you want in your next job, you can search for these specific criteria. If your priority is to start on a specific career path, then you look for growth, advancement, learning, and mentorship in your next job. If you have specific financial obligations that you need to meet (e.g., student loans to repay, family to support, a relocation), then compensation is a main criterion. If you have a mission or legacy you wish to impart (e.g., to help a specific underserved community), then you will be looking at the mission of your next employer to see if it aligns with yours. If you value your relationships and day-to-day interactions with people, then you will be looking closely at who your boss and colleagues will be in your next job. These are just some examples, and people often have multiple considerations. You will want to look closely at your interests and values to determine overall what you want and how you might prioritize jobs that meet some but not all criteria.

Step 2: Determine where you want to do it

This step involves knowing what industry, what function and what geographic location you wish to pursue. The industry you target is the type of business in which you want to work.

Industries include the following examples:

- Arts
- Education
- Energy
- Food

- Fashion
- Health care, pharmaceuticals, and biotech
- Hospitality and leisure
- Financial services
- Government
- Legal
- Luxury goods
- Management consulting
- Manufacturing
- Media and entertainment
- Nonprofit causes
- Retail
- Sports
- Technology
- Telecommunications
- Transportation, aerospace, and automotive

These are just some examples, and they are of very broad industry categories. You can specify even further into subcategories. You will want to subcategorize because if you pick too broad an industry, you will have the same dilution-of-efforts problem as if you haven't specified an industry at all.

If you look at the arts, subcategories include the following examples:

- Type of art—visual or performing arts
- Type of organization—venues for exhibiting and performing, arts education, artist support, or art supplies
- Sector—nonprofit (e.g., Lincoln Center, a venue for performing arts), private sector (e.g., Warner Music Group, a record label), government (e.g., National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency supporting artists and arts organizations)

It is not enough to say, "I want a job in the arts." Do you mean visual arts, as in painting or sculpting? Do you mean you'd like to work in a venue, such as a museum or a theater? Do you want to work for educational programs that focus on the arts?

Do you want to work in support of artists—at a foundation that gives grants for creative projects, or at an artists' union? Do you want to be in and around artists, selling or manufacturing art supplies? Finally, you can be in the arts and work for a nonprofit, a private company, or a government agency. Each of these sectors is very different.

In a later section of this unit, we will give ideas for how to explore different industries and the different subcategories of your industry choices to see what might be right for you. We will also talk about how to research industries for specific organizations and company names and other information that will help you find the jobs you want. You can see already how useful it can be to focus on being specific. Being specific in describing the jobs you want is necessary to find where those jobs are.

Let's take another example from the list so you can get more ideas on how to break an industry down. If you look at energy, the following subcategories are included:

- Types of energy—oil, gas, coal, nuclear, or alternative
- Types of organizations—exploration companies, utilities, research firms, regulatory agencies, equipment and support, or capital raising
- Sector—nonprofit (the US Energy Association, a nonprofit professional association), private sector (e.g., Exxon Mobil, an oil and gas company), or government (e.g., the Environmental Protection Agency)

If you are interested in energy, you could work for a private company that is involved in many types of energy and at many stages, from exploration to delivery.

You could research energy-related issues for a nonprofit. You could be focused on regulations for a government agency. There are multiple, different possibilities for that single energy industry choice.

Finally, let's look at sports as a possible interest. Perhaps you have been a long time athlete or a diehard fan. Can you take a personal interest and make it into a career?

- Types of sports—a specific sport (e.g., football) or sports in general

- Types of organizations—sports team (e.g., New York Giants), sports league (e.g., NFL), sports venue (e.g., Madison Square Garden, Meadowlands), sports program (e.g., an after-school program dedicated to foster competitive skills among youth), sports product (e.g., Under Armour), sports retailer (e.g., Footlocker), or sports business (e.g., agencies who represent athletes, marketing and advertising firms who help companies with sports-related campaigns)
- Sector—nonprofit (e.g., Turn 2 Foundation, which supports sports programs and is funded by Derek Jeter, a professional baseball player), private sector (e.g., Under Armour, Footlocker), or government (local departments of parks and recreation)

If you are interested in sports, you might focus on a specific team or sport and look at different organizations involved with that team. Or you might focus on sports in general—perhaps take on the mission of expanding the spectator base, increasing participation among youth, or determining the impact of sports on culture.

Here is a list of possible subcategories for common industries:

Table 29.1 – Subcategories in Common Industries

Overall Industry	Subcategories
Arts	• Visual or performing arts • Venues • Education • Artist support and marketing • Arts-related products • Education
Education	• Early, elementary, middle school, secondary school, higher education, adult, corporate, and executive • Independent, alternative and charter, public • Regulation and advocacy • Research • Pedagogy
Energy	• Oil, gas, coal, nuclear, alternative • Exploration • Utilities • Research • Regulation and safety • Equipment • Capital raising
Food	• Catering • Restaurants • Corporate services • Media and journalism • Nutrition science • Regulation and safety • Human rights and food access
Fashion	• Retail • Design • Manufacturing • Buying • Media and journalism

Health care, pharmaceuticals, biotech	• Hospitals, clinics • Pharmacies • Medical equipment • Research • Regulation and safety • Human rights, medical care access, patient • advocacy, privacy • Insurance
Hospitality and leisure	• Hotels, resorts, spas • Leisure versus commercial • Booking and sales • Event planning • Equipment and operations
Financial services	• Accounting and audit • Commercial banking • Private banking and asset management • Investment banking • Retail banking • Insurance • Regulation • Consumer advocacy and protection
Government	• Federal, state, municipal • Constituents represented (e.g., artists, children, elderly, small business) • Industries represented (e.g., arts, education, health care, banking)
Legal	• Professional services, in-house • Criminal, civil • Family, immigration, litigation • Research • Operations and document processing • Regulation • Public Defender • Research
Luxury goods	• Retail • Design • Manufacturing • Media and journalism
Management consulting	• Functional specialists: HR, economics, sales, • general strategy, technology • Industry specialists: financial services, • pharmaceutical, nonprofits
Manufacturing	• Equipment • Regulation and safety • Union relations • Capital financing

Media and entertainment	• Film, TV, publishing, digital • Content production • Distribution • Marketing • Advertising • Research • Regulation and monitoring
Nonprofit causes	• Mission based (e.g., ending poverty, eradicating • polio) • Constituent based (e.g., advocating for the • homeless, protecting consumers) • Programs • Foundations
Retail	• Product based (e.g., clothing, office equipment) • Customer based (e.g., children's, women's)
Sports	• Specific sport or sports in general • Sports team • Sports league • Sports venue • Sports-related education • Sports products and equipment • Sports retailers • Sports agencies, marketing, or advertising
Technology	• Hardware • Software • Services • Regulation • Advocacy (e.g., privacy, net neutrality)
Telecommunications	• Engineering and design • Manufacturing • Utilities • Regulation • Advocacy
Transportation, aerospace, and automotive	• Motor, marine, rail, aerospace • Leisure versus commercial use • Engineering and design • Manufacturing • Logistics • Regulation and safety • Consumer protection and access

Function

The function of a job refers to your overall responsibility and what you are doing day to day. Examples of job functions follow:

- Management
- Sales

- Marketing and public relations
- Finance and accounting
- Human resources
- Operations
- Technology

In both of the industry examples for arts and energy, you could be doing many different things within any of the subcategories. If your industry choice leads you to an art museum as a possibility, you might do several things:

- Manage a program or exhibit (management).
- Handle membership or ticket sales (sales). Raise money (at a nonprofit, this is referred to as development).
- Create brochures and advertising (marketing).
- Analyze and report on the finances of the museum (finance and accounting).
- Act as the point person for employees on questions about pay, benefits,
- Day-to-day role and advancement, and other career-related issues (human resources).
- Organize the open and close, facilities, and maintenance or other daily operations (operations).
- Run the customer database (technology).

In a later section of this chapter, we will give ideas for how to explore different functional areas to see what might be right for you.

Geography

Finally, even if you know what you are doing (function) and who you are doing it for (industry), you need to know where you will physically be. Geography is the third element of a well-defined target. How many potential art museums are located in your desired area? If your desired location has few or no art museums, then your search is unrealistic, and you have to expand your industry (to include other types of museums or other types of art-related organizations) or change your geography. If there are art museums in your desired location, but they are all small and do not need the fundraising skills you have, then you need to expand your function (do something else within the art museums) or change your geography. Geography gives you another critical point of focus for your job search.

Aside from physical location, some jobs have another type of geography consideration. You might be targeting a job whose customers, research subjects, or constituents are of a specific geography:

- Chicago-based (geography 1) curator (function) for an art museum (industry) specializing in East Asian Art (geography 2)
- New York City–based (geography 1) equity research analyst (function) specializing in transportation projects (industry) in sub-Saharan Africa (geography 2)
- Washington, DC–based (geography 1) lobbyist (function) specializing in raising awareness for energy alternatives (industry) in the Mississippi
- Delta (geography 2)
- Austin-based (geography 1) marketing manager (function) for a computer manufacturer (industry) is charged with opening up the
- China market (geography 2)

Your job interest may be related to a specific geography, and this definitely should factor in your search. You also must then factor in your physical location.

Step 3: Develop your self-marketing campaign

Your marketing campaign includes how you present yourself both in person and on paper to prospective employers. Developing a strong resume and cover letter is crucial to getting an interview. Resume and cover letter writing and interview techniques will be addressed in greater detail later in this unit.

The way you dress, carry yourself, and physically behave also communicate your job potential. Your nonverbal communication either supports the things you say and how you say them, or it undermines you. If you are an articulate, well-spoken person but dress in a sloppy manner, slouch, and fidget, then your actions belie your verbal communication. Therefore, poise goes hand in hand with communication as a fundamental prerequisite for your search.

Professional Dress Signals Your Professional Maturity

What you wear to different job search functions signals neatness, professionalism, and understanding of general business protocol. A business suit in a dark neutral color is the standard. Black, blue, brown, and gray are neutral colors. Some industries and specific companies within industries dress more casually, so it is important to consult an experienced person in the specific industries and companies that interest you for the most relevant guidelines. For example, in media and fashion, your dress is a signal of how much you know and can fit into that field.

A dark suit would be too bland and look out of place at a fashion-forward company. For general functions, such as career fairs or professional mixers, stick to proper business attire. Even if there are a range of dress options in attendance, it's best to be more formally dressed. In addition, most job seekers look more professional and put together with a business suit. You probably will carry yourself more professionally, have better posture, and be more alert in a business suit than in casual attire.

If you are attending an event or an interview where business casual is stipulated, this is still neater and more formal than casual attire. Khakis rather than jeans, dress slacks and a sport coat for men, and a sweater set for women are some examples of business casual.

Here is a checklist of things to remember about dressing professionally:

- Dark, neutral colors and a matching suit jacket and slacks or skirt are the standard.
- Shoes should be comfortable and polished. No open-toed styles or very high heels; even in dressy styles, shoes with open toes or very high heels look unprofessional.
- What you wear beneath the jacket will also be seen. For men, blue or white dress shirts are standard, though some other colors are acceptable. For women, stick to blouses with sleeves in case you take your jacket off (sleeveless is too casual). Women should also stay away from frilly camisoles—they can be seen under your jacket and still look like lingerie.
- Cover yourself. No body hair for men or cleavage for women should be visible. Women should make sure skirt lengths are not too short.
- Avoid overly printed ties, lots of jewelry, accessories, or too much makeup, all of which detract from a professional appearance.
- Have a professional briefcase or bag. A backpack or other casual bag diminishes the professional image.
- Fragrance is not recommended because some people are allergic.
- Keep hair neat and off your face so interviewers can see you.
- Don't wait until you start your job search to make sure you have the appropriate clothes. It takes time to ensure the fit and length is right, and you may need tailoring or other services.

The Way You Carry Yourself Also Signals Professionalism

If you have a great suit but you slouch, that is an incomplete package. Good posture, steady eye contact, and a firm handshake are additional fundamentals to the job search process. Even if you think this is common sense, do not assume that you will be 100 percent put together once your search starts. If you are not used to dressing professionally and interacting with people in a formal business context, then you may have a weak handshake or poor eye contact and not realize it. Before you get busy with interviews, see if you can attend a business event just as a practice run.

Here is a checklist of things to remember about carrying yourself professionally:

- Maintain good posture. You don't want to be stiff, but you want to stand and sit straight, as it keeps you looking and feeling alert. Practice maintaining good posture over time (interviews can last thirty minutes or longer).
- Maintain steady eye contact, but not 100 percent of the time. It's preferable to look away from time to time, as glaring or staring at someone makes them uncomfortable.
- Have a firm handshake. Do not break the person's hand, but do not be hesitant or limp, either.
- Develop a habit of turning off and not checking your cell phone when you are talking to someone.
- Practice eating and speaking formally. There will be situations where you are networking or even interviewing over a meal. You do not want a real interview to be the first time you experience formal dining and conversation.

Body Language and Nonverbal Communication Support or Undermine Your Words

You might look great, carry yourself well, and speak eloquently, but you also communicate with physical gestures and other nonverbal cues. Pay attention to how you use your body during conversations and meetings. You might find that you can't sit still for long periods of time or that you use a lot of distracting hand gestures. You might be too still and miss opportunities to accentuate points with a nod of the head or finger movement. Some recruiter pet peeves include the following:

- Looking over the recruiter's shoulder. What are you staring at?

- Fidgeting constantly. How are you going to appear to clients if you can't sit still?
- Gesticulating in an overly dramatic way. Don't slam your hands down emphatically on the recruiter's desk. It looks threatening, not forceful.
- Lack of common courtesy, for example, not covering your mouth when you yawn, cough, or sneeze. How could an employer put you in front of a client with that unmannerly behavior?
- Checking cell phones during meetings or interviews. Is this job less important to you than your cell phone calls?

Start practicing good manners now so these habits are ingrained behaviors before your job search.

Step 4: Build your network

According to www.dictionary.com, networking is a supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups having a common interest. Networking is an essential tool in your job search process and will be discussed in more detail later in this unit.

Step 5: Take Action & Commit 100%

Job searching should be treated like a full time job. It takes time and resources to research the job market and find positions that are a good fit. It takes time to customize your cover letter and resume for each position and to practice interviewing for each individual opportunity.

Finding and managing your time will require trade-offs. A proactive job search takes ten to fifteen hours per week. You will need to take this time from other activities. Before your job search starts, take an inventory of everything that is taking up your time. Create a comprehensive calendar that includes the following:

- Major trips or vacations when you will physically be away
- Critical projects, papers due, or exam weeks when you will be busier than usual
- Regular daily, weekly, or monthly appointments, such as classes, club meetings, or gym workouts
- Job search events that you know about in advance (for many students, include specific deadlines set by your school, such as when you should submit your resume to the employers coming to campus)

Create a comprehensive activity list that includes necessary but non-time-specific activities:

- Homework
- Laundry and housework
- Exercise and self-care
- Volunteer work
- Hobbies
- Ten to fifteen hours of job search activity, some of which must be done during normal business hours

Look at the unscheduled times and your list of activities. Block out where things might go. Be realistic about when you do your best work. If you have more energy in the morning, reserve that time for your job search activity. If you know you can't concentrate by end of day, use that time for non-thinking activities, such as housework or exercise.

Well before you start your job search, start moving activities around and make arrangements for your replacement if you need to drop activities. You want to have a schedule in place that supports your job search, not crowds it out.

Ideas and Support Systems to Help You Set Up Your Work Space

Your job search is a project, so you need a comprehensive work space. Stocking up supplies in advance of your search enables you to stay focused and not get derailed by a surprise trip to the store. You also want to prepare in advance for services you may need, such as printing, copying, mailing, and faxing. Know the hours of the closest post office and office supply and service store. Know where you can send and receive faxes and where you can do special copying, binding, or printing. Here is a checklist of ideas for a comprehensive work space:

- Build a surplus of office essentials, such as paper, pens, mail supplies, staples, and so forth.
- Have a pen and paper by all phones if you share your workspace with others. This way, your cohabitants can easily take messages for you.
- Audit your computer, phone, and Internet access to ensure that your equipment and communication lines are in order. If you have a slow internet connection, research public access places, such as libraries, and list their availability.
- Create a professional voicemail message for all phones, including your cell phone.

- List post office, office supply, and service store addresses and hours.
- Figure out how to backup computer files, change printer ink, unblock paper jams, and any other minor but critical support services for your equipment. You do not want to be late for a meeting because you were printing a resume at the last minute and it got stuck in the printer.
- Check for privacy. If your work space is part of your bedroom and you will be making video calls, invest in a folding screen or figure out how to position the webcam to keep your environment looking professional.
- Check for quiet. Your job search will involve a lot of phone calls, including interviews. Plan now for a space where you can be heard, hear well, and concentrate.
- Make it a space that energizes and inspires you. Add pictures, fresh flowers, and so forth.

If you have a very organized friend, enlist his or her help in setting up and decorating your space.

Ideas and Support Systems to Help Manage Your Money

Know your budget for your job search essentials in advance. You can price out the work space items listed previously and the professional dress requirements listed earlier. For job search events you already know about, budget for registration fees and transportation costs. If you want to work with a career coach, factor that into your budget.

Another financial consideration is the opportunity cost of the time spent on your search, as opposed to working. If you have to drop a part-time job to launch your search, there is the cost of lost wages. If you are a student and your job search extends past graduation, there is the cost of supporting yourself while you look. How will you pay for your living expenses? How long can you sustain yourself without a job?

Your financial situation affects the execution and timing of your job search, so you need to decide on these issues prior to your search. If you are relying on family or friends to help with your living expenses, have a candid conversation about both of your expectations before you start your search.

You Must Be Confident Your Job Search Will Be Successful

Having confidence in your job search means two things:

- You believe you will get a job. You know with 100 percent certainty there is a job somewhere out there for you.
- You believe you will get a job you want. You have a positive attitude about working. You are excited at the prospect of doing the job you are targeting, in the industry you are targeting, and for the companies you are targeting.

You have to know you will be successful, and you have to want that success. If you have just one of these two things, this is not sufficient to project enough confidence in your job search. If you believe you will get a job, but don't believe it will be something you want, you will appear anxious, frustrated, and full of dread. If you are excited about what you want to do, but don't believe you will get a job doing it, you will appear as if you are not good enough for your prospective employers.

A confident job seeker is someone who is energized at the prospect of finding his or her dream job. A confident job seeker may not be an expert on resume s, interviews, or other job search tactics, but he or she has an innate knowledge that he or she will be able to figure those things out. This is not arrogance. Prospective employers will shy away from arrogant job candidates who appear to be high-maintenance divas and poor team players. You don't want to come across as someone who thinks you are better than your future boss or colleagues. Confidence is a healthy, positive attitude.

You Can Proactively Build Confidence into Your Job Search Strategy

Ideally, you have confidence before you start your job search. If confidence has been a struggle your whole life or if you feel overly depressed or anxious about your job search specifically, you should seek help from a guidance counselor, therapist, or other professional resource. You want to rule out any medical conditions, such as depression, as the root cause of your anxiety. If you have some nervousness, but not in a crippling way that keeps you from your job search, you can plan to proactively build and maintain your confidence throughout your job search by surrounding yourself with positive influences:

- Pair up with a job search buddy. Pick someone with a can-do attitude, and agree to support each other during your search. Maybe you can meet once a week or call each other right before a big event (e.g., job interview or career fair).
- Start a job search group. A larger group will have more energy than just one person. A group also has a range of personalities and perspectives that can contribute alternative points of view. A group will also have people at different stages of the search, enabling you all to see different outcomes unfolding.
- Enlist the support of a coach or mentor. A more experienced person can be a great sounding board for ideas and a champion for when you need a pick-me-up.

- Read about successful people. When you see other people's achievements over adversity, you are able to see your own potential.
- Keep a journal that focuses on the positive. Write down things for which you are grateful. Write down past successes and wins. You will see that you have been successful in other areas, and this can give you the confidence that you can succeed in your job search as well.

Designate an allocated amount of time each day to your job search and don't get discouraged if landing the job you want is taking longer than you had anticipated. There is something out there for everyone and with patience and hard work, you'll find the right job!

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4.9: Networking

Graciela Martinez and Elizabeth Shaker

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.

These statistics illustrate the importance of networking and cultivating relationships with professionals in the field your career field.

What exactly is networking?

The **process** of **engaging** others in helping reach an **objective**. 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:

- **Process** – Networking is something that doesn't happen casually but requires thought, planning, and deliberate activity.
- **Engaging –** You are looking to have others do something for you—give you information, guidance, other contacts, or perhaps a recommendation.
- **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.



Figure 30.1 – Social Networking (Image by Chris Potter is licensed under CC BY 2.0).

A common question/misconception about networking is:

- I am new to college and will not be graduating for at least a couple of years. I am not searching for a job now and do not plan to do so for at least another 2-4 years; do I need to work on my resume and networking now?

The answer is 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, scholarships 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.

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.

Let technology help you in this endeavor. Your computer, or smartphone has features for capturing contact information and retrieving it based on keywords, and most will even connect with your calendar for scheduling and reminders. 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.

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?"
- 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." Create a college student business card!
- 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!
- 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.

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.

How to Build Your Network on a Regular Basis, Even If You Are Shy: Venues for Meeting People

Build Your Network Every Day

Great networkers build their networks every day, while keeping in touch with those they have already met. Networking is work, but the rewards far outweigh the effort you will expend.

The most effective way to build a network is to have a genuine interest in every person you meet. Most individuals know when someone wants to know them for what they offer versus wanting to know them for what they can gain from the relationship. Don’t fall into that self-serving trap. Genuine interest in others is the impetus for building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships of give and take, with the emphasis on the give.

Build Your Network Even If You Are Shy

If you are shy and the thought of networking wreaks havoc with your nervous system, certain strategies you can employ immediately will allow you to benefit from networking venues of all kinds.

Step 1: Observe the Networking Masters

We all know people who are natural networkers and who know how to work a room better than most. For those of you who are shy watch people who network effectively. Observe how they meet and greet a variety of people. Notice their body language, especially their smile, posture, handshake, and eye contact. You will naturally pick up pointers from these individuals.

Step 2: Pair Up with Someone Who Is a Good Networker

If you can pair up with a networking master, by all means do. If you have a friend who is extroverted, ask them to attend an event with you and pair up to meet as many people as you can. This can be a very valuable adventure that results in meeting quite a lot of new people.

Step 3: Ask Questions That Get Other People to Talk Easily

You can ask seven questions that will naturally elicit a great response from a person you want to get to know:

- How did you get your start in this business?
- What do you enjoy most about what you do?
- What separates you from your competition?
- What do you see as the coming trends in this business?
- What is the strangest (or funniest) incident you have ever experienced in this business?
- What three or four critical skills are necessary to succeed in this business?
- What advice would you give to me knowing I want to get my start in this business?

Step 4: Don’t Take Things Personally

When you take the plunge and begin networking and meeting individuals, try to develop a thick skin and don’t take things personally. Some individuals will not want to communicate with you, and that is fine. Move on to those who do. To a large degree, it’s a numbers game, so the more individuals you meet and follow up with correctly, the more will join your network.

Meet People at Different Venues

Your college environment is rich with potential networking contacts. Below are a few opportunities on campus for you to consider networking:

- Join a club on campus: There are so many different clubs on campus ranging from academic clubs, community service clubs, cultural clubs and honor societies just to name a few. Consider contacting the club advisor to learn more about the club and check out their next meeting. Join at least two or three that spark your interest so you have variety in your friends and network. Club membership is a great way to get connected early on in your college career, meet people who have the same interests as you, and learn a tremendous amount. School clubs funnel information to their members about networking events, internships, and full-time opportunities.
- Establish a relationship with the Career Center services: Get involved with this group early on. People in career services have relationships with all the companies that come on campus to recruit. Check in with them early in your college career and find out what opportunities exist. The Career Center hosts different workshops and career related activities throughout the year.
- Get to know your professors! They are not only your instructors, but they are connected to industry and have experience in the discipline they teach and have connections. Get to know your instructor more…. ask them about their backgrounds and how they ended up teaching at your school. Ask what they like about it. You will be surprised at what you find out. Some professors will have worked in the business world and will have some good connections for you. You never know until you ask.
- Be curious about people and ask open-ended questions: When meeting someone new, ask them questions like “How did you pick this school?” and listen. A good listener is so hard to find. Open-ended questions often yield a story (sometimes a compelling story), and you learn quite a bit about a person. Ask about their family relationships. Be genuine because it is wonderful to find out about people, and you never know who they know or who their extended family knows.
- Meet as many different types of folks at school as possible: Your school presents opportunities to meet people from all walks of life. Try to meet the president of the college, various administrators, deans (the dean of students is a great contact because that person manages the school clubs), professors, teaching assistants, fellow students, cafeteria workers, the hot dog vendor on the corner, the stationary store owner and clerks, the workers at your favorite coffee shop, security, library staff, and so on. Get to know these folks by (a) being polite and pleasant, (b) being responsible, and (c) recognizing them and knowing them by name. Even if your new acquaintances don’t further your networking objectives, perhaps some will become friends and make your stay at school all the better!
- Keep in touch with your old high school friends: Your high school friends are likely at different schools, but it’s important to maintain contact.
- Your network will only grow this way, and you will enjoy continuing your friendships.

Networking is critical to your success throughout life (Beiderwell, Bruce, Flatworld).

Your Networking Pitch

A networking pitch was originally termed an elevator pitch because in the time an elevator takes to go between floors (generally thirty to forty seconds), you should be able to articulate your value proposition (the skills you have and the position you are seeking). The elevator pitch is also known as the professional pitch, the networking pitch, or simply the pitch. Watch the “how to perfect the elevator pitch video.”

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=368#oembed-1

In thirty seconds or less, be able to introduce yourself in a **confident** and convincing manner, making a strong impression. If your pitch is too long and drawn out, it lacks conviction. When meeting networking contacts, recruiters, and hiring managers, this is your one chance to make a great impression and present yourself with clarity. No one wants to listen to a long, drawn-out speech. Make

your pitch clear and concise, enabling the person who is listening to know exactly what type of job search candidate you are.

Any information you can share that distinguishes you from others is very helpful.

Perhaps you have something unique in your background:

- You speak two or three languages.
- You lived abroad for a particular length of time.
- You achieved something significant athletically or musically.
- You volunteered in a meaningful way and perhaps raised extraordinary funds for various charities.

Distinguish yourself from others in whatever way you can to ensure you are remembered in a positive light.

You will deliver your pitch at different times and occasions, including the following:

- Career fairs present an opportunity to meet representatives from various firms. These individuals will meet many students or candidates, so it is important that you make sure your pitch is short and crisp. Also be certain to do your research on their company, as many candidates do not.
- Networking events enable you to first meet someone in a more relaxed setting.
- Interviews often begin with the interviewer asking for a summary of your background or asking that you take one or two minutes to let them know about you. Include high-level themes in your past (e.g., you've always been involved in health care at some point in your schooling and in your career). If themes are not apparent, talk about your achievements and the quality of your efforts.

Consider the following steps as you prepare your pitch.

Step 1: Write Your Pitch

Your pitch should answer the following five questions:

- What is your educational background? Detail every college or university you attended, your major and minor, and your expected degree and graduation month and year (include your GPA if it is 3.3 or higher).
- Do you have any pertinent experience in the field in which you are interested?
- What are your critical skills and strengths? Highlight your top two or three skills.
- What do you want to do? Be specific regarding industry, function, and geography (see
- Unit 5 section 5.1 "Step 1: Identify Your Job Search Targets").
- Why would you be good at the position? Focus on presenting your top two or three skills, and the skills you have that are necessary to succeed at the job you are targeting.

Step 2: Edit Your Pitch

Once your pitch is written, review and edit it accordingly. You should use words that come naturally to you because the more natural the delivery, the more impressive the pitch. Here are some steps you can consider while editing your pitch:

- After you edit the one-page answers to the pitch questions, ensuring that you've covered all the important items, cut it to half a page; this forces you to prioritize the essential elements.
- After you edit the half-page document, ensuring that you've covered all the important items, cut it in half again (it's now one-quarter of the page); this forces you to be even more ruthless in prioritizing.
- After you edit the quarter-page document, ensuring you've covered all the important items, cut it in half again, leaving only four or five key bullets; this forces you to be concise and select just the most important items.

Step 3: Practice Delivering Your Pitch

Once you have the final pitch in writing, you'll need to practice, then practice, then practice some more. Your pitch should be spoken in a confident and compelling manner. Deliver your speech out loud to ensure it flows smoothly and addresses your career highlights. Practice it until you have it memorized.

Below is a sample pitch:

Hi. My name is Javier Cougar.

I am currently attending College of the Trees, majoring in business and communications.

I've seen the power marketing has to sell products. I have worked in retail for the past three years and during this time, I have seen sales tripled in cases where items were marketed well. I find this fascinating and know this is the career for me. I thrive on being creative and client focused and enjoy using these skills to grow revenue.

Activity 30.1 – My Elevator Pitch

To help you prepare for networking opportunities, take time to develop your pitch. Write your pitch in 100 words. Recite it and see how it sounds. Modify it if needed and make sure you practice it with

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Career and Life Planning – An Open Educational Resource Publication by College of the Canyons 5.2 The Power of Networking. Access for free at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kTVzQ6mKcTPEVnK_YUl6UkZLd1mn7wa4

Martinez, G., & Shaker, E. (2019). Choosing Your Major and Educational Planning. In *Career and Life Planning*. College of the Canyons.

Modifications: Video embedded, minor formatting edits, figures/activity renumbered, CoC references removed and minor edits for broader audience.

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4.10: Cover Letter and Resume

Graciela Martinez and Elizabeth Shaker

The Cover Letter

A cover letter is a professional business letter that accompanies your resume and introduces yourself to the employer. It states the position you are applying for and your interest in the job and the company. It is designed to hook the reader and spark their interest in reading your resume.

Your cover letter should be engaging, informative, and show your command of the written word. It should flow easily from a reader's perspective, making the connection between the opportunity and your ability to succeed if given the chance. The tone should be compelling. You should be excited about the opportunity and you should be confident of your ability to succeed (even if you truly lack the confidence).

The format of your cover letter should involve three basic parts:

- The Introduction: The introductory paragraph, states the position you are applying for, how you heard about it, and why you are interested in the position. If someone referred you for the position, mention their name. The goal is to hook the employer and motivate them to want to review your resume and invite you for an interview!
- The Body: Paragraphs 2-3 give actual examples of your success in areas that support what the employer is looking for in the position. This is where you link your skills and abilities with the job description.
- The Closing: the final paragraph shows enthusiasm for working for the company. Request an interview to further discuss the position and state that you will call within a week to follow-up. Thank the employer for their time and consideration.

The body of the cover letter is the most important part. To help you craft a strong body, it is important to match your qualifications with those the employer is looking for. To help you do this, you will need to study the job description in great detail. Extract the main functions, tasks, and desired qualifications from the job description and give examples from your past work experience to illustrate how you are a good fit.

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

The following video features Aimee Bateman, founder of Careercake.com, who explains how you can create an incredible cover letter. You can download a transcript of the video here.

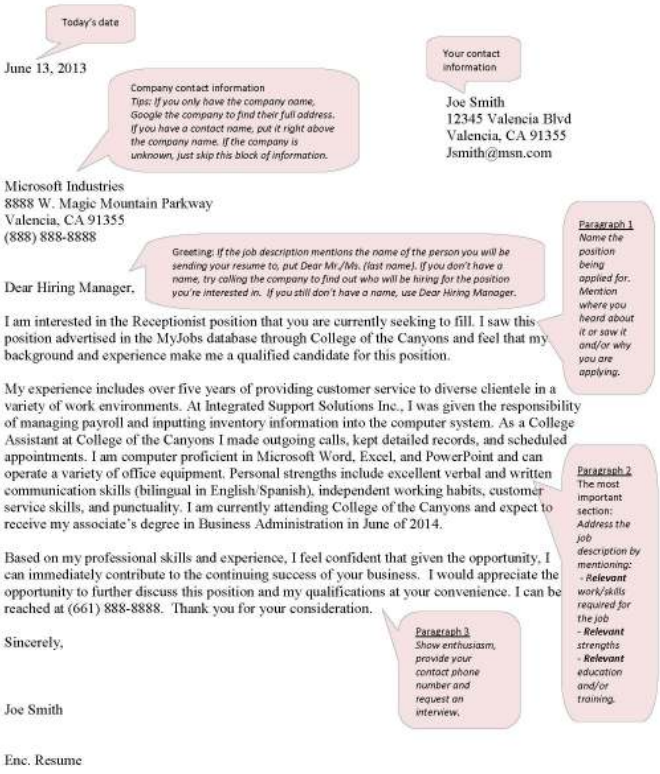
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Table 31.1 – Cover Letter Resources

Website	Description
Student Cover Letter Samples (from About Careers)	This site contains sample student/recent graduate cover letters (especially for high school students and college students and graduates seeking employment) as well as cover letter templates, writing tips, formats and templates, email cover letter examples, and examples by type of applicant

How to Write Cover Letters (from CollegeGrad)	This site contains resources about the reality of cover letters, using a cover letter, the worst use of the cover letter, the testimonial cover letter technique, and a cover letter checklist
LinkedIn Cover Letter	This site contains articles, experts, jobs, and more: get all the professional insights you need on LinkedIn
Cover Letters (from the Yale Office of Career Strategy)	This site includes specifications for the cover letter framework (introductory paragraph, middle paragraph, concluding paragraph), as well as format and style
COC Career Center	The Career Center provides assistance with career counseling, internship assistance and the job search process. Meet with a an expert for professional feedback on your resume.

Sample Cover Letter Template



Activity 31.1: Creating My Cover Letter

Now that we have reviewed the importance of a cover letter, it is time for you to develop your cover letter. Find a job or internship announcement you would be interested in applying for and craft your cover letter for this particular job/internship opportunity.
Make your cover letter personal and specific to the job/internship announcement and make sure it hooks the employer
Use the cover letter tools listed in the Cover Letter Resources table above to help you create your cover letter. Save your document as a PDF file.
Follow instructions from your instructor on how to submit your work.

Developing a Strong Resume

Marketing Focus

Your resume is a marketing document that sells your candidacy. It provides an outline of your educational background, your work experience, and the key skills you have acquired. Your resume should be marketed in a format that is pleasing to read, efficient in its use of the English language, and so concise that it fits on one page. Once you have approximately ten years of experience, it is more acceptable to have a two-page resume, but until then, you should adhere to a one-page document. Recruiters can frown on the audacity of a college student with a two-page resume. Whether you are not sure you can fill a one-page resume, or whether you think it's not possible to fit your information to only one page, this section will help you get to your goal: an exceptional, one-page resume.

The following video is an animated look at why résumés are so important. You can read a transcript of the video here.[38]

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=370#oembed-2

Quality, Clarity, and Accuracy

Your resume is the most critical component, or cornerstone, of your marketing campaign and it must meet two important criteria:

- Your resume must be written in a clear and concise manner so the reader can quickly grasp what you offer as a candidate. Most seasoned recruiters scan a resume in about seven to ten seconds, but do not let that short review time throw you. Recruiters have an eye for the key things to look for in a resume, so a lot of care should be put into its construction. That construction should highlight the following features:
- Your strengths
- Your responsibilities
- Your accomplishments
- Your resume must be completely error-free. A resume represents you when you are not there. Recruiters look for reasons to reduce the number of resumes to review, so one error can be all that is needed to discard your resume and your candidacy. This is true in both good and bad economies, so take great care to guarantee 100 percent accuracy. Proofread your resume several times, use spell check, and ask someone who is exceptional at proofreading to review it. Always assume that an error lurks somewhere in your resume and review it and review it and review it until you find that error! Resumes often have the following common errors:
- Misspellings (Spell check does not catch every misspelled word; meat will not be corrected if you meant to write meet.)
- Errors in verb tense (Past experiences should be written in the past tense and current experiences in the current tense.)
- Grammatical errors of any kind
- Inconsistent formatting
- Inappropriate length

How to Craft the Perfect Resume

This is a trick title because there is no perfect resume. You could always choose to have a particular bullet point written in ways that are grammatically correct, are results oriented, and use action verbs, but writing a resume is not a perfect science. You could show your resume to five different recruiters and you might get five different opinions. There is no need to worry. The important thing is that it is well-written and highlights your accomplishments (no matter how big or how not so big). It's important that the

format be consistent and that you get an opinion from a professional, whether it is someone from career services, a professor, or a person who is currently working in the field in which you are most interested.

A well-written resume can do seven specific things for you and your job search:

It Represents You When You Are Not There

Your resume can be uploaded to global job boards like Monster, CareerBuilder, and others in a few minutes. It can be sent to a company's online database with a push of a button. It can then be shared with dozens of recruiters and hiring managers without you even knowing about it. In fact, it's a lot easier to get your resume in front of a recruiter than it is to have a physical presence in their office; therefore, make certain it's a well-written, well-positioned document that makes an exceptional first impression.

It Quantifies Your Accomplishments

The best resume quantifies results and accomplishments clearly and easily. Here are some examples:

- If you reduced errors by 35 percent, if you increased profits by 55 percent, and if 75 percent of your customers are repeat customers, include this information clearly, succinctly, and proudly.
- If you have been a student teacher with thirty-five students in a classroom and student grades improved by 25 percent, include that as well.
- If you have worked as an administrative assistant in a dentist's office and you are part of a marketing team that has increased new patient accounts by 10 percent last quarter, include that!
- If you worked in the school library and the number of lost books has declined by 50 percent, or if you provide guidance to approximately fifty students per day, that information should be in your resume.

Quantifying your accomplishments gives your resume readers the specific information they need to know about your abilities and to be intrigued by what you can do for them.

It Clearly States Your Abilities

Focus on the results of your actions. Being results oriented helps resume readers understand your abilities. What exactly do you do, or what have you done in the past? Your resume should answer this question very quickly. For example, if you have been responsible for opening and closing a retail store on a daily basis and for managing the register that took in approximately $5,000 worth of merchandise a day, state that clearly and concisely. If you have written three to four sports articles for your school paper every month for the past three years, include that as well.

The more you quantify your accomplishments, the more your abilities will be understood.

It Shows Your Command of the Written Word

You don't have to be an English major to make sure that your resume is well written. Visit the career services department and inquire about resume writing workshops. Be sure to participate in them and consider scheduling a 1:1 appointment with a career counselor for additional support with your resume. Ask an older sibling who is in the workplace to review your resume before it goes into cyberspace or to a future employer. Other options include asking a teacher, professor, or perhaps someone with whom you worked with or for in the past to review your resume. Whatever the case, it is your responsibility to have a well-written resume. Remember that if it has one misspelled word, your resume could easily be dismissed, along with your candidacy. It's critical that your resume be accurate and well written.

It Creates Talking Points for Your Future Interviews

Clearly listing your accomplishments and quantifying those accomplishments can create talking points for your future interviews. For example, perhaps your bullet point is the following:

- Responsible for the intake and outtake of approximately 1,000 books daily, ensuring that all library users are logged into the new electronic database, which has decreased the number of lost books by 80 percent in the past year.

Many individuals have to think about the results of their work. Including this detailed information in your resume actually allows you to easily talk about the value you've brought to previous employers. During an interview, with the preceding example in mind, you can easily talk about how you use technology to improve processes. You can discuss the team environment of the library staff and how you are all working toward decreasing the number of lost books. It shows that you have positively affected the bottom line by helping libraries hold onto books versus losing them, which results in unnecessary fees to library users.

It Proves Your Worth to Your Past Employers

Whenever including bullet points about past work, always tie your efforts to the bottom line. Earlier examples in this Unit included the following accomplishments:

- Reducing errors by 35 percent
- Increasing profits by 55 percent
- Boosting repeat sales to 75 percent

Information relating to a company's bottom line is exactly what employers want to read. Highlighting results like these increases your chances of having your resume noticed.

It Demonstrates What You Can Do for Your Future Employer

Unlike financial investments, past performance is an indicator of future success, so include and quantify your past performance, and future employers will be inclined to believe you can do the same for them. They will believe it, but you have to continue supporting that belief with your exceptional networking and interviewing skills. Interviewing skills will be addressed later in this Unit. Remember, however, that your resume is introductory in nature. You want to get their attention and initiate their interest so your foot can inch ever closer to getting in their door.Resume Format

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 appeals to you the most?

- 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.
- 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.
- 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
- Video, infographic, and Web-site résumé: Other formats you may wish to consider are the video résumé, the infographic résumé, or even a Web-site 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 submission of any format other than paper based. Video Resume Examples; Infographic Résumé Examples; Web-Site 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. In the following video, a résumé-writing expert describes some keys to success.

Contents and Components to Include

- Your contact information: full name (avoid nicknames), address, phone number, professional email address
- **Objective:** a brief statement sharing what you are looking for and what you have to contribute
- A summary of your skills: 5–10 skills you have gained in your field; you can list hard skills as well as soft skills (refer to the Professional Skill Building topic in this course)
- 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). Use brief bullet point statements to list your responsibilities and achievements. Use action words to start each bullet point. Refer Table1 below.
- **Volunteer experience:**
- Education and training: formal and informal experiences matter; include academic degrees, professional development, certificates, internships, study abroad, etc.
- References statement (optional): "References available upon request" is a standard phrase used at the end of résumés or you may take a proactive approach and create a separate document that lists your references. See sample below
- Other sections: may include, a branding statement, a summary statement, additional accomplishments, and any other related experiences such as: Computer Skills, Language Skills, Extracurricular Activities or Honors and Awards

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

- Aim to make a résumé that's 1–2 pages long on letter-size paper.
- Make it visually appealing.
- Use action verbs and phrases. See Table 1 below for a list of action verbs.
- Proofread carefully to eliminate any spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typographical errors.
- Include highlights of your qualifications or skills to attract an employer's attention.
- Craft your cover letter as a pitch to people in the profession you plan to work in (more on cover letters in the next section)
- Stand out as different, courageous.
- Be positive and reflect only the truth.
- Be excited and optimistic about your job prospects!
- 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.

In the following video, "Résumé Tips for College Students From Employers," several college graduate recruiters summarize the most important points about crafting your résumé.[39]

You can download a transcript of the video here.

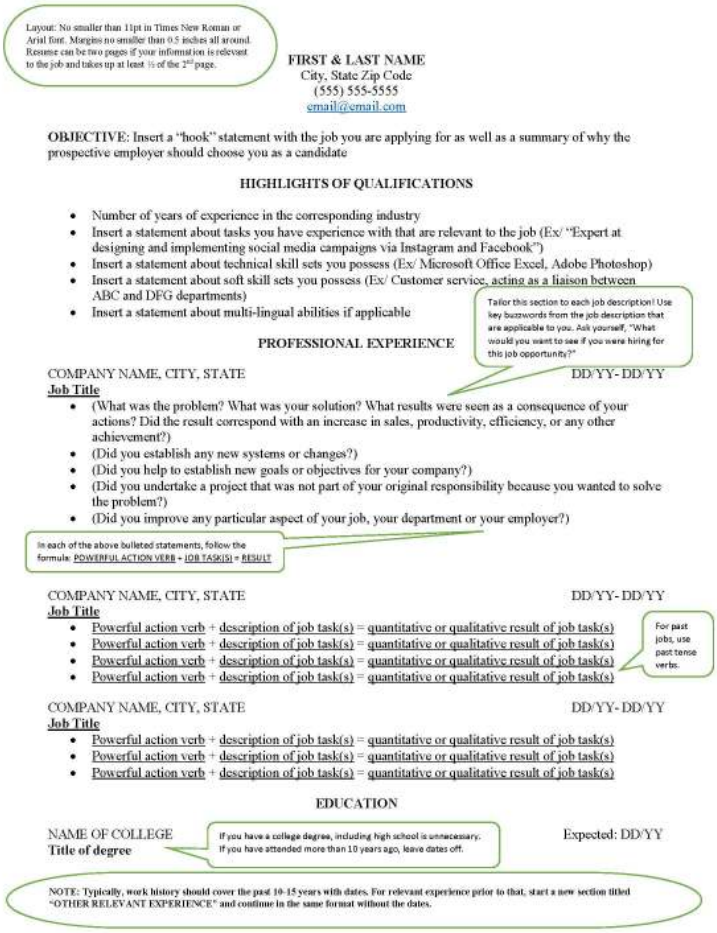
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Table 31.2 – Action Words

accelerated accomplished achieved acquired administered advised analyzed appointed approved arranged assisted assembled audited attained delegated demonstrated designed determined developed devised directed distributed drafted edited educated eliminated encouraged enhanced enlarged established evaluated examined exceeded executed	expanded expedited extracted fabricated facilitated formulated founded generated headed helped hired identified illustrated implemented improved increased headed helped hired identified illustrated implemented improved increased initiated innovated inspected installed instructed integrated interpreted interviewed investigated	launched maintained managed marketed mediate minimized monitored motivated negotiated obtained operated organized originated overhauled oversaw participated performed persuaded planned prepared presented prioritized processed produced programmed promoted proposed provided published recorded recruited	regulated related remodeled reorganized repaired represented researched resolved restored restructured retrieved reviewed revised scheduled shaped solved sorted spoke streamlined summarized supervised tabulated taught trained translated trimmed upgraded utilized validated worked wrote

On the next few pages are samples to reference to help you prepare your resume. The resume examples are from College of the Canyons' Job Search Information & Templates page.

Sample Reverse Chronological Resume Template



Sample Reverse Chronological Resume

Jane Doe
23450 Any Street Road
Valencia, CA 91355
(661) 555-5555
JaneDoe2000@earthlink.net

OBJECTIVE: To obtain a position as a **Clerical Assistant** at College of the Canyons

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Over two years of professional experience performing clerical duties
- Office experience includes typing (50wpm), filing, creating reports, answering phones, scheduling appointments, mailings and database management
- Computer proficient in both Mac and PC platforms, with experience using Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, and the internet for online research
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills; Bilingual in English and Spanish
- Highly organized, with a proven ability to manage multiple tasks in fast-paced work environments
- Equally skilled working independently or as a member of a team

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Microsoft Industries, Valencia, CA 06/12 – Present
Receptionist
- Type all office correspondence and documents and answer incoming calls on a multi-line phone
- Input statistical and confidential information into the computer database
- Operate and train staff on a variety of computer software programs and company procedures
- Utilize interpersonal skills when working with diverse professionals
- Verify the accuracy of new client files and records

Sears Department Store, Northridge, CA 04/10 – 05/12
Cashier
- Greeted customers entering the establishment and answered questions about merchandise
- Operated the cash register and received payments by cash, check, credit, debit, and gift cards
- Issued receipts, distributed change, processed returns, and handled exchanges
- Maintained a clean and orderly checkout area and completed other general cleaning duties

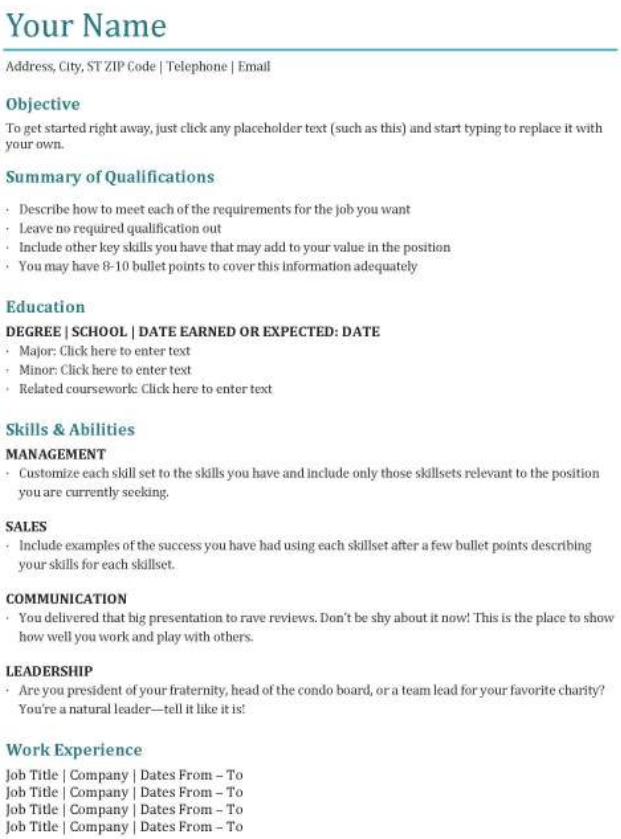
Publishing Today, Valencia, CA 01/09 – 03/10
Secretary
- Organized meetings, planned agendas and handled the scheduling of office events
- Input, filed, mailed, and faxed official documents
- Served as acting supervisor when director was out of office, working closely with colleagues and staff to ensure the smooth running of the office
- Interfaced with staff and business representatives on a regular basis

EDUCATION

California State University Northridge, Northridge, CA
Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration Expected: 06/14

College of the Canyons, Valencia, CA
Associate of Arts Degree in Accounting Received: 06/12

Sample Functional Resume Template



Your Name

Address, City, ST ZIP Code | Telephone | Email

Objective

To get started right away, just click any placeholder text (such as this) and start typing to replace it with your own.

Summary of Qualifications

- Describe how to meet each of the requirements for the job you want
- Leave no required qualification out
- Include other key skills you have that may add to your value in the position
- You may have 8-10 bullet points to cover this information adequately

Education

DEGREE | SCHOOL | DATE EARNED OR EXPECTED: DATE

- Major: Click here to enter text
- Minor: Click here to enter text
- Related coursework: Click here to enter text

Skills & Abilities

MANAGEMENT

- Customize each skill set to the skills you have and include only those skillsets relevant to the position you are currently seeking.

SALES

- Include examples of the success you have had using each skillset after a few bullet points describing your skills for each skillset.

COMMUNICATION

- You delivered that big presentation to rave reviews. Don't be shy about it now! This is the place to show how well you work and play with others.

LEADERSHIP

- Are you president of your fraternity, head of the condo board, or a team lead for your favorite charity? You're a natural leader—tell it like it is!

Work Experience

Job Title | Company | Dates From – To
Job Title | Company | Dates From – To
Job Title | Company | Dates From – To
Job Title | Company | Dates From – To

Sample Functional Resume

Roberta Hawley

333 West Terrace

Madison, WI 55555

E-mail: rh333@uwisconsin.edu

Cell: 917.333.5555

OBJECTIVE:

To secure an entry-level position in the health care industry, using my volunteer experience, along with my client focus, and results-oriented approach.

EDUCATION:

University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

BS degree, expected Spring 2013

Major: health care, Minor: communications

GPA:3.8

HONORS:

- Health Care Award recipient, Wisconsin General Hospital 2011
- University of Wisconsin Student Government, elected junior class president, 2011
- Dean's List, 2010m 2011

- Senator Smith Scholarship for Academic Excellence, 2010
- Pi Kappa Delta
- Silver Helmer National Honor Society

LEADERSHIP SKILLS:

- President health care club, 2011, member 2008-2012
- Treasurer, nutrition club, 2010, member 2009-2012
- Captain, varsity tennis team, 2009-2012 and state singles champion, 2009

HEALTH CARE VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES:

- Volunteer reader, Mercy General Hospital, 2007-Present
- Gift shop volunteer, Mercy General Hospital, 2009-Prenset

COMMUNITY VOUNTEER ACTIVITIES:

- Fun Run, Memorial Half Marathon, 2009-Present
- Wisconsin Cares volunteers, Coat Collection Drive, 2010
- Tennis coach, Wisconsin Special Olympics, 2008-2010

COMPUTER SKILLS

- Microsoft Office Suite: Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Apple formats, Photoshop, and UNIX platforms
- LexisNexis and VISIO
- Programming skills C++

Sample Reference Page

References for Joe Cougar, 23450 Any Street Road Valencia, CA 91355(661) 555-5555 Email: Joecougar@earthlink.net:

Jane Jones Supervisor, JCrew Retail Store, May 2012 – August 2012 Phone: (661) 555-5555 Email: Janejones@jcrew.org

Sarah Canyons Professor, College of the Canyons, Spring 2016 Phone: (661) 755-5555 Email: Sarah.canyons@canyons.edu

Michael James Supervisor, Publisher Today, April 2013 – May 2014 Phone: (661) 855-5555 Email: Michael.james@publisher.com

As you develop your resume, be sure to have several people review it with you. The Career Center is a great resource on campus to help you with your resume. They have experts available to assist you in creating, critiquing, and drafting your resume.

Table 31.3 – Resume Writing Resources

Website	Description
The Online Resume Builder (from My Perfect resume)	The online résumé builder is easy to use. Choose your résumé design from the library of professional designs, insert prewritten examples, then download and print your new résumé.
Résumé Builder (from Live Career)	This site offers examples and samples, templates, tips, videos, and services for résumés, cover letters, interviews, and jobs.
Résumé Samples for College Students and Graduates (from About Careers)	This site offers a plethora of sample résumés for college students and graduates. Listings are by type of student and by type of job. Résumé templates are also provided.
JobSearch Minute Videos (from College Grad)	This site offers multiple to-the-point one-minute videos on topics such as print résumés, video résumés, cover letters, interviewing, tough interview questions, references, job fairs, and Internet job searching.
42 Résumé Dos and Don’ts Every Job Seeker Should Know (from the muse)	A comprehensive list of résumé dos and don’ts, which includes traditional rules as well as new rules to polish your résumé.

COC Career Center	The Career Center provides assistance with career counseling, internship assistance and the job search process. Meet with an expert for professional feedback on your resume.

Activity 31.2: Creating My Resume
Compile data reflecting your professional and educational skills and accomplishments. Assess the main résumé formats and select one that meets your needs, then create a first draft of your professional résumé. Compile all needed information for your résumé, including your contact information, a summary of your skills, your work experience and volunteer experience, education and training (including your intended degree, professional development activities, certificates, internships, etc.). Optionally you may wish to include job objective, a brief profile, a branding statement, additional accomplishments, and any other related experiences. Select one of the résumé builder tools listed above in the Résumé Writing Resources table. Create your résumé, following instructions at your selected site. Save your document as a PDF file. Follow instructions from your instructor on how to submit your work.

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Career and Life Planning – An Open Educational Resource Publication by College of the Canyons. The Cover Letter. Access for free at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kTVzQ6mKcTPEVnK_YUl6UkZLd1mn7wa4

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Modifications: Minor edits for broader audience, renumbered tables, activities.

Footnotes:

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4.11: Interviewing Skills for Success

Graciela Martinez and Elizabeth Shaker

Interviewing for Success

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.

First, let's define the interview. What is an interview? An interview may be defined as a conversation between two or more people in which the interviewer asks questions to obtain information from the interviewee. A better definition might be an exchange of information between the interviewer and interviewee to assess if a match exists between a job's requirements and a person's skills and abilities.

The second definition is much more proactive in the case of the interviewee. As an interviewee, you should not passively answer questions, but should employ strategies so you are presented in the best possible light. As an interviewee, you also are responsible for highlighting your strengths in the interview and giving answers that are detailed and results oriented.

As you prepare for your interview, it is important to focus on three things:

- Know yourself and be able to articulate how you are a good fit for the position.
- Know your resume well enough to enthusiastically speak about every minute detail.
- Know the company, the position, and the industry for which you are interviewing.

The interview is your time to shine in person and demonstrate how you are a good fit for the position. The interview process involves three phases: preparation, the actual interview, and the follow up. Preparing for each of these phases will help build your confidence for the big day!

Phase I – Preparation

This phase takes place before the interview and involves knowing yourself. Assessing your strengths, weaknesses, interests, values, personality, skills and abilities. In Unit 2 – Self-Exploration, you addressed this in detail through the different career assessments you completed. As you prepare for your interview, you will want to link the information you have gained from your career assessments and articulate them to the employer so you can illustrate how you are a good fit for the job!

The preparation phase includes research and practice. Preparation is key to succeeding in the interview process. The following strategies will help you get a second round of interviews:

Research the industry, the company, the competitors, and the interviewer (if possible):

Completing the research step ensures that you have fully researched the company, the industry, and the competition. Knowing how to interview well within the industry and company will help you get a second interview. You also might be able to research the interviewer using Google or LinkedIn. Having relevant background information might give you helpful hints on how to position yourself. As you research the company, pay particular attention to their mission, values and philosophy. Be able to make connections with how your personal mission, values and philosophy align with the company.

Practice Answering Interview Questions:

There are generally common questions that are consistently asked during interviews. Familiarizing yourself with these questions will help you gain confidence and feel more at ease during the actual interview. We will address these questions a little further in this section.

Have a Full Dress Rehearsal Three Days before the Interview:

Being prepared reduces stress and improves performance. Here is a checklist of things to do and consider before your interview day.

- Make sure your interview attire is clean and fits well. You should feel very comfortable in the clothes you wear for an interview. This helps build your confidence.
- Pay attention to colors and style. If you are interviewing at a company where the dress is casual, it is still best to dress in a professional, conservative manner. Men and women should consider conservative suit colors such as navy, beige, and black. White or beige shirts give a very professional appearance. If you are not sure, it might help to shop at a professional clothing store.
- Take care in all aspects of your appearance.
- Bring extra copies of your resume.
- Write down well-researched questions before the day of the interview.
- Carry a professional-looking briefcase that has an inside portfolio containing paper and a pen.
- Keep a small bottle of water in your briefcase in case your mouth gets dry.
- Carry a cloth handkerchief in case your face perspires (for any reason).

Some people sweat more than others and using a handkerchief is more professional (and sanitary) than using your hand. Avoid tissues because they can leave a residue that doesn't make a very good impression. On a somewhat related note, if you happen to sneeze during an interview, sneeze into your sleeve versus into your hands. The interviewer will not want to shake your hand otherwise!

You will have an opportunity for a full dress rehearsal for the mock interview assignment using The Perfect Interview. The Perfect Interview is a program purchased through the college that will allow you to practice interviewing skills. You will record a mock interview and will work in groups to critique each other. This is a great way to see and hear yourself during an interview. Practice makes perfect! Your instructor will go over this assignment in class.

Know Where You Are Going:

Getting lost on the way to an interview will only increase your stress, so know exactly where you are going, even if you must make a trial trip. Few things are worse than being late or arriving looking like you just did the one hundred-meter Dash.

Establish a Routine to Follow the Day of the Interview:

The most successful interviewees have a routine that includes the following:

- Set two alarm clocks to make sure you wake up early enough to have plenty of time to get ready for the day.
- Have your interview suit ready to go, your shoes polished, a portfolio with two to three copies of your resume and a working pen, and five to seven questions already written down.
- Arrive at least thirty minutes in advance to avoid the slightest possibility of being late. You may wait in your car or a coffee shop until fifteen minutes before the interview. You don't want to let the interviewer know you are there thirty to forty-five minutes early.
- Read or listen to something inspirational before your interview.
- Carry a small bottle of water in your briefcase in case your mouth gets dry.

Phase II – The Interview

The moment you have been waiting for has arrived—the actual interview. Keep the following factors in mind during the interview:

Body Language

It is important to be aware of nonverbal impressions such as your handshake, eye contact and eye movement, posture, and facial and hand expressions. A sizeable percentage of what we communicate comes via body language:

- Eye contact: Maintain good eye contact throughout the interview. It's OK to look away occasionally, but, for the most part, eye contact should be steady. It shows confidence and inspires trust in all that you say.
- Smile: When you are feeling stressed, a smile usually relaxes your face, which usually helps you to relax overall. An introductory or occasional smile shows that you are enjoying the conversation, and it adds to your confidence factor.
- Firm handshake: Practice your handshake. The Goldilocks approach is best: Don't crush the interviewer's hand, but don't give a soft, floppy handshake, either. Your handshake should be firm and businesslike. If you get nervous to the point of having a sweaty palm, wipe it against your pants leg or skirt just before you shake your interviewer's hand.
- Posture: Sit up straight with your shoulders back and your feet firmly planted on the ground. It's fine to cross your legs if you feel more comfortable doing so, but avoid looking too relaxed. You should be poised and fully focused on the interviewer, ensuring that you answer all questions to the best of your ability.

Networking Updates

If you've met others in the company, mention that up front. It's a great way to open an interview because you establish that you've already met others at the company, and the interviewer also can contact them for feedback.

Focus

The more focused you are during an interview, the more successful you will be. Focus on the question asked and answer it directly. If you think you have gone off course for any reason, it is OK to ask the interviewer if you are on the right track. Your answer should have a beginning, a middle, and an end that includes a real, tangible, and preferably positive result. Here is an example of a question asked and an effective answer with real, tangible and positive results:

Question: Jenna, what was your biggest contribution to the company you interned with last summer?

Answer: Throughout the summer, we had approximately five to six team meetings where the entire staff of ten engineers and their direct reports were present to discuss the major goal of the summer: the construction of a new courthouse.

I was tasked with drafting the agenda of these meetings and the agenda notes, which verified all that was discussed and agreed upon. The agendas directed complex meetings, and the agenda notes served as key documents that verified and clarified what was discussed and agreed upon during the meetings.

My first draft of the first agenda was much too broad, but with feedback from my manager, I ensured it included all the details necessary to hold a productive and effective meeting and created the structure for the agenda notes document. The agenda notes were typically three to five pages long, and by the second meeting, I was drafting the agenda and publishing the notes without any revisions from my manager.

I received exceptional feedback from several department heads because, in many instances, the notes saved countless hours of work. For example, during the third meeting, we reversed course on a previously agreed-upon strategy for the front columns of the courthouse. One of the key assistant engineers was not at the meeting, and when her peer brought her up to speed, he forgot to mention that the columns were changed from the Roman style columns to the Grecian columns, which needed a more intricate support system from the roof to the courthouse steps. Luckily, she read my agenda notes, which highlighted any course changes in red, and saved about two weeks' worth of work, which was easily several thousand dollars. It also kept everyone on track regarding the completion date, which is June 2014.

To improve this process overall, I loaded the agenda and the notes into the department's central files so instead of relying upon hard copies or e-mailed copies, everyone had one place to go for this important document that kept everyone on track. They are still using the improvements I implemented, so I'm very proud of that.

The answer's beginning set the stage:

- Throughout the summer, we had approximately five to six team meetings, where the entire staff of ten engineers and their direct reports were present to discuss the major goal of the summer: the construction of a new courthouse.
- I was tasked with drafting the agenda of these meetings and the agenda notes, which verified all that was discussed and agreed upon.
- Notice it had a middle that allowed you to understand how things were working:
- My first draft of the first agenda was much too broad, but with feedback from my manager, I edited it to include all the details necessary to hold a productive and effective meeting and create the structure for the agenda notes document.
- By the second meeting, I was drafting the agenda and publishing the notes without any revisions from my manager.

Positive momentum was built throughout the answer, and Jenna shared the positive results of her work:

- I received exceptional feedback from several department heads because in many instances, the notes saved countless hours of work.
- To improve this process overall, I loaded the agenda and the notes into the department's central files, so instead of relying upon hard copies or e-mailed copies, everyone had one place to go for this important document that kept everyone on track.
- They are still using the improvements I implemented, so I'm very proud of that.

Authenticity and Honesty

Never misrepresent anything about yourself during the interview:

- Don't indicate you are fluent in a language if you aren't.
- Don't mention you know a computer program that you clearly don't know.

- Don’t mention you’ve been to a certain city if you haven’t been there.

Interviewers have a way of discovering any misrepresentations, so save yourself misery and humiliation by being authentic and honest.

Questions to Ask toward the End of the Interview

At the end of the interview, the interviewer will usually ask if you have any questions. This important step in the interview process is relatively easy and can be done in advance of the actual interview. Use the research you’ve already conducted to formulate five to seven questions you’d like to ask at the end of the interview. The table below includes some topics and potential questions to help you brainstorm as you develop your questions.

Question Your Next Steps

Your final interview question should pertain to the next steps you should take so you will know how to follow up. Be certain your last question accomplishes the following:

- It demonstrates that you are forward thinking and that you tie up loose ends.
- It clarifies the follow-up process.

Phase III – The Follow Up

You can take definite steps after an interview to improve your chances of being called back for a second round or getting an offer for the position. For example:

- **E-mail a Thank-You Note before the Day Ends:** E-mail, versus a handwritten note, is preferred for many reasons:
- Your note will be immediately received by the interviewer. It’s common courtesy to thank people for their time right away, and manners count quite a bit during the job search.
- Your ability to write a concise business note is demonstrated.
- Your quick communication keeps you at the top of the interviewer’s mind.
- Your e-mailed thank-you note can be shared easily and often by everyone who interviewed you. This positive momentum keeps you in a positive light with all parties.
- Your e-mail is an opportunity to quickly confirm that you have the critical skills necessary to do a fantastic job. In the e-mail, you can reiterate the skills you have or mention something specific that was discussed in the interview, thus making an even stronger case for why you’d be a great hire.
- Your e-mail can include an attached article about the company or about an interest you share with the interviewer.
- Your e-mailed thank-you note is more likely to receive a response from the interviewer.

Some individuals believe a handwritten note distinguishes you from others; while that may be true, you never know if it arrived. You could send an e-mail and a handwritten note to cover all the bases, but don’t use the exact wording for both notes. Using a high-quality, professional notepaper or stationery is recommended.

Update All Parties Relevant to Your Search

If you’ve met other people during your job search and they’ve been helpful in any way, send them an e-mail update as to how you’ve progressed. It will mostly likely be shared with others, so take great care when writing any note to a company Representative.

Map Your Follow-Up Strategy

Once you’ve interviewed for a position, note your expected follow-up on your calendar. If the company representative said you will be contacted in a week, mark that on your calendar. If you aren’t contacted, add another three or four days onto your calendar and then follow up with the company. After that, maintain consistent communication to help produce positive results.

When Things Go Wrong

Sometimes no matter how well you prepare, something still goes wrong. The following strategies will help you manage when things go amiss:

- If you forget to turn your cell phone off and it rings, apologize and quickly turn off the phone. Don’t look at the number of the person calling you.
- If you are late, call in advance to notify the interviewer and ask if the interview can proceed. Apologize when the interview takes place.

- If you have a wardrobe malfunction—a popped button, a run in your stockings, or you spilled coffee on your clothing—a little humor might help.
- If you went on a tangent and did not answer the question directly, check to make sure you are on track or ask that the question be repeated.

The more you practice interviewing, the more prepared you will be. Each interview serves as a learning experience and an opportunity for you to strengthen your interviewing skills. There are different types of interviews for you to become familiar with. The next section will address the different types.

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 is 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. 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 white wall or curtain.

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. Stay alert.

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.

For a summary of the interview formats we've just covered (and a few additional ones), take a look at the following video, *Job Interview Guide—10 Different Types of Interviews in Today's Modern World*.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=374#oembed-1

Interview Venues:

Knowing the four different types of interview venues will help ensure your success:

- **On Campus –** The Career Center at on campus hosts job fairs and oftentimes they conduct interviews on campus. If your interview takes place on campus, you will probably receive instructions from your career services office regarding the date and time of the interview. Check with the office to ensure you know how you will be notified. Most career services offices have a general check-in area, a waiting area, and very small interview rooms. It's best to practice in these rooms ahead of time, so you know exactly what to expect. Some rooms are literally five feet by five feet.
- **Off Campus –** If your interview takes place off campus, the company with which you are interviewing will send instructions regarding where to report and when. Ensure you know exactly how to get there, and arrive early if at all possible because you probably will need to go through security. Bring the interview schedule with you; it should include the name(s) of the individuals with whom you will interview and their contact information.
- If you need to travel via train or plane to an interview, dress professionally on the way there. Wearing yoga pants and flip-flops doesn't make a good impression, and there is always a chance you will bump into company representatives during your trip.
- **In a Corporate Office or Conference Room –** Most often, candidates will be interviewed in the interviewer's office, but there are times when you will be interviewed in a conference room. Some conference rooms are glass-enclosed areas, and it can be distracting to interview as individuals look in and walk by. Regardless of the setting, maintain your focus on the questions asked and the interview at hand.
- **During a Meal –** Mealtime interviews can be tricky situations because food and drink are involved.
- Strike a healthy balance of not being ravenous but not leaving your plate untouched either. Focus your full attention on the conversation and interview at hand. It is wise to stay away from messy marinara sauces and long strings of pasta because they can easily stain your clothing. Forgo alcohol at all costs and certainly if you are not of legal age to consume alcohol. If you are not comfortable with dining etiquette, familiarize yourself with it to increase your comfort level. Know which fork is correct to use for salad versus dinner. Research this so you are prepared in advance. Interviews that take place during a meal can heighten nerves and cause you to spill a glass of water, which doesn't bode well for your confidence level.

No matter what the venue, dress well and take extra copies of your resume, a portfolio with paper and a pen that works, a list of questions you will ask, and perhaps a bottle of water just in case you need it.

Interview Questions

For most job candidates, the burning question is “What will I be asked?” There’s no way to anticipate every single question that may arise during an interview. It’s possible that, no matter how well prepared you are, you may get a question you just didn’t expect. But that’s okay. Do as much preparation as you can—which will build your confidence—and trust that the answers will come.

To help you reach that point of sureness and confidence, take time to review common types of interview questions. Think about your answers. Make notes, if that helps. And then conduct a practice interview with a friend, a family member, or a colleague. Speak your answers aloud. You will get a chance to practice through your mock interview assignment in class. Your instructor will review detailed instructions with you.[47]

The more you understand about different types of interview questions, the better you can prepare. This next section reviews the four basic types of interview questions: open-ended questions, specific questions, motivation questions, and unconventional questions

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions don’t have specific answers. They include questions like the following:

- Tell me about yourself. Walk me through your career. Why did you make the choices you made?

Such questions present an opportunity to tell your story in an engaging, articulate, and compelling way. Explain why you selected the school(s) you selected, your major and your minor, and your GPA (if it’s above 3.3). Describe the jobs you’ve had and how you got them. Did you apply directly or did you get them through networking? What were your most significant accomplishments at each job? Highlight significant accomplishments that may or may not be explicit in your resume. Often, a theme will emerge, but if that isn’t the case, talk about your decisions in a positive light.

- With which skills and functions are you most comfortable? If I were to assign you a project based on your expertise, what would I give you?
- If you enjoy working with clients, talk about your specific achievements and how you helped your clients. Have you served them well enough for them to be repeat customers? Have they referred other clients to you? If you are very strong analytically, give an example of the most analytical project on which you’ve worked and the project’s outcome.
- What are your weakest skills, and how are you addressing them? What areas would your supervisors say you need to develop?
- Everyone has strengths and everyone has weaknesses. You should do a substantive assessment of your weaknesses prior to an interview. A weakness should never be a critical component of the job for which you are applying. If there is a trick to answering this question effectively, it’s to highlight what you are doing to strengthen each weakness. For example, if public speaking is something you consider a weakness, you can say that to improve this, you raise your hand as much as possible in class, and you volunteer to present whenever possible. The more prepared you are with the content of your presentation, the better you perform.
- What do you do for fun? What do you do in your free time? What do you like to read?

These questions present an opportunity to enthusiastically and specifically discuss what you enjoy doing in your spare time. If you enjoy tennis, talk about how long you have been playing and your favorite player. If you enjoy reading, mention the last great book you read.

Specific Questions

Specific questions have concrete answers and might include the following:

Tell me about this [the interviewer can point to anything on your resume, whether it be a project, an employer, a class, a skill, or a hobby.

- You must be able to quickly and completely discuss any topic from your resume and its relevance to your professional career. You should be able to recount every detail about each project, and enthusiastically relay those details to your interviewer. If you are not enthusiastic about your work, they will not be either. Also highlight the result of your work or any project about which they want to know more.

Tell me about your favorite project, your most significant project, or a project that demonstrates your leadership, project management, analytical, research, or communications skills.

- When answering this question, remember who sponsored the project, the project's objective and deliverable, steps you took to complete the project, and the results of your efforts. Note your role as well as the roles of other team members. Be specific and quantify the results.

Tell me about a project where something went wrong or tell me about a difficult client.

- Everyone has worked on projects where something went wrong. If we procrastinated, we learned to become more disciplined in our approach to projects. If someone didn't do their part of the project, which then caused us to do extra work, we learned to communicate more clearly and check the project's progress on a regular basis.
- We also have worked with difficult clients. The trick is to not say anything negative about a client. If a client was demanding, remember that all clients have a right to make demands. We need to raise our game to ensure they are pleased with the service and our level of professionalism. Never make negative comments about a client, a boss, a peer, or a company. Doing so sends an immediate red flag to the interviewer, so avoid such negativity at all costs. Position everything in a positive light, which can only help your candidacy.

What do you think about current events or significant events in the employer's industry?

- Interviewers want to know that you are knowledgeable about current events, especially those pertaining to their industry. The very best candidates are well versed in the current news, so be prepared to discuss one or two items. It's important that you cite the source of the news and what you learned from it. If you did subsequent research about the topic, discuss that as well. It's an opportunity to highlight your research and your passion for this industry.

Motivation Questions

Interviewers often want to know about a candidate's motivation by asking the following questions:

With which firms are you interviewing? What positions are you seeking? How will you choose?

- The savviest interviewers know that the best candidates interview with multiple companies. Many candidates are comfortable discussing specific companies with which they are interviewing, and, from a recruiting perspective, it's fine to mention the company names. If you would rather not discuss this, mention that you are currently interviewing with other companies, but this company is your number one choice and highlight why you want to work there. They should get the hint that you don't want to mention specific companies.
- No matter what company is interviewing you, ensure that you know why you want to work for that particular company. Know their strong points and know their competitors. Know clearly why you want to work for them versus their competitors.

What do you hope to accomplish in your career? Where do you see yourself in one, five, or more years?

- Your research will help you answer this question. If you've conducted some informational interviews, you will have a clear idea of what a career can look like in one, five, and ten years. It is also important to network with peers who have interned at the companies in which you are interested because they can share specific information with you. For example, consulting, investment banking, and brand management have well-defined career paths. Advertising has a defined career path, but it may not be as defined as other businesses and industries.

What questions do you have for the interviewer?

- This can be a make-or-break question because some interviews consist of just this one question. Every interview candidate should enter an interview with five to seven questions written down in advance. These questions should come directly from your research.

Why do you want this position? Why do you want to work with this company?

- Answers to these questions will come from your research. Have a specific reason you want to work at the company doing the exact job for which you are interviewing. Is the brand name very strong, giving you an opportunity to work with the best? Is the brand name not yet a household name, giving you an opportunity to make it so?
- It's also important to know what skills you will gain in this specific position and which will enable you to be successful. Will the position strengthen your analytical skills? Will it enable you to become a subject-matter expert? Be specific in your answer.

Unconventional Questions

Some interviewers may think you are too rehearsed and may want to inject a bit of stress; perhaps they want to shake you up a bit by asking what may seem to be crazy or certainly bizarre interview questions:

- If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be? Why?
- If you were a car, what color would you be? Why?
- If you were an item in the supermarket, what item would you be? Why?
- If you were an animal, what kind of animal would you be? Why?

Note that these questions are rare and you probably will not be asked them, but since preparation is key, it's worth examining why they are asked. These types of questions are asked to get a true glimpse into your personality. The "If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be and why?" question could be answered the following way:

- If you were a corporate research analyst who relied purely on your research to describe a stock, and that research would be shared with hundreds of portfolio managers, you might say you were a redwood tree. A redwood is one of the strongest trees on the planet and has roots that grow hundreds of feet into the ground. Not even the strongest of winds can cause the redwood to sway.
- If you were applying to be a technology customer service representative who troubleshoots during their entire day, you may say that you were a palm tree. A palm tree bends and yields to gentle breezes and hurricanes alike, but it survives almost anything that comes its way and stands tall and straight the minute the wind stops.

Unconventional questions have no correct answer, but when asked them, four strategies can help you succeed:

- Practice answering a few of these types of questions. If you need a few minutes to consider your answer during an interview, it's fine to ask for a bit of time.
- Answer by showing something positive or beneficial about you and your personality.
- Avoid humor and answer the question seriously and sincerely.
- Work backward to the answer. Think about a characteristic that is important to the job, and then match it to a tree, a fruit, or an item in a supermarket.

As you prepare for interviews and practice your responses to common questions, it is also important to be aware of **illegal questions.** There are questions that are inappropriate for an employer to ask and knowing these types of questions can help you respond if faced with an illegal question during an interview.

Illegal Questions

Illegal or discriminatory questions include references to the following:

- Age
- Birthplace
- Childcare arrangements
- Ethnicity and race
- Disability
- Marital and family status
- National origin
- Religion
- Sexual orientation

If you are asked any question relating to the preceding topics, it could be for one of two reasons. Either the interviewer is asking an illegal question or the interviewer might not be well versed in interview techniques. Many hiring managers have not been formally trained in interview techniques, and the lack of training can result in asking an illegal question.

It is hoped that the question would be harmless enough so that you can answer it without feeling uncomfortable. If you feel uncomfortable answering something, tactfully say that the question doesn't relate to the job. Try to move onto another question or ask a question pertaining to the job to get the interview back on track.

If you feel that you were subjected to discrimination, speak to someone at your career services office. They can provide the guidance necessary at this stage of your job search. If that is not possible, consult a friend or professor and ask for guidance in your next steps. This is not a matter to be taken lightly, so it's important to get help from someone who is familiar with these issues.

Avoid Interviewer Pet Peeves

A number of things can annoy an interviewer and must be avoided at all costs. The following includes a list of things you should not do. Mock interviews are especially helpful at this stage because sometimes candidates are not aware they are doing things that

are clear turnoffs to interviewers, so proceed with caution.

Not Being Prepared

Being unprepared is an insult to the interviewer who is investing their time and energy into meeting with you. You should be there on time, have several copies of your resume in your portfolio, focus on answering any question asked, and have a list of questions to ask at the end of the interview.

Negative Body Language

Positive body language such as looking the interviewer in the eye and shaking their hand firmly when saying hello inspires trust. Poor body language can eliminate you as a potential candidate. Practice answering questions with a friend and look them straight into the eye. Smile when you talk about big goals that you have achieved. You may look away now and then, but for the most part hold their gaze throughout the interview. Sit up straight in an attentive position to help ensure you make a good impression.

Appearing Tense

Stress is a vital component of an interview because you want the job and you need to impress. Using that stress to perform better is key, and, with practice, you can appear more relaxed than you actually are. For example, if your palm sweats a bit, discreetly wipe your hand on your pants leg or skirt before you shake the interviewer's hand. Preparing in advance usually lowers stress, but if you still need additional methods to calm yourself before an interview, try listening to soothing music before entering the building or read something inspirational before the interview. Taking deep breaths before you enter the building can lower stress a great deal.

Not Focusing on the Question and Not Answering It Directly

If your interviewer asks for a one- to two-minute overview, don't spend six to eight minutes regurgitating your resume. Focus and listen carefully to everything the interviewer asks you. If they ask for a one- to two-minute overview, make sure you give them one to two minutes. If you feel you might be going on a tangent and not answering the question, it's fine to ask if you are going in the right direction, or you can ask the recruiter to repeat the question and start over. Practice is important, even when you practice going off the topic.

Waning Energy

The interview process is strenuous. If you interview with one person, it's easy to keep your energy up. However, some interviews might be set up where you will interview with multiple people or several individual people throughout the day, and, in some cases, on different floors and in different buildings. Your energy level must be as strong and consistent with your seventh interview as it was with your first. To avoid waning energy, bring a small bottle of water with you to help you feel refreshed. If your interview day will be several hours long, bring a small snack bar to help you stay alert.

Blaming Others for Your Poor Performance

Putting anyone or anything in a negative light is not a good strategy for an interview. Criticizing your past peers, boss, or company puts you in a negative light. Interviewers red flag any type of negative comment and might probe for more negative energy lurking in other interview responses.

Not Treating Everyone with Respect

Treat everyone you meet during the day with the utmost respect, whether it is the security guard, the administrative assistant, or the actual interviewer. Be respectful if you are trying to rush through security or if you are holding an elevator for someone. All of these individuals communicate with each other, and if you leave a bad impression with any of them, it could end your candidacy. Be courteous and kind to everyone you meet. Manners do count.

Master the Interview

Control what you can control, and your interview will be more successful. This includes doing the following, but this list is far from exhaustive:

- Assess your strengths and weaknesses before the interview.
- Research the company and its competitors in advance of your meeting.
- Prepare and practice interview questions.
- Create a routine for the day of the interview to ensure you don't rush or skip important steps.
- Write down five to seven questions to ask at the end of your interview to prove you are motivated to get this job offer.

Remember that interviews are subjective and that a second interview is never a guarantee. Budgets can shift and your targeted company may have to pull an open requisition. Perhaps the company wants to promote from within and they may hire an internal candidate. Many interviewers hire in their own image, regardless of any interviewer training course they may attend. No matter what happens at the end of your interview, it's important to stay positive and it's equally important to not take it personally.

Regardless of the interview's outcome, and especially if you don't get the job, thank the interviewer for the interaction. Continue to keep in touch because that person can become an important part of your network. Leaving a positive impression can only help your future prospects because jobs for which you would be a perfect fit might open in the near term. Remember also that recruiters and hiring managers tend to move from company to company, and there is a strong likelihood that your paths may cross again. Maintaining positive relationships can only help your career.

Lastly, if you interview for a position and you don't get it, at least appreciate the value and practice of your experience. Troubleshoot what could have gone better and improve on that one thing. If you are proactive enough at strengthening your interview ability and ensuring you have enough interviews lined up, you increase your chances of getting a job offer.

Below is a list of resources that contain common interview questions and good explanations/answers you might want to adopt.

Table 31.1 – Resources for Interviews

Website	Description
100 top job interview questions—be prepared for the interview (from Monster.com)	This site provides a comprehensive set of interview questions you might expect to be asked, categorized as basic interview questions, behavioral questions, salary questions, career development questions, and other kinds. Some of the listed questions provide comprehensive answers, too.
Interview Questions and Answers (from BigInterview)	This site provides text and video answers to the following questions: Tell me about yourself, describe your current position, why are you looking for a new job, what are your strengths, what is your greatest weakness, why do you want to work here, where do you see yourself in five years, why should we hire you, and do you have any questions for me?
Ten Tough Interview Questions and Ten Great Answers (from CollegeGrad)	This site explores some of the most difficult questions you will face in job interviews. The more open-ended the question, the greater the variation among answers. Once you have become practiced in your interviewing skills, you will find that you can use almost any question as a launching pad for a particular topic or compelling story.

Why Should We Hire You

From the Ohio State University Fisher College of Business Career Management Office, here is a video featuring representatives from recruiting companies offering advice for answering the question "Why should we hire you?" As you watch, make mental notes about how you would answer the question in an interview for a job you really want.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=374#oembed-2

Activity 31.1: What Makes Me A Great Fit?

Now that we have discussed strategies to help you prepare for interviewing, it is time to apply what you have learned. Take a moment and think of your ideal job.

- Write a paragraph describing your ideal job. Imagine that you are already in this job. What is your job title and what are you responsible for executing? What is the name of the company or organization? What is its function?
- Now identify the top three reasons why you are a great fit for this ideal job. What sets you apart from the competition? List the qualities, skills and values you have that match the job requirements. Provide examples to support your answers. Connect your values to the company's values.
- Summarize your answer.

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4.12: Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

Graciela Martinez and Elizabeth Shaker

Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce

Diversity and inclusion in the workforce is important to understand as you prepare for your future career. Diversity is not simply a box to be checked; rather, it is an approach to business that unites ethical management and high performance. Business leaders in the global economy recognize the benefits of a diverse workforce and see it as an organizational strength, not as a mere slogan or a form of regulatory compliance with the law. They recognize that diversity can enhance performance and drive innovation; conversely, adhering to the traditional business practices of the past can cost them talented employees and loyal customers.

A study by global management consulting firm McKinsey & Company indicates that businesses with gender and ethnic diversity outperform others. According to Mike Dillon, chief diversity and inclusion officer for PwC in San Francisco, “attracting, retaining and developing a diverse group of professionals stirs innovation and drives growth.”

Living this goal means not only recruiting, hiring, and training talent from a wide demographic spectrum but also including all employees in every aspect of the organization.

Workplace Diversity

The twenty-first century workplace features much greater diversity than was common even a couple of generations ago. Individuals who might once have faced employment challenges because of religious beliefs, ability differences, or sexual orientation now regularly join their peers in interview pools and on the job. Each may bring a new outlook and different information to the table; employees can no longer take for granted that their coworkers think the same way they do. This pushes them to question their own assumptions, expand their understanding, and appreciate alternate viewpoints. The result is more creative ideas, approaches, and solutions. Thus, diversity may also enhance corporate decision-making.

Communicating with those who differ from us may require us to make an extra effort and even change our viewpoint, but it leads to better collaboration and more favorable outcomes overall, according to David Rock, director of the Neuro-Leadership Institute in New York City, who says diverse coworkers “challenge their own and others’ thinking.”

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), organizational diversity now includes more than just racial, gender, and religious differences. It also encompasses different thinking styles and personality types, as well as other factors such as physical and cognitive abilities and sexual orientation, all of which influence the way people perceive the world. “Finding the right mix of individuals to work on teams, and creating the conditions in which they can excel, are key business goals for today’s leaders, given that collaboration has become a paradigm of the twenty-first century workplace,” according to an SHRM article.

Attracting workers who are not all alike is an important first step in the process of achieving greater diversity. However, managers cannot stop there. Their goals must also encompass **inclusion**, or the engagement of all employees in the corporate culture. “The far bigger challenge is how people interact with each other once they’re on the job,” says Howard J. Ross, founder and chief learning officer at Cook Ross, a consulting firm specializing in diversity. “Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance. Diversity is about the ingredients, the mix of people and perspectives. Inclusion is about the container—the place that allows employees to feel they belong, to feel both accepted and different.”

Workplace diversity is not a new policy idea; its origins date back to at least the passage of the **Civil Rights Act** of 1964 (CRA) or before. Census figures show that women made up less than 29 percent of the civilian workforce when Congress passed Title VII of the CRA prohibiting workplace discrimination. After passage of the law, gender diversity in the workplace expanded significantly. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the percentage of women in the labor force increased from 48 percent in 1977 to a peak of 60 percent in 1999. Over the last five years, the percentage has held relatively steady at 57 percent. Over the past forty years, the total number of women in the labor force has risen from 41 million in 1977 to 71 million in 2017.

The BLS projects that the number of women in the U.S. labor force will reach 92 million in 2050 (an increase that far outstrips population growth).

The statistical data show a similar trend for African American, Asian American, and Hispanic workers (Figure below). Just before passage of the CRA in 1964, the percentages of minorities in the official on-the-books workforce were relatively small compared

with their representation in the total population. In 1966, Asians accounted for just 0.5 percent of private-sector employment, with Hispanics at 2.5 percent and African Americans at 8.2 percent.

However, Hispanic employment numbers have significantly increased since the CRA became law; they are expected to more than double from 15 percent in 2010 to 30 percent of the labor force in 2050. Similarly, Asian Americans are projected to increase their share from 5 to 8 percent between 2010 and 2050.

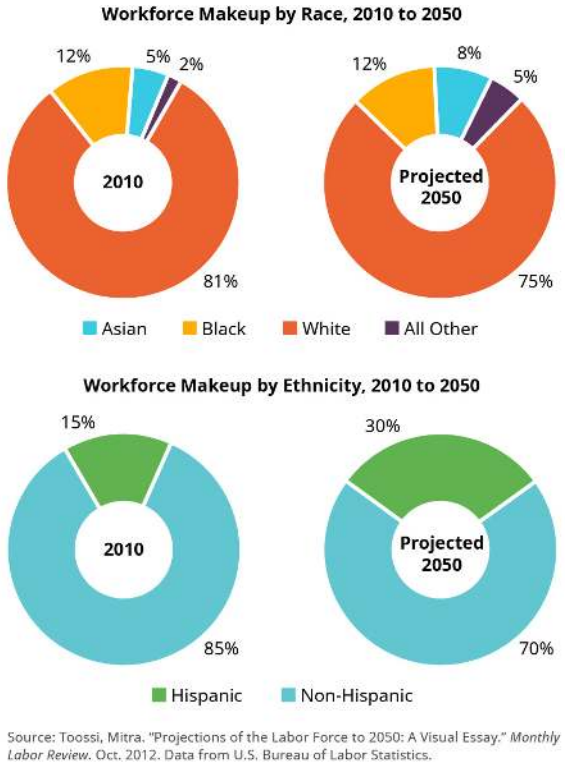


Figure 32.1 – There is a distinct contrast in workforce demographics between 2010 and projected numbers for 2050. (Image by OpenStax is licensed under CC BY 4.0)

Much more progress remains to be made, however. For example, many people think of the technology sector as the workplace of open-minded millennials. Yet Google, as one example of a large and successful company, revealed in its latest diversity statistics that its progress toward a more inclusive workforce may be steady but it is very slow. Men still account for the great majority of employees at the corporation; only about 30 percent are women, and women fill fewer than 20 percent of Google's technical roles (Figure below). The company has shown a similar lack of **gender diversity** in leadership roles, where women hold fewer than 25 percent of positions. Despite modest progress, an ocean-sized gap remains to be narrowed. When it comes to ethnicity, approximately 56 percent of Google employees are white. About 35 percent are Asian, 3.5 percent are Latino, and 2.4 percent are black, and of the company's management and leadership roles, 68 percent are held by whites.

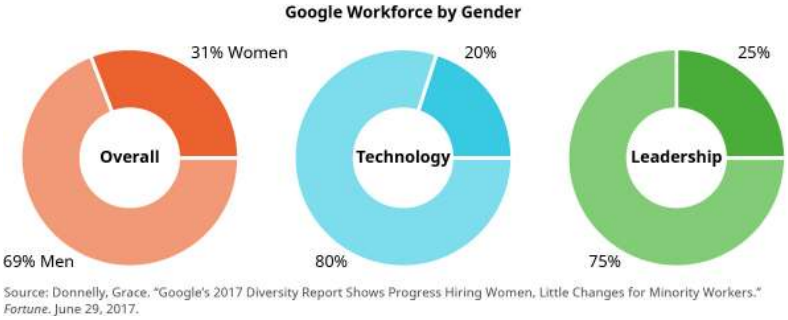


Figure 32.2 – Google is emblematic of the technology sector, and this graphic shows just how far from equality and diversity the industry remains. (Image by OpenStax is licensed under CC BY 4.0)

Google is not alone in coming up short on diversity. Recruiting and hiring a diverse workforce has been a challenge for most major technology companies, including Facebook, Apple, and Yahoo (now owned by Verizon); all have reported gender and ethnic shortfalls in their workforces.

The **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission** (EEOC) has made available 2014 data comparing the participation of women and minorities in the high-technology sector with their participation in U.S. private-sector employment overall, and the results show the technology sector still lags.

Compared with all private-sector industries, the high-technology industry employs a larger share of whites (68.5%), Asian Americans (14%), and men (64%), and a smaller share of African Americans (7.4%), Latinos (8%), and women (36%). Whites also represent a much higher share of those in the executive category (83.3%), whereas other groups hold a significantly lower share, including African Americans (2%), Latinos (3.1%), and Asian Americans (10.6%). In addition, and perhaps not surprisingly, 80 percent of executives are men and only 20 percent are women. This compares negatively with all other private-sector industries, in which 70 percent of executives are men and 30 percent women.

Technology companies are generally not trying to hide the problem. Many have been publicly releasing diversity statistics since 2014, and they have been vocal about their intentions to close diversity gaps. More than thirty technology companies, including Intel, Spotify, Lyft, Airbnb, and Pinterest, each signed a written pledge to increase workforce diversity and inclusion, and Google pledged to spend more than $100 million to address diversity issues.

Diversity and inclusion are positive steps for business organizations, and despite their sometimes slow pace, the majority are moving in the right direction. Diversity strengthens the company's internal relationships with employees and improves employee morale, as well as its external relationships with customer groups. Communication, a core value of most successful businesses, becomes more effective with a diverse workforce. Performance improves for multiple reasons, not the least of which is that acknowledging diversity and respecting differences is the ethical thing to do.

Generational Differences in the Workforce

Today we have four different generations in the workforce and each generation differs in terms of values, communication style, and life experiences. Each group brings valuable contributions to the workplace.

Each generation is a subculture with a sense of reality based on formative world and national events, technological innovations and socio-cultural values. To understand how that experience impacts communication, it's instructive to consider how the different generations view technology and communications media. The following examples are based on an analysis of generational differences:

Table 32.1 – Examples of Generational Differences

	Traditionalists	**Baby Boomers**	**Generation X**	**Millennials**	**Generation Z**
Technology is . . .	Hoover Dam	The microwave	Internet	Hand-held devices	Virtual
Communicate via . . .	Rotary phones	Touch-tone phones	Cell phones	Internet & Text	Social Media

Every generation develops expertise with communication formats and media that reflect their situational reality. For example, Traditionalists tend to have a more formal communication style, with a strict adherence to written grammatical rules and a strong cultural structure. Baby Boomers tend to prefer a more informal and collaborative approach. Gen X communications tend to be more blunt and direct: just the facts. Millennial and Gen Z communication is technology-dependent. As an Ad Council article notes, these generations are driving a truncation of the English language, shortening words (e.g., *totally* becomes *totes*) and abbreviating phrases into one or two-syllable "words," which may or may not be spoken aloud (e.g., FOMO for "fear of missing out" and TIL for "today I learned").

For additional perspective, see McCrindle Research "How to Speak Gen Z" infographic. These clippings have their roots in texting language: a shorthand that's optimized for the communications media and immediate gratification expectations of mobile communication.

Texting

Texting is a cross-generational trend—something that nearly all adults in America participate in. For perspective on texting, read onereach.com's "45 Texting Statistics that Prove Businesses Need To Start Taking Texting Seriously." A few excerpts, for perspective:

- Over 80% of American adults text, making it the most common cell phone activity. (Pew Internet)
- The average adult spends a total of 23 hours a week texting (USA Today)
- The average Millennial exchanges an average of 67 text messages per day (Business Insider)
- On average, Americans exchange twice as many texts as they do calls (Nielsen)
- Only 43% of smartphone owners use their phone to make calls, but over 70% of smartphone users text (Connect Mogul)

Bridging the Generation Gap

Each generation brings not only a frame of reference but also a set of competencies—and expectations—based on how they view the world and their place in it. The challenge for both businesses and individuals is that we now have five generations in the workforce. Differences in generational communication style and media are, effectively, language barriers. To the extent that individuals can't translate, the communication gaps are a hindrance to effective collaboration and, by extension, achievement of critical goals and objectives. The communication disconnect can also affect employee morale and productivity.

The opportunity in this situation is to leverage specific generational strengths and decrease points of friction. The best case scenario is to create a culture and opportunities that encourage cross-generational sharing and mentoring. As Nora Zelevansky wrote in a piece for Coca-Cola: "In order to master intergenerational communication, it is necessary to understand some broad generalizations about the generations and then move beyond those to connect as individuals."[26]

In a related trend, the model of talent management is changing. As discussed in a Sodexo report on 2017 Workplace Trends, we're moving to a model of shared learning, where workers of all ages contribute to each other's growth and development. Indeed, the researchers identified "intergenerational agility" as a critical aspect of the employee and employer value proposition. Business benefits of intergenerational learning include increased efficiency, productivity and competitive positioning. Two statistics that suggest the culture and communication gaps can be bridged:

- 90 percent of Millennials believe that Boomers bring substantial experience and knowledge to the workplace
- 93 percent of Baby Boomers believe that Millennials bring new skills and ideas to the workplace.

The diversity of the intergenerational workplace isn't just a development—it's a creative opportunity.

Professor Mariano Sánchez of the University of Granada in Spain sees the opportunity in cultivating "generational intelligence;" specifically, "organizing activities that raise generational awareness, connect generations and help them work better together—exchanging knowledge, ideas, skills and more to enhance the broad skill sets everyone needs in today's jobs."

According to Jason Dorsey, Millennial and Gen Z researcher and co-founder of The Center for Generational Kinetics, "The key is getting each person to recognize that everyone has different communication skills that can be harnessed to best support the organization." Incorporating multiple communication media in meetings and to facilitate ongoing discussion/collaboration allows members of different generations to share expertise and demonstrate the value of a particular medium. Selecting technology that supports multiple ways of communicating and collaborating can also leverage collective strengths and create fertile ground. For example, using a videoconferencing platform allows for participants to connect visually and participate virtually, with audio, screen sharing and recording capabilities.

Activity 32.1: Generational Differences in the Workplace

After reading the section on generational differences in the workplace, reflect on your experiences at school, work and in your community and answer the following questions:
What generation do you identify with?
How closely do you resemble some of the descriptors used to describe this generation? Explain and give examples.
Why do you think it is important to understand the generational differences in the workplace? Explain and give examples.
Understanding the broad generational generalizations are important to help understand different work styles and preferences, however it is essential to move beyond generalizations and connect as individuals.

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Zelevansky, Nora. “Bridging the Gap at Work: Improving Intergenerational Communication.” Coca Cola Journey, 01 Dec 2014. Web. 26 June 2018.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Unit 4 - Health and Wellness

5.1: Introduction to Health and Wellness
5.2: Chapter- 34 Creating Your Best Self
5.3: Your Overall Well-Being
5.4: The Mind-Body Connection
5.5: Mental Health Basics
5.6: The Role of Social Media on Mental Health
5.7: Physical Health Basics
5.8: Safety Consciousness
5.9: Life Stages Theory
5.10: Community Resources and On Campus Resources
5.11: Culturally Relevant Approaches to Health and Wellness

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5.1: Introduction to Health and Wellness

Amy Baldwin



Figure 33.1 Spending time in nature is just one way to relieve stress, reconnect, and refocus. (Credit: GlacierNPS / Flickr Public Domain (CC-0))

Student Survey

How do you feel about your overall health and well-being? 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. 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 can manage my emotions most of the time.
2. I can reduce stress when it is negatively affecting me.
3. I feel comfortable seeking out help when needed.
4. I get enough sleep.

You can also take this chapter's survey 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 of 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 Unit

This unit explores the many ways your health and well-being may be impacted by the choices you make. The goal of this material is to help you do the following:

- Understand how your mindset influences your emotions.
- Identify strategies to manage your moods.
- Describe differences between stress versus anxiety and sadness versus depression.
- Understand the mind and body connection.
- Identify ways to maintain and enhance your emotional health.
- Understand mental health risks and warning signs.
- Outline steps you can take to ask for help.
- Describe actions you can take to improve your physical health.

As a first-year college student you will make many choices without parental oversight, including the way you take care of your body and mind. 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 and emotional, for example) and healthy coping strategies to manage life stressors. 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.

In this unit you will learn the skills you need to live a healthy lifestyle for both your mind and body. The first step is to focus on who you are and how you can create your best self. This includes how to promote self-efficacy (i.e., your belief in yourself) and create strategies that you can use to improve your resiliency (i.e., your ability to recover from challenges and adapt to change) during your transition into college. Next we will discuss the mind and body connection and how we need to consider managing both as a top priority every day.

We will address identifying your feelings and mood and build a vocabulary that helps you communicate with others. Then we will move into the topic of stress versus anxiety and how to manage both. At this point, prepared with identifying and managing your emotions with strategies you can use on your own, we will discuss when and how to seek help including the steps you must take to

establish your own support system. Once you have a support system, we will then discuss the importance of managing your problems in a way that holds you accountable for your actions and behaviors yet provides a framework for others to help you effectively. We will then discuss the role of social media on your overall health and well-being and provide suggestions for creating boundaries with the use of social media. Lastly, we will help you to gain a better understanding of how to maintain physical health through good nutrition, maintaining physical activity, and sleep.

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OpenStax College Success Concise Chapter 6 Introduction. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/6-introduction

Baldwin, A. (2023). Maintaining Your Mental Health and Managing Stress – Introduction. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

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5.2: Chapter- 34 Creating Your Best Self

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- What skills do you need to promote self-efficacy?
- What strategies can you use to improve your resiliency?

You are in college to fulfill an educational, personal, or professional goal. But it is just as important to work on creating your best self in the process, as *who* you are and *what* you believe you can achieve are just as important as the piece of paper you will receive at graduation. The first step in this process is identifying your positive attributes, which will be the foundation of your self-confidence. The belief in your abilities is also known as your *self-efficacy*. One way to increase your self-efficacy is to identify your strengths and values. Think of strengths as characteristics about ourselves that make us feel good about who we are, things we are good at, and parts of our personalities that make us good friends or good members of our community. Values are the things that matter to us the most. Typically, we do the best we can to live by our values; however, sometimes we struggle. Identifying strengths and values is a great place to start when making big life transitions. Being clear on what you view as your strengths and the values that are important to you will help you with finding similar people to build your support network.

Let's get started. First, consider your strengths. In Table 30.1, we have listed several examples of strengths. What are your strengths? What would your family say if we asked them about your strengths? What about your friends or community, would they have other examples of your strengths? Answer these questions to make a list of your own.

Next, let's consider your values. When finding your support network, friends, new clubs or organizations to join, one way to start is to understand your values and then look for others that have similar values. Your values have been shaped largely by your family, friends and the culture you grew up in.

Many of these values may be challenged as you go through college and grow as an independent person. Understanding your current values and recognizing when they are being challenged may give you some insights into why you value what you do and what changes you may be open to. Consider the values in the table below and then list some of yours. Did you come to these through your family, your community?

Table 34.1

Achievement	Efficiency	Hard Work	Positivity
Adventure	Empathy	Health	Security
Ambition	Equality	Honesty	Selflessness
Balance	Excellence	Honor	Service
Belonging	Exploration	Humility	Simplicity
Calm	Fairness	Independence	Spontaneity
Challenge	Faith	Intelligence	Stability
Commitment	Family	Joy	Strength
Community	Fitness	Justice	Success
Competition	Flexibility	Love	Trustworthiness
Contribution	Freedom	Loyalty	Understanding
Control	Friends	Making a Difference	Uniqueness
Creativity	Fun	Merit	
Curiosity	Generosity	Openness	

Dependability	Growth	Originality	
Diversity	Happiness	Perfection	

Throughout life, your values will often be challenged by other individuals. Someone may challenge your political views, or your religion, or your value in family. It is best to recognize your current values and then, as they are challenged, you can have a clearer understanding of the person you want to be.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Take a few minutes to write down a list of your strengths and values. Once you have created a list, reflect on it and consider what changes you would like to make. Are there strengths that you do not currently have but want to work on over the next few years? Can you imagine how this list might continue to evolve during college and even after you've graduated?

Although your journey through college is just starting, you will soon have to make critical decisions as to what courses you want to take, you may have to choose a major you want to focus on, and you will be start to look for your next step, life after college. One of the most asked questions you will face on this journey is where you see yourself in the next three to five years. Use this time to draft your vision.

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5.3: Your Overall Well-Being

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- How can I shift my mindset to change how I feel?
- How can I understand my emotions?

Day-to-day, you most likely experience situations that either align with your values or go against them; you may undergo experiences that make you confident or unconfident. These situations may trigger strong emotions or lead you to react in a manner that you may later regret. During transition periods, such as the transition into college, you may be even more likely to have these experiences, particularly involving topics and people you do not know well. When these situations happen, it is best to consider your thoughts, consult available resources, and allow time to understand how to best navigate your emotions.

Understanding Your Mindset

Let's first talk about your mindset. Have you ever heard someone refer to "seeing the glass half full" or "seeing the glass half empty?" This is another way of saying that, given a situation that could be interpreted multiple ways, some see the positives (half full) while others see the negatives (half empty). It is natural to move in and out of these frames of mind depending on the situation, your confidence level, the amount of stress you have in your life at the time, and so on. Setbacks and mistakes will always occur, and it's okay and appropriate to feel negatively about them. With experience and practice, you will learn how to move on from these negative feelings and adapt your attitudes in order to promote success.

Let's consider the following example:

- Negative reaction: "I forgot to complete an assignment and now I will fail the course because this is the second time I missed submitting my work on time."

How does this feel? What emotions are you experiencing? What is your mood?

- Now let's reframe to a more positive reaction: "Yes, I will get a zero for that assignment. However, if I work hard on the final two assignments and get at least a B on my final exam, I could improve my final grade to at least a C+."

How does this new thought feel in your body and mind? Is it different in a good way or not so good way? What emotions are you experiencing now? How has your mood changed?

Most likely you feel differently in your body and in your mind when you consider each of these responses. When the thinking is that the course is lost, you may feel disappointed, frustrated, and uncertain regarding the future. However, in the more positive reframing of the situation, the mood may shift to one of calmness and even purpose, because there is a way forward.

A key aspect of effective and positive attitudes is the awareness and ability to take responsibility for situations in which you contributed to the outcome. In the example above, the person did recognize that they were the ones who forgot to complete the assignment. Consider similar situations you've been in. Do you tend to put the responsibility for a missed assignment or a bad grade on yourself or your instructor? Do you tend to blame technology, unclear instructions, or too much work? While unfair situations can certainly occur, it is very important to recognize the role we play in them, and take ownership of mistakes and any extra work we need to undertake.

The ability to reconsider situations and find positive ways forward is a critical skill in navigating not only your college experience, but throughout your life, career, and relationships. To do that effectively, you will also need to identify your feelings and emotions. Examining what you are feeling will help you to more easily navigate those emotions. By understanding your emotions and how to communicate with others about how you are feeling, you will decrease the chances of behaviors that may have negative consequences.

Expanding your emotional vocabulary (see Figure 6.2) will allow you to be more specific in identifying the feelings you experience. Identifying your emotions will help you to find a solution or coping strategy more quickly. Using a tool such as this emotion wheel enables you to identify the emotion you may be experiencing. You may think that you are "angry"; however, after you look at the emotion wheel you may realize you are hurt or disappointed. Also, by identifying your emotions at a given time, you will be able to improve your mood and the relationship between your feelings and mood. Once you have a better understanding of the relationships between your feelings and mood, you'll be better equipped to overcome situations in which you have low moods versus when your moods are more positive.

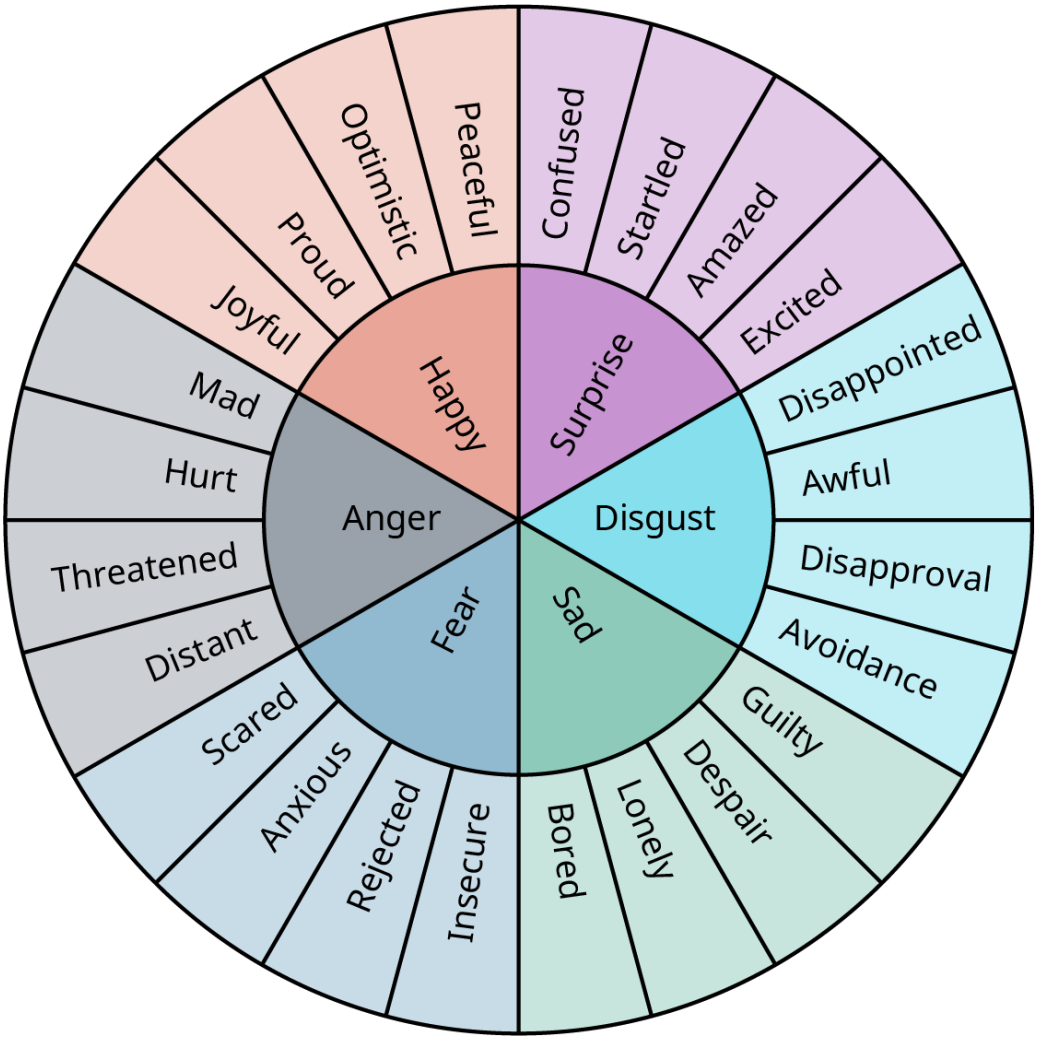


Figure 35.1 Tools like emotion wheels, based on Robert Plutchik's original, more complex work, can help us understand our feelings.

ACTIVITY

Take a moment to consider how your feelings change your mood by completing the sentences below with the first thing that comes to your mind.

I feel happy when…

I feel angry when…

I feel strong when…

I feel love when…

I feel proud when…

I feel jealous when…

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5.4: The Mind-Body Connection

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- Are there ways I can control how I react in stressful situations?
- Is it possible to "feel" stressed in your body?

Controlling Emotional Reactions

As you begin to understand how feelings impact your mood, and how your mood can feel in your body, you can start to align your emotions with the physical reactions that your body experiences. Doing this will help you in knowing when you need to use coping skills to help you through stronger emotions. (Coping skills are discussed in the section on mental health.)

Below is a conversation between a student and her professor.

> *Paige shows up to class a few minutes late, interrupting her professor when she enters the room. Professor Marsh is returning the most recent essay assignments. When Paige sees her grade she jumps up and explodes, "What is this garbage?!"*
>
> *Surprised, Professor Marsh turns towards her. "I beg your pardon?"*
>
> *"This grade," Paige says, walking towards her teacher. "What is this?" Paige leans against the desk. Palms of her hands sweating. Face flushed.*
>
> *Standing this close, Professor Marsh can see the slight tremble in Paige's lip. "If you have a question about your paper, we can talk about it after class."*
>
> *"I wanna know now. What is this total piece of garbage?" Paige waves her paper in the air.*
>
> *"You're excused," the professor says, calmly and with no equivocation.*
>
> *This gets Paige's attention and that of the other students in the room. "What?"*
>
> *"You're excused," Professor Marsh juts her head towards the door. "Your behavior is completely inappropriate, so you need to leave."*
>
> *"I don't want to leave."*
>
> *"Fine. Then sit down and remain calm and respectful." And she does.*
>
> *When class ends, Paige comes up to Professor Marsh, wrinkled paper in hand, and sets it down. "I don't understand why I got this grade."*
>
> *"Well, let's go over my notes and see." Professor Marsh starts to read Paige's work, explaining her feedback.*
>
> *Shaking her head, Paige pushes off from the edge of the desk, smacks it with her fist, and says, "That's B.S.!. This is totally personal and this class sucks!"*
>
> *As the professor stands and gathers her things, Paige folds her arms across her chest. "Where are you going?"*

> *"I'm leaving. If you aren't interested in talking about your work, I'm not interested in staying." And so Professor Marsh leaves – concerned about Paige's attitude, lack of boundaries, and well-being.*

Have you experienced a situation when you've been so frustrated you wanted to scream? Would you have responded differently? Do you feel Paige was in control of her emotions? In this example, Paige's reaction was driven by her emotions. Physically she experienced sweaty palms, a flushed face, and a trembling lip. Psychologically she was angry and hostile. Behaviorally, she was waving her paper in the air and yelling at the professor.

Table 36.1

Examples of Types of Reactions			
Type of Reaction	**Physical**	**Psychological**	**Behavioral**
	sweating, shaking	feeling sad, hurt, angry	crying, punching, yelling

Paige's reaction illustrates the various reactions you may experience with emotions including the physical, psychological, and behavioral reactions. When experiencing these reactions it is best to take a step back and not allow your emotions to take over. This situation could have been avoided if Paige took a moment to pause and collect her thoughts. Reacting quickly often results in over-reacting; so, to prevent negative consequences, a better approach is to take a breath and walk away. The same idea applies when you are not in person: Taking substantial time before sending an email or text, reacting to a social media post, or responding to a comment in a discussion forum can make a difference between a careful, constructive outcome and one that leads to even deeper problems.

As you continue this journey of managing your emotions, you will find that you experience more situations in which you feel in control of your emotions and less often experience emotion-driven behaviors and lack of control.

Physical Responses and Well-Being

When you have felt really frustrated with a personal relationship or an upcoming test, have you ever experienced a headache, stomachache or perhaps felt extremely tired? This is your brain and body working together to let you know that they are stressed. The connection between our mind and body is powerful, and both feed off of each other to influence how we feel and function every day. The amount of sleep we get, the types of food we eat, what we do for exercise or what we don't do, all interrelate and lead to how we can manage our emotions or not.

Developing coping skills will help you manage how you are feeling and calm your body and mind with the goal of decreasing your stress level. Taking a pause versus reacting immediately, such as going on a walk, connecting with a friend, or simply focusing on your breath during times of stress has the potential to slow down your heart rate and calm your mind.

Although coping strategies help in these stressful situations, what you do every day to prepare your body to manage these times matters just as much. You need to focus on taking care of your body and mind daily. Again, the mind-body connection is so strong that what you eat, how much activity you do, and the amount of time you sleep directly influences your ability to manage your day-to-day stressors.

Below are some simple suggestions to ensure you are making your mind and body your top priority. A more comprehensive understanding of each of these behaviors is discussed later in the chapter.

- A healthy diet will help you to be your best self and keep your mind and body functioning properly. Balance is critical: Try to have a serving of a protein source, a carbohydrate source, and a serving of a fruit and vegetable at each meal. Typically, you will find that your body and mind need fuel every 3-4 hours during the day. Knowing this, you can plan accordingly your meals and snacks. Lastly, don't forget to hydrate.
- Being active for at least 60 minutes every day can be a goal for you if you find yourself spending most of your day sitting—in class, while studying, or as you complete assignments. Being physically active will help your body feel awake and make you stronger to handle stressful situations. Even simple activities such as taking a walk, finding a yoga class or online video, or even a pick-up game of basketball can maintain good physical health.
- As important as being active is, it is equally critical to spend time sleeping. Note, that being inactive (watching TV, playing video games) is not the same to our bodies as restorative sleep. Maintaining a regular sleep routine and schedule is critical to

your mind and body.

APPLICATION

Choose one health goal from each of the three areas described above and write down how you will ensure that you meet each goal by listing your tactics, or what you will do regularly to meet the goal.

	Goal	Tactics
Example: Being active	To walk at least 2 miles each day	• 1) Block off 30 minutes after the last class of the day to walk the nature trail on campus • 2) Use my watch to track my steps each day to ensure I have walked at least 2 miles
Eating healthfully		
Being active		
Sleeping fully		

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5.5: Mental Health Basics

Amy Baldwin

Question to consider:

- What are some of the ways to tell if you are holding onto stress?
- How do mindfulness and gratitude encourage emotional health?

What Is Mental Health?

Mental health "includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, act, make choices, and relate to others. Mental health is more than the absence of a mental illness—it's essential to your overall health and quality of life." According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 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 recent survey of over 350,000 college students from almost 400 campuses across the U.S. found that more than 60% of students met criteria for one or more mental health illness diagnosis (i.e., depression, anxiety, eating disorder, suicide ideation). Although mental health illness worsened among all students, health disparities were found among racially and ethnically minoritized (i.e., Asian, Black, Latinx, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Arab American) students.

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. Exposure to harmful social media also plays a role and impacts your anxiety levels, self-perception, and other aspects of mental health. Mental health conditions show up in many ways. Anxiety, depression, and eating disorders are some of the most common.

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 occurs when something in our brain stops functioning correctly. This dysfunction prevents you from taking care of yourself, interferes with your relationships, and may lead to you missing school or work. 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. Regardless of how or why it occurs, depression is a treatable medical condition, and the ability to identify what it is and how to treat it is important.

Because depression is a medical illness, it needs to be treated by a health professional. If you are experiencing symptoms of depression, reach out to your doctor or call your local mental health resources on campus. During this situation, having a friend or family member to call and talk to is the fastest way to get the help you need. Building a network of support for yourself is critical.

Suicidal Behavior

Suicide is when people direct violence at themselves with the intent to end their lives, and they die because of their actions. People who contemplate suicide often experience a deep feeling of hopelessness. They often feel they can't cope with challenging life events and are not able to see solutions to problems. At 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.

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 you to take the first step in finding treatment.

If someone is telling you that they are going to kill themselves, do not leave them alone, and call the suicide hotline at 988. 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.

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

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. The table below provides three common eating disorders.

Table 37.1

Eating Disorder Type	Description
Anorexia nervosa (also called "anorexia")	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).
Bulimia	Is characterized by 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 continue medical care and counseling to reach full recovery. Eating disorders can be treated successfully with medical care, psychotherapy, counseling, or coaching. It is important to seek treatment if you suspect there is an issue. Treatment can address any underlying psychological issues. If you think you might have an eating disorder, visit a doctor or your campus health center. The National Eating Disorders Association also offers information, help, and support.

Anxiety Disorders

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." 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.

Identifying Anxiety

Experiencing stress is both normal and healthy to build both your self-efficacy and resilience. We typically experience different types of stressors throughout the day. Although stress doesn't always feel good for us to experience and is often unpleasant when it is happening, it is typically for a short amount of time. Think about the last time you were stressed: taking an important final exam, having to present your work in front of classmates, introducing yourself to others at a new club you joined. These situations are typically very short and centered around a particular event. You may experience sweaty palms, a fast heartbeat, a headache or stomachache, but these feelings usually go away after the situation. To learn more about what stress does to your body, visit the American Psychological Association's page on stress.

Table 38.1

Stress	Anxiety
Normal, healthy response	Unhealthy response
Acute	Chronic
Centered around a particular event	Happens for all kinds of events
Feelings usually go away after the event	Feelings don't go away

On the other hand, when you are experiencing anxiety, your body and mind are trying to communicate to you that you need to seek help and may need medical treatment. Anxiety will feel similar to a stressful situation, as described above, but the feeling doesn't go away. Using an example from above, you have to present your work in front of your classmates today and you feel very nauseous, your heart is pounding so hard in your chest you feel dizzy and have to sit down. You don't think you can walk the 10 minutes to class and decide to just skip class and stay home. This may be anxiety. Anxiety is different than stress as it sometimes prevents you from doing your daily activities. Anxiety may affect your ability to concentrate, increase your risk for heart disease, can weaken your immune system, disrupt your sleep, and can cause fatigue, and depression. The table above contrasts the differences between stress and anxiety so that you can better determine what you are experiencing over time. When you feel any of the symptoms listed above, ask yourself "Is this stress or anxiety?"

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 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 okay to feel bad. What's important is to acknowledge and work through your feelings, and find a friend or a counselor to talk to.

Developing Coping Strategies

Everyone experiences stress during their lives. It is part of the human experience, and despite how healthy and well-adjusted you are, stress is inevitable. What makes a difference is how you deal with it. 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 interpret 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 suggestions below that can be added to your own "toolkit" for coping with stress. As you read through the descriptions, think about the following questions:

- Which ones have you tried? You may already have one or more that work really well for you.
- Which ones do you want to try? If you have not tried any or many, consider focusing on adding one to your strategies for coping with stress.
- Which ones would be best in certain situations? 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

Mindfulness means being present with your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. Mindfulness is also without judgment—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.

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.

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 of 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. 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 in 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, suffered a major panic attack on national television. Following this challenging 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 okay. Simply notice when you're lost and start over. Every time your mind strays and you start over, it is like a bicep curl for your brain. Start with 3 minutes of meditation, and slowly work your way up to 15 or 20. To hear more about Dan's journey, watch this video.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=267#oembed-1

For a simple meditation to get started, you can try one of the videos on the meditation Youtube channel. There are also some great meditation apps including 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."

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."

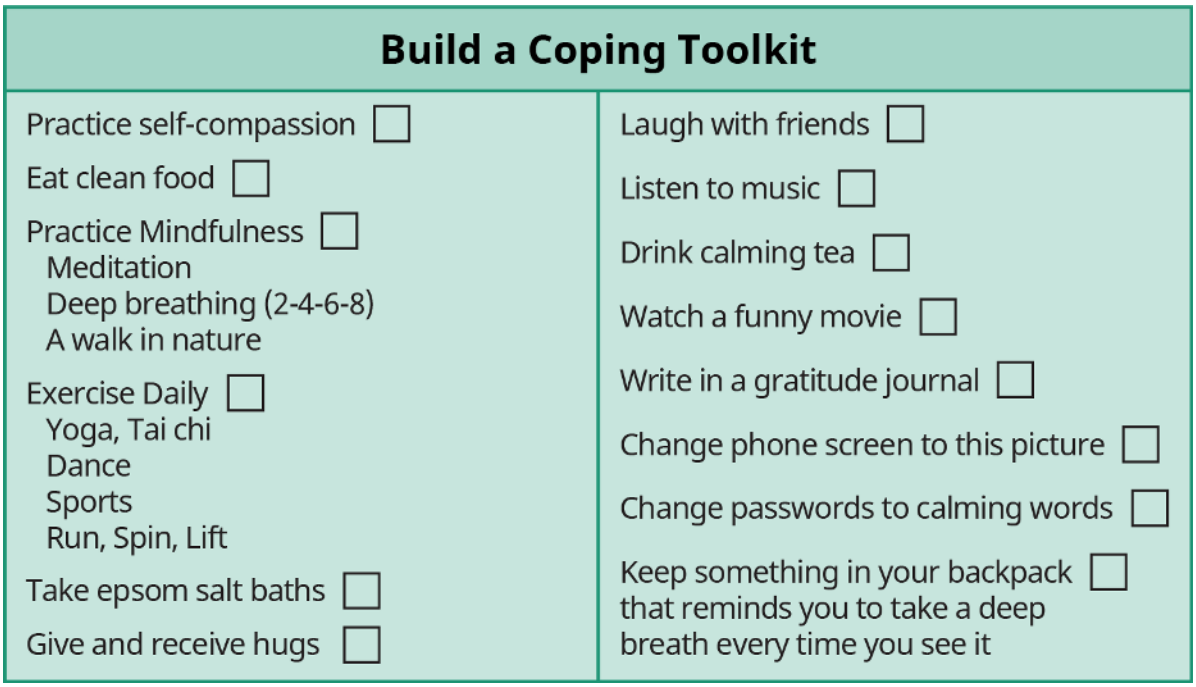


Figure 33.1 Do you have a toolkit filled with a variety of coping tools to help you navigate any stressful situation? (Credit: Modification of work by Robin Benzrihem)

ACTIVITY 38.1

Take a look at some of the suggested tools for your coping 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 toolkit.

Asking for Help

If you find that you are stuck in a low mood and are more often feeling down, hopeless, a burden to others and simply don't find many things bring you joy, you may need help from a professional. As just discussed, there may be situations when you may want advice or support and need to reach out to others. Having your own support system is key. In this section you will build the foundation of your support system.

You may have a teacher, guidance couselor, a friend's big brother/sister, or your own sibling who has helped you through difficult situations. Once in college, some of them may be harder to reach. Consider who you know now and start the process of building a bigger system.

ACTIVITY 38.2

Take a moment now to list the names of a few people who are part of your support system. Do you have their phone number or emails? Do you know where they live? This is a great start. You can even create a contact list in your phone titled 'student mental health services' so that it's ready when you need it.

Table 38.2

List of Resources

People	Contact Number	Best Type of Support
Jane Doe	xxx-xxx-xxxx	Setting boundaries with family

Reaching out and making a few good friends in this new environment will be a great start in this process. This may be easier said than done; however, it is a great skill to develop when in college as you are around so many people. You will also share at least one or two values or strengths with these individuals at your school which is a great conversation starter. Other people that may be in your support system could be family members, professors or counselors at school, or even a sports coach or leader of a community group you participate in.

Examples of situations in which you may need to ask for help are endless. You may have low motivation to complete assignments or attend class, be unable to concentrate during lectures, feel helpless with simple tasks, miss family or friends, or just feel unhappy with being in college. All of these situations could be related to a lack of sleep, poor eating habits, the negative effects of sustained stress, or symptoms of depression you may be experiencing. If you find that you are failing class or are in danger of being dropped because of attendance issues, or just can't seem to be motivated to leave your dorm room, use your support system. Figure 6.4 provides a flowchart for dealing with common situations you may experience in college by providing prompts for determining when you can make changes on your own and when you may need to seek help.

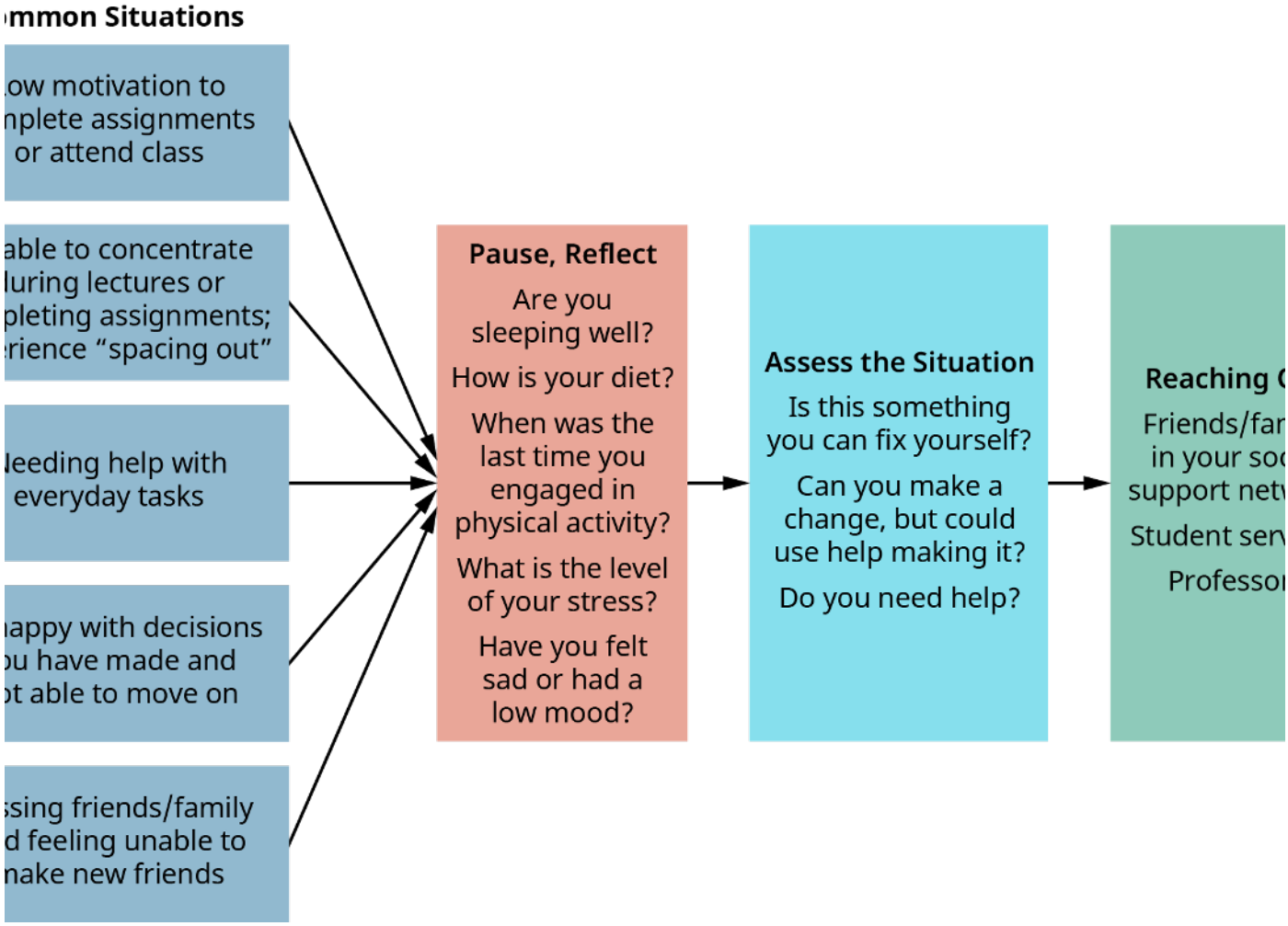


Figure 38.2 Common Situations and Next Steps

If you found yourself in one of these situations and needed support today, who would you call and why? If they weren't available, who is the next person on your list? Having a plan and a group of people you can reach out to is a game changer for when you are stuck in a situation and need help in moving forward.

Sometimes, seeking help and starting the conversation with someone can feel intimidating and even stressful. Consider these examples to help you begin:

- "I feel very alone today. Can we talk?"
- "I think I am going to fail my class. I could really use some help coming up with a plan."
- "I said some things that I shouldn't have to my close friend and don't know what to do about it. What would you do if you were me?"
- "You are so good at working in groups and I just hate it. It makes me feel so uncomfortable. Could you tell me how you do it?"
- "I have to get up in front of my class to present on a research topic and I am very nervous. What can I do to feel less stressed about this?"

Having a list of a few people that you can call or stop to chat with will make these situations easier to manage and help you feel like you are not in it alone. When you do reach out, consider how you feel, what your mood is like, if you have a handle on your emotions. You should be able to express yourself in the situation but have space to receive help. Remember it is best to go for a walk to cool off or take a few moments by pausing to gather your thoughts. This is a great time to pull in your support system to help you work through these feelings and emotions. With your support system you will be able to have a clearer picture of the problem and discover some steps to take to overcome the situation.

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5.6: The Role of Social Media on Mental Health

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- Why do I use social media?
- How can I balance positive and negative social media use?
- How can I identify and improve problematic social media use?
- What should I do if I experience cyberbullying?

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 that social media affords us. We live in a fast-paced, always-on world with a lot of pressures.

Social media offers many benefits, from staying connected to your loved ones and friends, learning about events in your community, and providing you with the ability to get information quickly. Unfortunately, these benefits are compounded with many risks (see Figure 38.1). Among college students, social media has also been associated with negative effects on self-esteem and self-image. Overuse of social media has been found to increase symptoms of anxiety, loneliness, and depression.

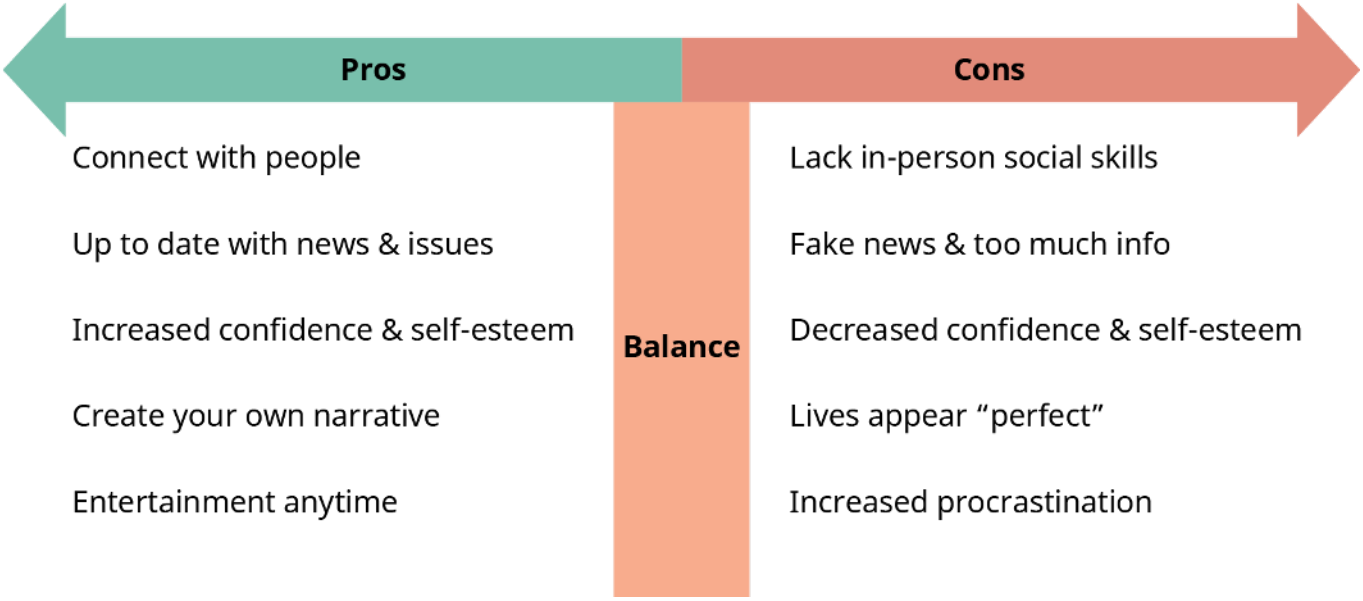


Figure 38.1 The Pros and Cons of Social Media

Uncovering Your Relationship with Social Media

By better understanding your relationship with social media, you will be more successful in finding the right balance and occasions for using it. The best way to get started is to just become aware of your relationship with social media and how it may or may not impact your own mental health.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

What is your relationship with social media? Do you feel you may have a problematic relationship with social media use? Here are some Questions to Consider and to learn more regarding your relationship with social media use:

- Do you spend a lot of time planning or thinking about how to use social media?
- Do you have difficulty concentrating in class or when you are studying due to social media use?
- Do you often use social media as an escape from what is happening in the real world?
- Do you feel you have to spend time on social media to feel satisfaction or pleasure?
- Do you find yourself engaging in or wanting to engage in social media when it is not appropriate (e.g., during a class)?
- Do you feel that you are more irritable, anxious, or sad when you are not able to use social media?
- Do you have experience with attempting to control your social media use and not being successful in such efforts?

Upon reflection from the activity above, where is your relationship with social media? To consider the relationship another way, think about the questions in the table below? Which more accurately describes your most frequent feelings when using social media?

Table 38.1 Relationship with Social Media

Frequency and Duration	Do you use social media for occasional entertainment and connection?	Or do you perhaps feel that you need constant stimulation and validation from your online network?
Feelings and Impact	Do you find yourself truly happy after looking through friends' posts or seeing your feed?	Or have you noticed that your mood is negatively impacted by what you are seeing on social media?
Outcomes and desire for change	Do you take inspiration and ideas from social media?	Or do you frequently feel you are "less than," or feel pressure to change?

Impact on Your Focus and Attention

When asked how social media use impacts a student's ability to study, two out of three undergraduate college students indicated they were more drawn to social media than their school work. Although the answer may be as simple as social media is more fun, the deeper issue may be related to how your use of social media has trained your brain to prefer to take in information in short doses. Social media rewards a distracted, shorter attention span, which may reward giving our brain quick doses of dopamine. (Dopamine is a chemical in your brain related to feelings of pleasure or satisfaction.) Similarly, when your phone beeps, buzzes, or vibrates with new posts waiting for you, your brain receives a dose of dopamine.

Distractions from social media have also been linked to our desire to be connected and be available for people in our networks. Similar studies have shown that the fear of missing out (FoMO) leads to significant social media-driven distractions.

The first step of gaining control over these distractions is by eliminating them. As you know, you can easily turn on/off your phone (watch, computer, etc.) notifications. Consider switching away from social media during your relaxing time and pick up a book or magazine, an old school puzzle, or journaling on paper. Another way to improve your concentration is to focus on one task at a time. Put away your phone for 30-90 minutes, jot down three tasks you need to complete, and check one off at a time. The more you use these strategies, the faster you will regain your focus and attention.

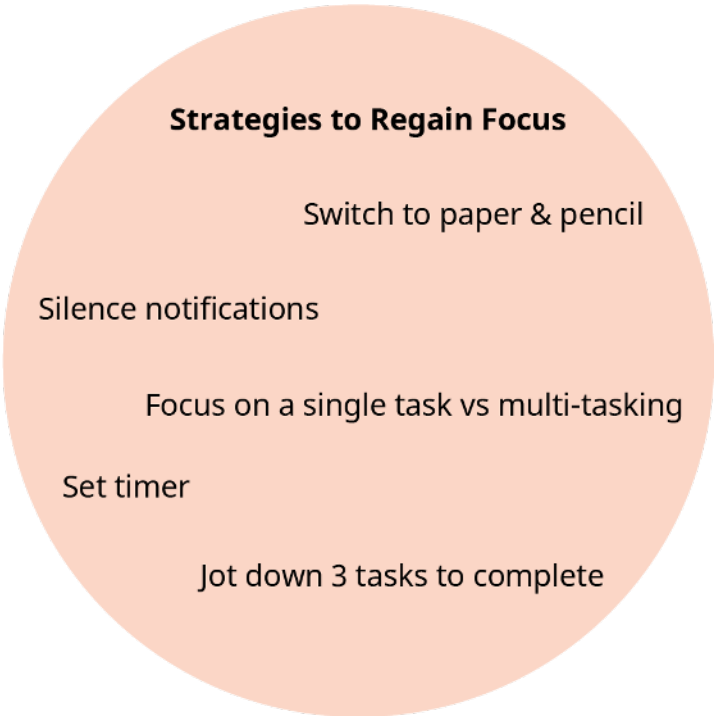


Figure 38.2 Strategies to Regain Focus

Impact on Relationships

Problematic social media use has been well documented among individuals who experience social anxiety and loneliness. For these individuals, social media is often used as a form of connection when in-person relationships are lacking. As mentioned above, for individuals who actively use social media as a way to directly communicate with others, social media use can provide social support and connection. Alternatively, those who use social media more passively, such as only to view other's lives, have more negative outcomes that can include depression and anxiety. Are you active in your engagement or passive?

If you feel your engagement is only passive, consider this as a red flag, and start by setting boundaries on your social media use as discussed above. To prevent social media from impacting your relationships, consider using social media more actively by reaching out to those in your network to plan in-person meet ups. Also, if you find yourself frequently comparing yourself to what you see on others' social media, remember that people's digital life might not be reflective of reality. If you find such comparisons damaging your self-esteem and relationship with yourself, reach out to your support network and open the conversation.

Need for Validation

Consider this scenario: Josh just finished finals week and posted on social media, "I guess I will start packing up my room. I know I just failed my chemistry final. My parents are going to threaten not to pay for next semester." An hour later, Josh is back in his dorm room and checks his account. No comments. No likes. No "hug" or "care" emoji.

How did you feel when you read this situation? Did it trigger you to cringe and feel bad for Josh? Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation? How did you feel then?

When you first started using social media you may have simply posted a picture or update in order to keep your friends and family connected with your life. At some point in time, you likely started to expect likes and comments. Eventually, if you don't get the same level of likes and comments you have become accustomed to, you may start to think your connections are not interested in you.

According to research, the lack of response is often interpreted as "no one cares since no one took the time to respond." This line of thinking can lead to self-doubt, insecurity, and anxiety. Seeking validation – either positive or negative — via social media is moving your relationship with social media into problem territory. If you reach that point, you should pause and reflect on the meaning of this behavior. One of the immediate steps you can take to disrupt this unhealthy cycle is to pause before you post.



Before posting ask yourself these questions...

1) Why am I posting?

2) Am I seeking approval or reassurance?

3) How will I feel if no one comments or likes this post?

Figure 38.3

Problematic Social Media Use

In 2021, the average internet user spent nearly two and a half hours per day on social media. That translates to over 37 days per year, and over the average lifetime, more than seven years of time. Let that sink in. Since we spend so much time on social media, dedicating such a massive portion of our lives to it, it's even more important we spend that time well. As stated above, there are definitely positives associated with engaging in social media, especially if you use it to learn more, broaden your social network, and enhance your life by letting it lead you to new offline experiences. However, there are times when social media use, or overuse, can be problematic and unhealthy.

Factors that lead to an individual having problematic social media use include the following:

1. poor self-regulation,
2. lack of control of time spent on social media,
3. social media as a mood regulator,
4. history of obsessive thinking,
5. social media impacting your social and/or professional life, and
6. if social media use is altered to negate these negative factors yet the individual relapses.

As a student, problematic social media use could mean that your attendance in class declines or you fail to complete assignments, which leads to lower academic achievement. You may find watching videos and viewing posts more satisfying than learning. You may regularly become distracted while participating in activities that require your full attention, such as driving. Further, problematic social media use refers to using social media platforms for reasons that are illegal, unethical, or socially unacceptable behaviors such as stalking, bullying, or spreading misinformation.

As previously described, evaluating your relationship with social media is the first place to start. In a recent intervention to decrease problematic social media use, students were asked to log their daily use of social media for one week. They logged the length of their time on social media, as well as how they were using it and their thoughts and emotions. After one week, students significantly reduced their level of problematic social media use and improved their mental health and academic efficiency.

Cyberbullying

The relationship between mental health issues and bullying is well documented. The relationship between mental health and bullying in the digital space, known as cyberbullying, is a newer problem and unfortunately provides a platform for bullies to say things behind the screen that most likely would never be said in person. Compared to traditional bullying, cyberbullying isn't easily reduced by supervision, has the potential for larger audiences, is often anonymous, and has fewer opportunities for someone to provide direct feedback in order to put a stop to the activity.

For individuals experiencing cyberbullying, it is much harder to avoid attacks and/or escape as the bullying can take place any time of the day. Cyberbullying has a larger audience due to how well connected social media is throughout the community, state, country, and world. Posts and conversations on social media have limitless reach which often puts the victim in a situation with very little control. Once information is in the virtual world, the text becomes very hard to remove and can "go viral" where it becomes so popular you can find it on any search platform.

Cyberbullying via social media can affect people of all ages, and it puts individuals in a difficult situation in which they cannot adequately defend themselves. The roles of each person involved in cyberbullying is consistently in a state of transition as people switch roles from being the victim, to the perpetrator, or the bystander as social media features (i.e., like, share) are utilized. In a recent study of US college students, 1 out of 2 students report being a victim of cyberbullying, while 1 out of 4 students report being a perpetrator at least one time per month.

Prevention strategies to decrease frequency of cyberbullying events are limited; however, research addressing victimization has noted the most effective strategy is to engage your social support network. Together you and a supportive person in your life can discuss the situation and make a plan to avoid further cyberbullying. Eliminating your social media platform where the attacks are occurring is not the only solution. Social media companies are aware that their users may experience these negative events and have put systems into place to report when users engage in such attacks. These companies have also enabled features to block or modify account privacy to prevent situations in the future. The table below provides common examples of cyberbullying and their explanations.

Table 38.2 Cyberbullying

Forms of Cyberbullying	Explanation
Victimization	person who receives the harmful communication
Perpetration	person initiating the harmful communication
Bystander or witness	person who witnesses the harmful communication

GET CONNECTED

If you feel you or someone you know is a victim, a perpetrator, or that you are a witness to cyberbullying you can contact student services and they can help safely guide you to the correct resources on your campus. If you need immediate assistance, IT departments and campus security can help you as well as recommend local law enforcement if illegal activity is at play including but not limited to harassment and stalking. Keep a record of the details including dates and times and take pictures when possible.

For more information on cyberbullying consult these resources.

Resource	Details

Resource	Details
stopbullying.gov	This is a federal government website and is managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It provides trusted resources for prevention and reporting of cyberbullying as well as documents strategies to deal with “haters.”
cyberbullying.org	This website provides a list of social media apps, gaming networks, and other platforms and a link to how to report cyberbullying for this particular website.
jedfoundation.org	The Jed Foundation is a nonprofit focused on youth mental health and suicide prevention. Through this website you can find immediate resources for you (“I need help”) or for someone you want to help (“I want to help”). The website also has a resource page with more information on cyberbullying including how to cope, understanding what it is, balancing social media, and more.

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5.7: Physical Health Basics

Amy Baldwin

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.

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. Although it is okay to choose unhealthy food options in moderation, your goal will be to focus on making healthier choices to fuel your mind and body daily.

One way to ensure you are making healthy meal choices is by using the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Healthy Plate Guidelines. MyPlate illustrates five different food groups considered the building blocks for a healthy plate for each meal—vegetables, fruits, protein, grains, and dairy.

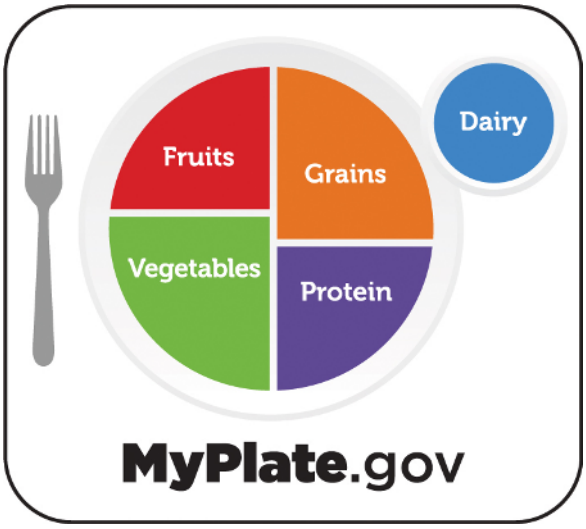


Figure 39.1 Eating healthy is a journey shaped by many factors, including our state of life, situations, preferences, access to food, culture, traditions, and the personal decisions we make over time. The USDA recommends that vegetables and fruits make up the largest portions of your diet, and to be mindful of your servings of carbohydrates, proteins, and dairy. 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)

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**, often called processed 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 other cereals are processed and should be checked for added sugar and other unhealthy ingredients. Review the label on these items and look for products that have less than 5 grams of fat and 10 grams of added sugars per serving. Also, review the dietary fiber and select products that have at least 3 grams per serving. Dietary fiber is a good thing; the higher the number the better. Fiber makes you feel full, and helps with digestion. Following these simple guidelines will help you select the best foods.

The average American eats 62 percent of their daily calories from processed foods. 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 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 39.2 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. (Credit: U.S. Food and Drug Administration/Public Domain)

This video on how to read a food label is a helpful overview on what else to look for:

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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. Water increases energy and relieves fatigue, helps maintain weight, 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. Water helps to flush out waste, so 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 for more benefits of drinking water:

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"But I don't like the taste of water!" No problem. Select any non-caloric beverage. Flavored waters are a perfect choice and there are many options with and without bubbles or caffeine. Limit your intake of caloric beverages such as juice, soda, and high calorie beverages at your favorite coffee shop.

Exercise

Many people exercise to maintain or lose weight, or increase cardiovascular health, but physical outcomes are 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. 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.



Figure 39.3 Many colleges 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. 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. Research has found that three brisk walks for 10 minutes a day is a great start. 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.

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 judgment, 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 health, yet almost 40 percent of adults struggle to get enough sleep. 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.

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 educational 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 educational 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.

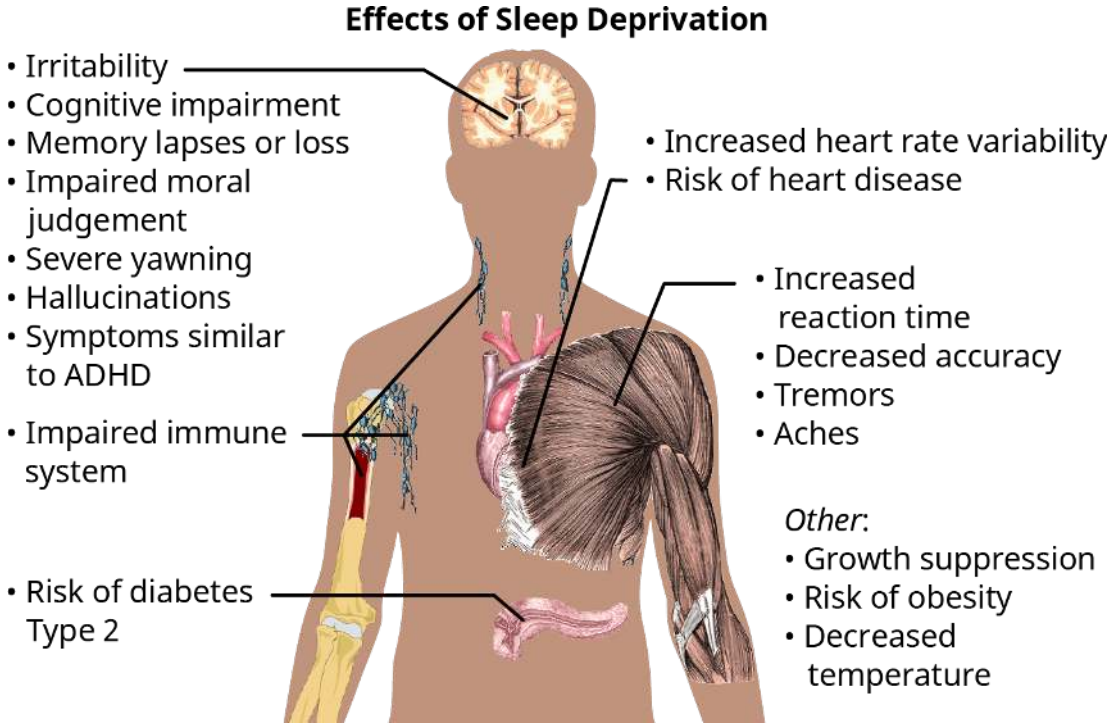
A review of hundreds of sleep studies concluded that most adults need around eight hours of sleep to maintain good health. Some people may be able to function quite well on seven and others may need closer to nine, but as a general rule, most people need a solid eight hours of sleep each night. And when it comes to sleep, both quantity and quality are important.

When sleep is cut short, the body doesn't have time to complete the phases 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.



he 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. Pul

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.

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.

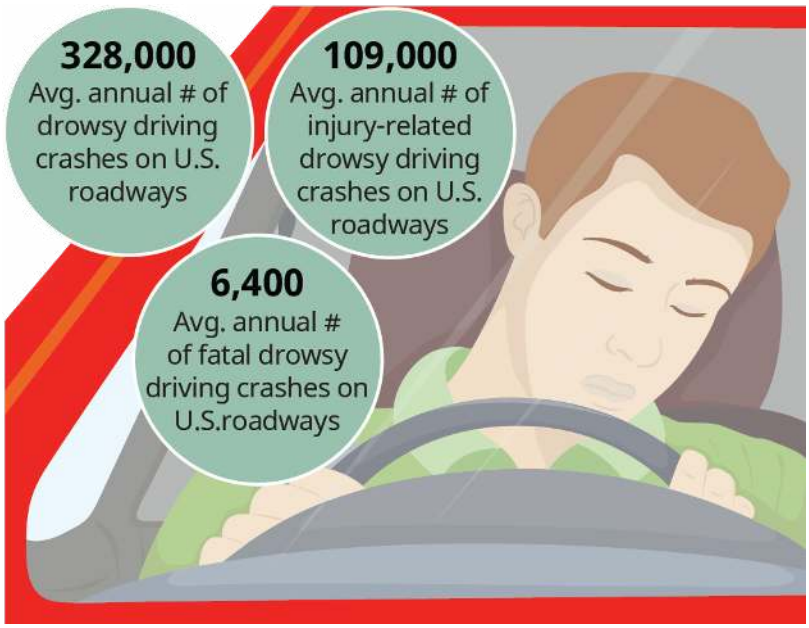


Figure 39.5 Driving while drowsy puts you, your passengers, and many others in danger. (Credit: Modification of work by Governors Highway Safety Association.)

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 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 once 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%." 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.

Making mindfulness and/or a gratitude practice (as discussed previously) a part of your bedtime routine are well documented as improving an individual's ability to fall asleep and have better quality of sleep. There are also great apps to help with relaxation, stress release, and falling asleep which include mediations, gratitude practice, and mindfulness. Consider the Insight Timer app, or any of the free apps 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?

Difficulty sleeping may be a sign of something else happening in your mind or body (i.e., anxiety, insomnia, sleep apnea). If you are doing all the right things and still have trouble falling or staying asleep, talk to your doctor or go to your student health services.

Here are some resources to learn more:

- Healthy Sleep, Harvard Medical School Division of Sleep Medicine
- Insomnia Treatment, American Association of Sleep Medicine
- Sleep Medicine, Society of Behavioral Sleep Medicine

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OpenStax College Success Concise Chapter 6.6 Physical Health Basics. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/6-6-physical-health-basics

Baldwin, A. (2023). Physical Health Basics. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

Modifications: Videos embedded. Figures renumbered.

Footnotes:

Dr. Joel Furhman https://www.mensjournal.com/features...here-20121107/

University of Virginia https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4207053/

Harvard Medical School https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsl...se_as_medicine

Kelty, Journal of Applied Physiology

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Matthew Walker, PhD ***Why We Sleep***

Governors Highway Safety Association

JCEM, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3047226/

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5.8: Safety Consciousness

Amy Baldwin

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.

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.

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.

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 degeneration 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
- 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. **Speak up.** 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. **Learn your campus emergency system.** 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.



Figure 40.1 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))

3. **Protect your drink.** 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. **Be alert and stay charged.** 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. **Avoid walking alone at night, and don't accept rides from strangers.** 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.

Get Connected

Luckily, there are tech opportunities to keep yourself safe. Three good apps for the job are:

Noonlight 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 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 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.

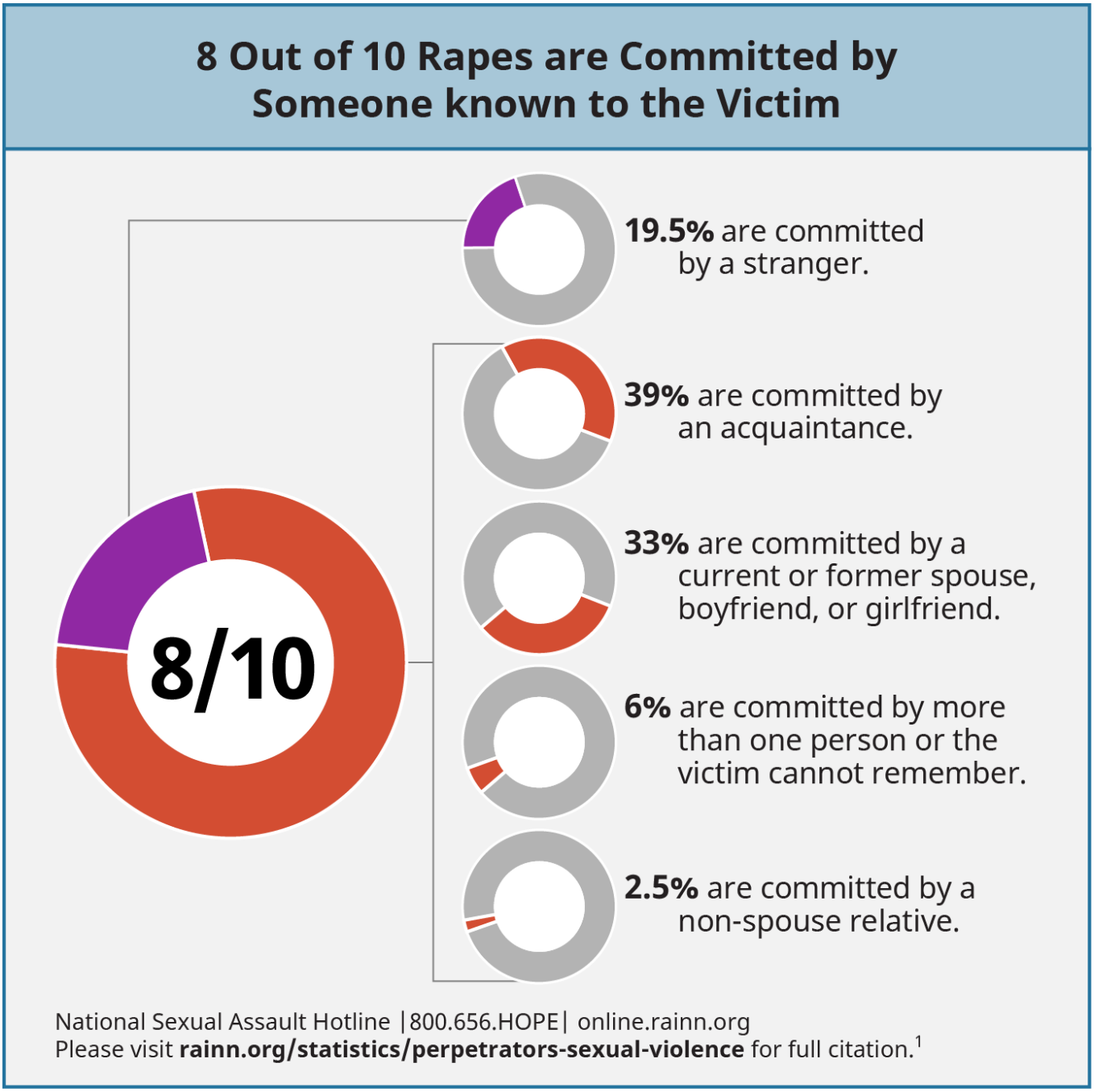


Figure 40.2 The majority of rapes are committed by people known to the victim, which can have a significant effect on prevention and reporting. (Credit: Modification of work by RAINN)

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.

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OpenStax College Success Chapter 9. Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence – Introduction. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/9-introduction

Baldwin, A. (2020). Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence – Introduction. In *College Success*. OpenStax.

Footnotes:

American College Health Association, 2018 https://www.acha.org/documents/ncha/...ve_Summary.pdf

NIDA's DrugFacts: Electronic Cigarettes (e-Cigarettes)

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5.9: Life Stages Theory

Lumen Learning

Periods of Human Development

Learning Outcomes

- Describe the basic periods of human development

Think about the lifespan and make a list of what you would consider the basic periods of development. How many periods or stages are on your list? Perhaps you have three: childhood, adulthood, and old age. Or maybe four: infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Developmentalists often break the lifespan into eight stages:

1. Prenatal Development
2. Infancy and Toddlerhood
3. Early Childhood
4. Middle Childhood
5. Adolescence
6. Early Adulthood
7. Middle Adulthood
8. Late Adulthood

In addition, the topic of “Death and Dying” is usually addressed after late adulthood since overall, the likelihood of dying increases in later life (though individual and group variations exist). Death and dying will be the topic of our last module, though it is not necessarily a stage of development that occurs at a particular age.

The list of the periods of development reflects unique aspects of the various stages of childhood and adulthood that will be explored in this book, including physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. So while both an 8-month-old and an 8-year-old are considered children, they have very different motor abilities, cognitive skills, and social relationships. Their nutritional needs are different, and their primary psychological concerns are also distinctive. The same is true of an 18-year-old and an 80-year-old, both considered adults. We will discover the distinctions between being 28 or 48 as well. But first, here is a brief overview of the stages.

Prenatal Development



Figure 41.1 An embryo at 8 weeks of development.

Conception occurs and development begins. There are three stages of prenatal development: germinal, embryonic, and fetal periods. All of the major structures of the body are forming and the health of the mother is of primary concern. There are various approaches to labor, delivery, and childbirth, with potential complications of pregnancy and delivery, as well as risks and complications with newborns, but also advances in tests, technology, and medicine. The influences of nature (e.g., genetics) and nurture (e.g., nutrition and teratogens, which are environmental factors during pregnancy that can lead to birth defects) are evident. Evolutionary psychology, along with studies of twins and adoptions, help us understand the interplay of factors and the relative influences of nature and nurture on human development.

Infancy and Toddlerhood



Figure 41.2 Major development happens during the first two years of life, as evidenced by this newborn baby and his toddler brother.

The first year and a half to two years of life are ones of dramatic growth and change. A newborn, with many involuntary reflexes and a keen sense of hearing but poor vision, is transformed into a walking, talking toddler within a relatively short period of time. Caregivers similarly transform their roles from those who manage feeding and sleep schedules to constantly moving guides and safety inspectors for mobile, energetic children. Brain development happens at a remarkable rate, as does physical growth and language development. Infants have their own temperaments and approaches to play. Interactions with primary caregivers (and others) undergo changes influenced by possible separation anxiety and the development of attachment styles. Social and cultural issues center around breastfeeding or formula-feeding, sleeping in cribs or in the bed with parents, toilet training, and whether or not to get vaccinations.

Early Childhood



Figure 41.3 Early childhood, or the preschool years, around ages 2-6, is filled with incredible amounts of growth and change.

Early childhood is also referred to as the preschool years, consisting of the years that follow toddlerhood and precede formal schooling, roughly from around ages 2 to 5 or 6. As a preschooler, the child is busy learning language (with amazing growth in vocabulary), is gaining a sense of self and greater independence, and is beginning to learn the workings of the physical world. This knowledge does not come quickly, however, and preschoolers may initially have interesting conceptions of size, time, space and distance, such as demonstrating how long something will take by holding out their two index fingers several inches apart. A toddler's fierce determination to do something may give way to a four-year-old's sense of guilt for doing something that brings the disapproval of others.

Middle Childhood



Figure 41.4 Middle childhood spans most of what is traditionally primary school, or the ages between 6-11.

The ages of 6-11 comprise middle childhood and much of what children experience at this age is connected to their involvement in the early grades of school. Now the world becomes one of learning and testing new academic skills and assessing one's abilities and accomplishments by making comparisons between self and others. Schools participate in this process by comparing students and making these comparisons public through team sports, test scores, and other forms of recognition. The brain reaches its adult size around age seven, but it continues to develop. Growth rates slow down and children are able to refine their motor skills at this point in life. Children also begin to learn about social relationships beyond the family through interaction with friends and fellow students; same-sex friendships are particularly salient during this period.

Adolescence



Figure 41.5 Adolescence, or the age roughly between 12-18, is marked by puberty and sexual maturation, accompanied by major socioemotional changes.

Adolescence is a period of dramatic physical change marked by an overall physical growth spurt and sexual maturation, known as puberty; timing may vary by gender, cohort, and culture. It is also a time of cognitive change as the adolescent begins to think of new possibilities and to consider abstract concepts such as love, fear, and freedom. Ironically, adolescents have a sense of invincibility that puts them at greater risk of dying from accidents or contracting sexually transmitted infections that can have lifelong consequences. Research on brain development helps us understand teen risk-taking and impulsive behavior. A major developmental task during adolescence involves establishing one's own identity. Teens typically struggle to become more independent from their parents. Peers become more important, as teens strive for a sense of belonging and acceptance; mixed-sex peer groups become more common. New roles and responsibilities are explored, which may involve dating, driving, taking on a part-time job, and planning for future academics.

Early Adulthood



Figure 41.6 Early adulthood, roughly ages 20-40, may be split into yet another category of "emerging adulthood," as there are often profound differences between younger adults and those in their late 30s.

Late teens, twenties, and thirties are often thought of as early adulthood (students who are in their mid to late 30s may love to hear that they are young adults!). It is a time when we are at our physiological peak but are most at risk for involvement in violent crimes and substance abuse. It is a time of focusing on the future and putting a lot of energy into making choices that will help one earn the status of a full adult in the eyes of others. Love and work are the primary concerns at this stage of life. In recent decades, it has been noted (in the U.S. and other developed countries) that young adults are taking longer to "grow up." They are waiting longer to move out of their parents' homes, finish their formal education, take on work/careers, get married, and have children. One psychologist, Jeffrey Arnett, has proposed that there is a new stage of development after adolescence and before early adulthood, called "emerging adulthood," from 18 to 25 (or even 29) when individuals are still exploring their identities and don't quite feel like adults yet. Cohort, culture, time in history, the economy, and socioeconomic status may be key factors in when youth take on adult roles.

Middle Adulthood



Figure 41.7 Middle adulthood spans the years between ages 40-65.

The late thirties (or age 40) through the mid-60s are referred to as middle adulthood. This is a period in which physiological aging that began earlier becomes more noticeable and a period at which many people are at their peak of productivity in love and work. It may be a period of gaining expertise in certain fields and being able to understand problems and find solutions with greater efficiency than before. It can also be a time of becoming more realistic about possibilities in life; of recognizing the difference between what is possible and what is likely. Referred to as the sandwich generation, middle-aged adults may be in the middle of taking care of their children and also taking care of their aging parents. While caring about others and the future, middle-aged adults may also be questioning their own mortality, goals, and commitments, though not necessarily experiencing a "mid-life crisis."

Watch It: The UP Series

In 1964, researchers and filmmakers began a fascinating and landmark documentary series known as the UP Series. The UK-based World in Action team, inspired by the Jesuit maxim, “Give me the child until he is seven and I will give you the man,” interviewed a diverse group of seven-year-old children from all over England. In the first film, called “Seven Up!,” they asked seven-year-old children about their lives, dreams, and fears for the future. Michael Apted, a researcher for the original film, has returned to interview these individuals every seven years since then, at ages 14, 21, 28, 35, 42, 49, 56, and finally at age 63.

You can watch the Up Series on YouTube.

You can view the transcript for “Some Kind of Connection- the Up Series” here (opens in new window)\

Late Adulthood



Figure 41.8 Late adulthood is generally viewed as age 65 and older, but there are incredible variations in health and lifestyle between the “young old” and the “oldest old,” who may be well into their 100s.

This period of the lifespan, late adulthood, has increased in the last 100 years, particularly in industrialized countries, as average life expectancy has increased. Late adulthood covers a wide age range with a lot of variation, so it is helpful to divide it into categories such as the “young old” (65-74 years old), “old old” (75-84 years old), and “oldest old” (85+ years old). The young old are similar to middle-aged adults; possibly still working, married, relatively healthy, and active. The old old have some health problems and challenges with daily living activities; the oldest old are often frail and in need of long term care. However, many factors are involved and a better way to appreciate the diversity of older adults is to go beyond chronological age and examine whether a person is experiencing optimal aging (like the gentleman pictured in Figure 8 who is in very good health for his age and continues to have an active, stimulating life), normal aging (in which the changes are similar to most of those of the same age), or impaired aging (referring to someone who has more physical challenge and disease than others of the same age).

Death and Dying



Figure 41.9 How people think about death, approach death, and cope with death vary depending on many factors. Photo Courtesy Robert Paul Young

The study of death and dying is seldom given the amount of coverage it deserves. Of course, there is a certain discomfort in thinking about death, but there is also a certain confidence and acceptance that can come from studying death and dying. Factors such as age, religion, and culture play important roles in attitudes and approaches to death and dying. There are different types of death: physiological, psychological, and social. The most common causes of death vary with age, gender, race, culture, and time in history. Dying and grieving are processes and may share certain stages of reactions to loss. There are interesting examples of cultural variations in death rituals, mourning, and grief. The concept of a "good death" is described as including personal choices and the involvement of loved ones throughout the process. Palliative care is an approach to maintain dying individuals' comfort level, and hospice is a movement and practice that involves professional and volunteer care and loved ones. Controversy surrounds euthanasia (helping a person fulfill their wish to die)—active and passive types, as well as physician-assisted suicide, and legality varies within the United States.

Try It: Check your learning with multiple choice assessment questions.

Think It Over

Think about your own development. Which period or stage of development are you in right now? Are you dealing with similar issues and experiencing comparable physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development as described above? If not, why not? Are important aspects of development missing and if so, are they common for most of your cohort or unique to you?

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5.10: Community Resources and On Campus Resources

Linda Bruce; Lumen Learning; and Dave Dillon

Using College Resources

Learning Objectives

- Identify major college resources and how to use them when needed

College resources to help you reach your educational and career goals are plentiful on most campuses. Here are several (but not a complete list of) campus resources to know about and find early in your college tenure. You may not need them right away; some you may not need at all. But you will at least find several to be vital. Be familiar with your options. Know where to find the services. Have contact information. Be prepared to visit for help. Check your college's campus resources for all they have to offer. Most services are free!



Advising

Most colleges and universities assign an academic adviser to each student. The adviser may be associated with your major. There may also be an office or department that provides advising. Call upon your adviser or the advising office if you have an issue with your adviser or you need other help.

Tutoring and Writing Centers

Tutoring and writing centers are established for all students, and seeking help from them is expected and to your advantage. Such services are covered by your tuition dollars, and they can richly enhance performance in any area of your studies. Know where to find these centers and how to schedule appointments.

Other Academic Support Facilities

Your college may also offer academic support in various other forms: for example, computer labs with trained assistants, tutors, mentors, peer advisers, and more. You can research what kinds of special support are available and be ready to take advantage of them.

Library Reference Desk

College libraries are staffed with professionals whose main function is to assist you and the college community in finding needed resources. Don't hesitate to find the reference desk and get to know the reference librarians. Invariably you will learn about valuable resources—many of them online—that you didn't know existed. Reference librarians are also educators, and they're there to help you.

Campus Health Center

In the event that you need any health services whatsoever, the campus health center can be your first destination. Stop into the center and learn about the services offered, the hours of operation, emergency provisions, and routine health services available.

Campus Counseling

Counseling is an essential service that colleges and universities invariably provide. Services can ranges from life-saving care to assistance with minor concerns. Life stressors, such as deaths and divorces in the family, issues with friends, substance abuse, and suicide are just a few of the many issues that college students may experience or witness others struggling with. Don't take matters into your own hands. Get help! The counseling center can help you and support you in gaining solid footing during difficult times. Don't hesitate to take full advantage of the services and help they offer.

Career Services

One of the most important purposes of college is to prepare students for a career. All colleges and universities have a career office that can assist you with many critical aspects of finding a suitable career. It may also help you find a campus job or review options for your major, help you get an internship, draft your résumé, and practice interview skills. Visiting the career office is a must for every student, and it's worth doing early and often (rather than waiting until you're about to graduate).

Spiritual Life

Most college campus have interfaith facilities to meet the spiritual-life needs of the entire college community. You may find these facilities to be a refuge in special moments of need or resources for your ongoing involvement. A healthy spiritual life can bring greater balance to your student life.

Additional support centers that students may wish to visit include offices for financial aid, students with disabilities, housing, diversity, student organizations, athletics, continuing education, international students, child care, and many others. Refer to your college Web site or other college directory for information about the many, many services that can be part of your college experience.

Community Resources

Community resources may also be helpful to you as you navigate your way in college. These examples from Grossmont College and Michigan University show some community resources that may be available to you at your college.

Grossmont College Community Resources.

University of Michigan Community Resources.

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Modifications: Minor editing. Addition of community resource information and links.

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5.11: Culturally Relevant Approaches to Health and Wellness

Open Resources for Nursing (Open RN); Kimberly Ernstmeyer; and Elizabeth Christman

This chapter has been adopted from a textbook designed for Nursing Students. For consistent context, references specifically for Nursing students have been preserved. Curator note: The content in this chapter matches the intention of the title of the chapter (from Grossmont College's course outline for Counseling 120, College and Career Success).

Culturally Responsive Care

After establishing a culturally sensitive environment and performing a cultural assessment, nurses and nursing students can continue to promote culturally responsive care. Culturally responsive care includes creating a culturally safe environment, using cultural negotiation, and considering the impact of culture on patients' time orientation, space orientation, eye contact, and food choices.

Culturally Safe Environment

A primary responsibility of the nurse is to ensure the environment is culturally safe for the patient. A **culturally safe environment** is a safe space for patients to interact with the nurse, without judgment or discrimination, where the patient is free to express their cultural beliefs, values, and identity. This responsibility belongs to both the individual nurse and also to the larger health care organization.

Cultural Negotiation

Many aspects of nursing care are influenced by the patient's cultural beliefs, as well as the beliefs of the health care culture. For example, the health care culture in the United States places great importance on punctuality for medical appointments, yet a patient may belong to a culture that views "being on time" as relative. In some cultures, time is determined simply by whether it is day or night or time to wake up, eat, or sleep. Making allowances or accommodations for these aspects of a patient's culture is instrumental in fostering the nurse-patient relationship. This accommodation is referred to as cultural negotiation. See Figure 43.1 for an image illustrating cultural negotiation. During cultural negotiation, both the patient and nurse seek a mutually acceptable way to deal with competing interests of nursing care, prescribed medical care, and the patient's cultural needs. **Cultural negotiation** is reciprocal and collaborative. When a patient's cultural needs do not significantly or adversely affect their treatment plan, their cultural needs should be accommodated when feasible.

As an example, think about the patient previously discussed for whom a fixed schedule is at odds with their cultural views. Instead of teaching the patient to take a daily medication at a scheduled time, the nurse could explain that the patient should take the medication every day when he awakens rather than every morning at 0800. Another example of cultural negotiation is illustrated by a scenario in which the nurse is preparing a patient for a surgical procedure. As the nurse goes over the preoperative checklist, the nurse asks the patient to remove her head covering (hijab). The nurse is aware that personal items should be removed before surgery; however, the patient wishes to keep on the hijab. As an act of cultural negotiation and respect for the patient's cultural beliefs, the nurse makes arrangements with the surgical team to keep the patient's hijab in place for the surgical procedure and covering the patient's hijab with a surgical cap.



Figure 43.1 Cultural Negotiation

Decision-Making

Health care culture in the United States mirrors cultural norms of the country, with an emphasis on individuality, personal freedom, and self-determination. **Self-determination** refers to a person's right to determine what will be done with and to their own body. This perspective may conflict with a patient whose cultural background values group decision-making and decisions made to benefit the group, not necessarily the individual. As an example, in the 2019 film *The Farewell*, a Chinese-American family decides to not tell the family matriarch she is dying of cancer and only has a few months left to live. The family keeps this secret from the woman in the belief that the family should bear the emotional burden of this knowledge, which is a collectivistic viewpoint in contrast to American individualistic viewpoint.

Space Orientation

The amount of space that a person surrounds themselves with to feel comfortable is influenced by culture. See Figure 43.2 for an image illustrating space orientation. For example, for some people, it would feel awkward to stand four inches away from another person while holding a social conversation, but for others a small personal space is expected when conversing with another. There are times when a nurse must enter a patient's intimate or personal space, which can cause emotional distress for some patients. The nurse should always ask for permission before entering a patient's personal space and explain why close contact is necessary and what is about to happen.

Patients may also be concerned about their modesty or being exposed. A patient may deal with the violation of their space by removing themselves from the situation, pulling away, or closing their eyes. The nurse should recognize these cues for what they are, an expression of cultural preference, and allow the patient to assume a position or distance that is comfortable for them.

Similar to cultural influences on personal space, touch is also culturally determined. This has implications for nurses because depending on the culture, it may be inappropriate for a male nurse to provide care for a female patient and vice versa. In some cultures, it is also considered rude to touch a person's head without permission.

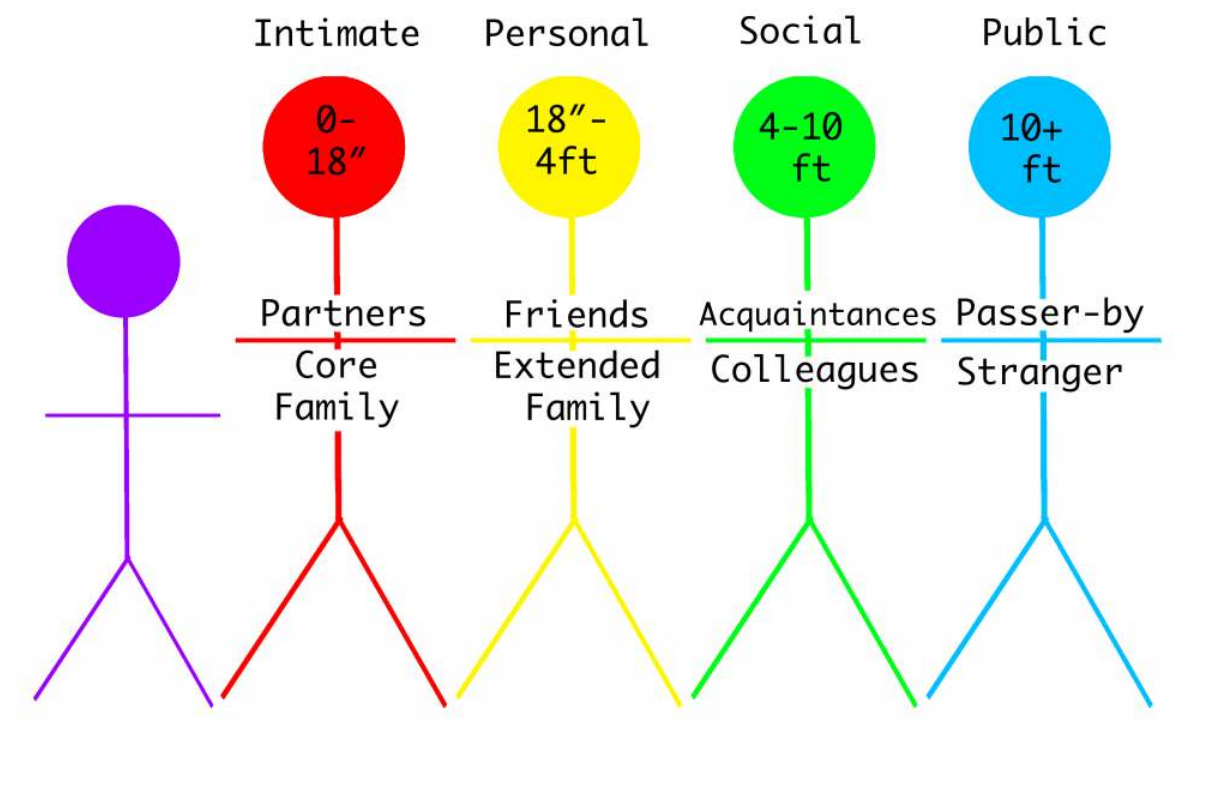


Figure 43.2 Space Orientation

Eye Contact

Eye contact is also a culturally mediated behavior. See Figure 43.3 for an image of eye contact. In the United States, direct eye contact is valued when communicating with others, but in some cultures, direct eye contact is interpreted as being rude or bold. Rather than making direct eye contact, a patient may avert their eyes or look down at the floor to show deference and respect to the person who is speaking. The nurse should notice these cultural cues from the patient and mirror the patient's behaviors when possible.

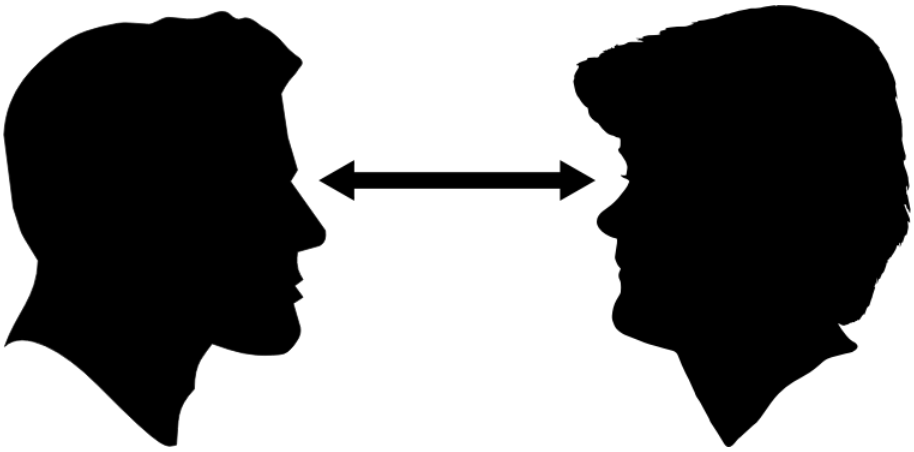


Figure 43.3 Eye Contact

Food Choices

Culture plays a meaningful role in the dietary practices and food choices of many people. Food is used to celebrate life events and holidays. Most cultures have staple foods, such as bread, pasta, or rice and particular ways of preparing foods. See Figure 38.4[5] for an image of various food choices. Special foods are prepared to heal and to cure or to demonstrate kinship, caring, and love. For example, in the United States, chicken noodle soup is often prepared and provided to family members who are ill. In certain Asian cultures, individuals prefer "heating" or "cooling" foods depending on the illness, with the belief that each specific food will help bring balance back to their system.[6] Additionally, certain foods and beverages (such as meat and alcohol) are forbidden in some cultures. Nurses should accommodate or negotiate dietary requests of their patients, knowing that food holds such an important meaning to many people.



Figure 43.4 Food Choices

Summary

In summary, there are several steps in the journey of becoming a culturally competent nurse with cultural humility who provides culturally responsive care to patients. As you continue in your journey of developing cultural competency, keep the summarized points in the following box in mind.

Summary of Developing Cultural Competency

- Cultural competence is an ongoing process for nurses and takes dedication, time, and practice to develop.
- Pursuing the goal of cultural competence in nursing and other health care disciplines is a key strategy in reducing health care disparities.
- Culturally competent nurses recognize that culture functions as a source of values and comfort for patients, their families, and communities.
- Culturally competent nurses intentionally provide patient-centered care with sensitivity and respect for culturally diverse populations.
- Misunderstandings, prejudices, and biases on the part of the health care provider interfere with the patient's health outcomes.
- Culturally competent nurses negotiate care with clients so the care is congruent with their cultural beliefs and values.
- Nurses should examine their own biases, ethnocentric views, and prejudices so as not to interfere with the patient's care.
- Nurses who respect and understand the cultural values and beliefs of their patients are more likely to develop positive, trusting relationships with their patients.

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Nursing Fundamentals – Culturally Responsive Care. Access for free at: https://wtcs.pressbooks.pub/nursingfundamentals/chapter/3-8-culturally-responsive-care/

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6: Unit 5- Listening and Note-Taking

Learning Objectives

After you have completed this unit you should be able to:

- Explain how to take notes during lectures
- Describe how to take notes from textbooks and other materials
- Explain verbal, non-verbal, and print clues to help you take focused notes
- Identify Cornell-style notes
- Identify and compare other note-taking formats
- Discuss the importance and value of taking notes
- Explain Ebbinghaus' forgetting curve and the rate of forgetting
- Describe basic strategies for taking lecture notes
- Discuss the importance of reviewing notes

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Unit 6 - Social Development

7.1: Introduction to Building Relationships
7.2: The Benefits of Healthy Relationships
7.3: Building Relationships in College
7.4: Working in Groups
7.5: Verbal and Non-verbal Communication
7.6: Active Listening
7.7: Interpersonal Skills
7.8: Mass Media Communication
7.9: Cross-Cultural Communication

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7.1: Introduction to Building Relationships

Amy Baldwin



s in college and in later careers will require you to develop and maintain healthy and productive relationships with people in various roles and from a wide array of backgrounds. (Credit: AXIS Dance / Flickr Attribution 2.0 Ger

Student Survey

How confident are you in building relationships and working with others in college? 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.

1. I set healthy boundaries when developing relationships.
2. I have gotten to know at least one professor well.
3. I have developed relationships with my peers in college.
4. I can work productively in groups.

You can also take this chapter's survey 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 Unit

By the time you finish unit 6, you should be able to do the following:

- Determine the key components of healthy relationships
- Discuss steps for managing conflict in relationships.
- Develop a plan to maximize your relationships in college.
- Identify the steps for working effectively in a group.

Good relationships can mean the difference between an enjoyable college experience and a difficult one. Many students report within their first year that they have experienced loneliness or homesickness whether they live on campus or in another state or country or commute back and forth to college. The good news is that these states are temporary. With time, students who say they are lonely meet more people, get involved in study groups, and get to know their classmates and roommates better. The students who feel homesick or just miss their family, friends, and pets (yes, *pets*) also report that once the term gets busier with events, meetings, class work, and studying, they find that the homesickness goes away.

This is not to say that quality relationships don't take time or work to develop. In fact, you will want to be mindful of what you can do to start relationships and improve them to create a more enjoyable college experience. This chapter offers specific suggestions that can help you get the most out of living and working with others.

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7.2: The Benefits of Healthy Relationships

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- How does self-care benefit relationships?
- Why is community so important to healthy relationships?
- What can I do to start developing relationships?

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 55.1 Healthy relationships involve trust, respect, and support. (Credit: Garry Knight / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Relationships come in many forms: classmates, family, friends, partners, 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 a particularly unhealthy or dangerous relationship. Even if you believe the person loves you, it does not make up for the harm they are doing to you. Seek support and safely 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."

In many families 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? Is a sports team? Is 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 55.2 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.

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.

ACTIVITY 55.1

Lisa Nunn's (2021) book *College Belonging: How First-Year and First-Generation College Students Navigate Campus Life* suggests that students experience belonging in three areas: academic belonging, social belonging, and campus-community belonging. Think about how you can take steps to feel as though you belong in each of these three categories and write down what you can do.

Realm of Belonging	Description	Steps You Can Take to Enhance Your Belonging
Academic belonging	Feeling confident in your classes, asking and answering questions in class, engaging with professors within and outside of class	1. 2.
Social belonging	Finding friends with shared interests, participating in events and organizations, talking to new people	1. 2.
Campus-community	Feeling generally accepted by the institution, feeling supported and helped by the programs and people on campus who work to see that you succeed	1. 2.

Taking the First Step in a Relationship

Consider this scenario: John is a first-year student who has moved several hundred miles away from home to attend college. He is, by self-admission, shy and has difficulty making friends. When he steps into his first class for the term, he meets Praya, a second-year student who says "Hello" when he sits down next to her. She seems outgoing and engaged as she greets others in the class as if she has known them for a long time. He feels out of place.

"Hi, Haley. How was your internship over the summer?" Praya asks one student. She asks another student, "Breylin, how do we always have a class together?"

John sinks down in his seat, afraid she is going to ask him questions as well. He pulls out his phone and looks through social media to keep her from bothering him. As other students enter the class, some quiet and others talkative, John wonders if he will have to interact with them. Even though he has not met many people yet–and certainly has not had any deep conversations with anyone–he feels anxious about having to get to know strangers and feels most comfortable keeping to himself at least for now.

John's story is not unusual. As you read in the previous section, many first-year college students have difficulty developing relationships in the first few weeks and months of college. The issue is often exacerbated by the constant notifications and vibrations that come from phones, which pull us out of conversations with others.

One way to improve your relationship-building skills is to learn the art of small talk, which is the first step in getting to know someone more deeply. Because we often turn to our phones or other distractions when faced with interacting with strangers – or even people we know well – it is no surprise that we haven't quite developed solid communication skills. If you want to get more involved in campus organizations, feel more comfortable in your classes, and eliminate general awkwardness in most social situations, then practice small talk skills.

What can you "small talk" about? Here are some topics that could get you started.

- The weather–"Wow, the cooler temperatures were a surprise this morning. Are you ready for the snow?"
- The latest sporting event–"How about our Bears? I can't believe they won in the final seconds of the game."

- Plans for the weekend–"Did you hear about that Halloween party in the park? Have you thought about going?"
- The current trend on social media–"Did you see that challenge on TikTok?"
- Majors–"What are you majoring in?" or "Are you a marketing major?"
- Careers–"What kind of job are you anticipating after graduation?"
- Schedule–"What are you taking this term? Anything you recommend?"
- Organizations–"I have been thinking about joining an organization. What are you participating in?"
- Recreation–"I got to play a new video game last weekend. Are you a gamer?"
- The class–"I struggled with that homework last night. Was it hard for you?"

Of course, tried-and-true compliments work as well as long as you keep them neutral. Admiring someone's clothing ("Great hoodie! Where did you get that?") or course resources ("Nice laptop. Do you like using it?") are safe bets. If you are not sure if you should ask the question or bring up the topic because you are concerned it may be controversial or not taken in the right way, then go with your instinct and choose something from the list above. Once you get to know people better, you can have deeper and more meaningful conversations.

One last note about "small talk." If you struggle with being friendly with others or coming up with something to say in those uncomfortable moments, then commit to practicing your small talk skills. Look for times during the day to try them out such as before class starts, when you are waiting in line, or when you attend an event and don't know many people. With practice, it gets easier to talk to people you don't know well. And, who knows? You may find someone who can become a friend.

GET CONNECTED

Which apps and websites help you get more comfortable developing relationships?

- Do you want to meet people who have similar interests? Meetup provides you the opportunity to create interest groups based on your location. You can use the app to create online or in-person groups.
- Do you want to learn how to start conversations and have fun doing it? Apps such as Real Talk, Make Talk, and Holsom can make starting conversations enjoyable. Learn what kinds of questions to ask that can get people talking and talking and talking.
- How about training in conflict management? Colorado State's Conflict Resolution for College Students provides an in-depth course that explores common reasons for conflict and common experiences that college students may encounter and need to manage.

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OpenStax College Success Concise 5.1 The Benefits of Healthy Relationships. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/5-1-the-benefits-of-healthy-relationships

Baldwin, A. (2023). The Benefits of Healthy Relationships. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

Modifications: Minor edit regarding unhealthy relationships. Figures renumbered.

Footnotes:

https://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/20/this...d-more-successful.html#:~:text=%E2%80%9COur%20study%20has%20shown%20that,said%20in%20the%20TED%20Talk.

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7.3: Building Relationships in College

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- What role will faculty play in my college experience?
- What other kinds of relationships do I need to develop?

Figure 56.1 provides an overview of the types of relationships you will develop in college. If you are aged 18- or 19-years old (often referred to as traditional college student age), you may look forward to expanding your relationship types beyond family and friends and authority figures to classmates (those who are in your classes), peers (those who are in college or near your age and have similar goals and activities), mentors (those who can help you develop skills or goals), and authority figures (those who direct and evaluate your work). If you are older than the traditional college student, you may also find that your circle of friends and colleagues will expand in some areas–and may even contract in others, at least while you are earning a degree.

Some people, such as professors, may fill multiple roles at different times in your college career. For example, a professor of your first-year seminar may be seen as an authority figure who dictates the learning objectives, creates assignments, and evaluates you. That same professor may become a mentor when you take them again your junior year as you are working on your major or participating in undergraduate research with them. Finally, your professor can become a friend after you graduate, especially if you have developed a bond with them that transcends the work you did together.

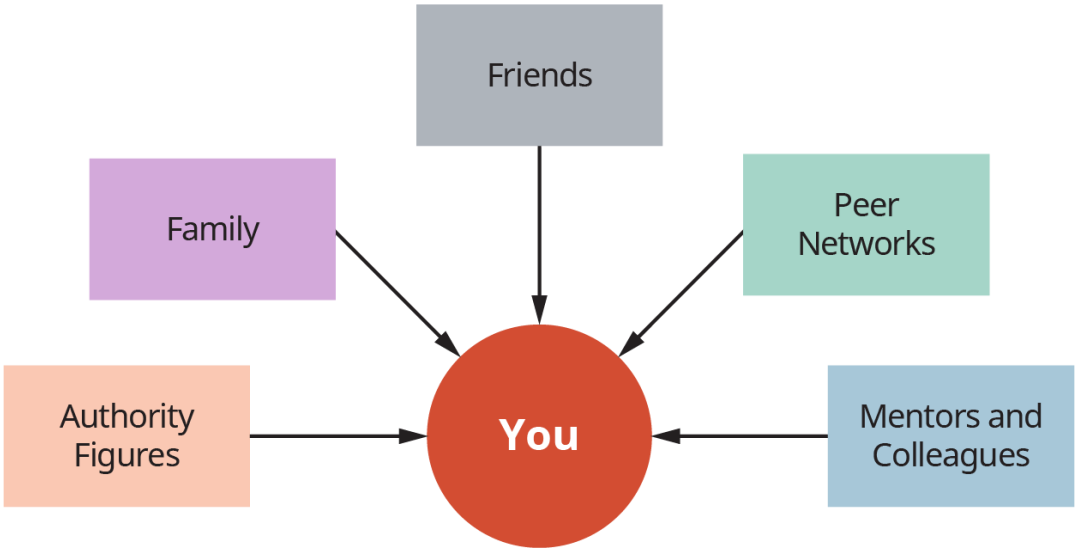


Figure 56.1 You and Your Relationships During College

Because professors are an important part of the college experience, we will talk first about them and how to develop good relationships with them.

What Professors Do

Professors are more than just teachers. This may be a surprise if you think about your experiences with high school teachers where they have their own classroom and a set of responsibilities including leading their classes that they must do between set hours each day of the week. College professors, by contrast, have much more flexibility and autonomy in their schedules, their workload, and their responsibilities outside of class. Because of these differences, you will want to view them in light of their additional roles and activities. See the table for a breakdown of common responsibilities professors have.

Table 56.1

Role or Responsibility	Why It Is Helpful for You to Know
Teaching	This is an obvious role, but it may be helpful to know that professors may be more focused on providing you with the latest knowledge in their field rather than the most innovative learning activity. You will be responsible for learning the material.
Researching	Many professors conduct original research as part of their job responsibilities. In some cases, they may focus most of their time on research. This may be helpful to know because you may want to consider participating in research with a professor as part of your college experience.
Writing and Presenting	When professors do research, they often write articles and present their findings. This means that they may also expect that their students write and present frequently and proficiently in their classes.
Mentoring Students	Professors may serve informally or formally as mentors to students at any time during your college career. This may be helpful to know as you identify people in your network who can serve as supporters of your success.
Participating in Shared Governance	Another key component of a professor's job is to serve on committees at the institution and participate in shared governance. Shared governance is the use of processes and structures to allow faculty, staff, and students to have a say in decision making on campus. Professors often spend considerable time in committee meetings reviewing data, evaluating policies and programs, and creating solutions to campus problems.
Participating in state, regional, national, or international organizations related to their discipline	Professors often have roles and responsibilities beyond the work they do at your institution. They may serve on a board or participate in an organization dedicated to sharing their research or working on a national issue. Knowing that your professors have connections and influence beyond the work they do to teach their students can provide more insight into why their schedules are often busy.
Working other positions or in business and industry	Adjunct professors, or faculty who teach part-time, may have limited office hours to meet with students because they teach classes at other institutions or hold jobs outside of academia.

Developing Relationships with Professors

Because your relationship with your professors is often the most visible and critical one to your learning and success in college, it is important that you take time to get to know your professors or at least remember their names, recognize them when you see them outside of class, and work diligently to meet their expectations. No one expects you to be best friends with them by the end of the semester, but you do want to view them differently than you may have viewed your high school teachers–as experts in their fields, partners in your learning, and mentors as you move through your degree. Here are a few ways that you can initiate and develop a relationship with your professors:

- **Get to know your professors.** This means to learn their names and something about them. They may share a few personal stories or you may be able to view their resume (often called a CV or *curriculum vitae*), which will list their education and publications. It also means showing up early or staying after class to participate in small talk or stopping by their office hours to talk or schedule a time with them to connect virtually..
- **Demonstrate interest.** You don't have to love the course, topic, or professor to demonstrate curiosity and focus in class. Nod when you agree or understand something or smile at your professor when they make a joke. You may find that pretending to be interested at first leads to genuine interest.
- **Participate in class.** One of the best ways to develop a positive relationship with your professor is to ask and answer questions in class. Engaging in a class discussion demonstrates interest in the topic and can go a long way in helping you stand out. If you don't feel comfortable speaking up in class, schedule a meeting outside of class to discuss key ideas.
- **Ask about expectations and assignments.** A great strategy that is underutilized is meeting with a professor *before* a test or assignment to ask about the expectations or to get clarification. In some cases, your professor may provide feedback on a draft or suggestions for studying.
- **Speak up when you stumble or fail.** Contrary to some college students' beliefs, professors *want* to talk to you when you fail a test or get a low grade because you misunderstood or procrastinated. Speak up when this happens even if you know well what contributed to your setback. Professors like to see that students are invested in their learning and improving.
- **Say "thank you."** If a professor gives you an extension on your paper or you just enjoyed the class, feel free to show some gratitude. Saying "Thank you for helping me conquer my math anxiety" or "I learned so much this semester" can go a long way toward building a relationship. And professors never get tired of students who are truly appreciative of their work.

As you read earlier in this section, professors have many different responsibilities in addition to teaching; however, they find joy and purpose in developing relationships with students who are engaged in their learning. While you don't have to be on a first-name basis with all your professors by the time you graduate, you should consider identifying a few who have sparked your interest in their courses or research to get to know them better. It would be a shame to graduate and not be able to recall one professor you had!

Managing Conflict with a Professor

Now that you know how to develop a meaningful connection with your professors, let's address how to deal with some common issues that can arise and how to communicate clearly and professionally. While college is often portrayed as freedom, exploration, and fun, there may be a time (or multiple times) that is stressful or discouraging. These times can occur when you are not happy with an assignment, classmate, discussion topic, a response to something you did or did not do, feedback on your work, or a grade. Any time you find yourself worried, upset, or angry about an event or experience with a professor, take these steps so that you can resolve the issue quickly and positively.

Step 1. Take a deep breath and write down what happened. Do this before you speak to your professor. Both activities, breathing and writing, will help you calm down and focus. It will also help you gather your thoughts.

Step 2. Make an appointment with your professor. Don't try to resolve the issue before, during, or after class as those are not ideal times to talk about an important issue unless it is the only availability you and the professor have. Explain why you want to meet to help the professor prepare. This is especially helpful if you have received a low grade as your professor may want to review the assignment or test beforehand.

Step 3. Explain the issue as clearly as possible. This is where the written account may help. Focus on what you experienced, heard, or read. Here is an example of a statement about a classmate's rude behavior that a professor would want to know: "When I spoke up in class about the need for more resources for immigrants, my classmate said under his breath 'They should just go back to where they belong. I don't know why you care.'"

Step 4. Share how you felt about the event. It is important to acknowledge your emotions, but you don't have to dwell on them. They will, however, provide some context as to why you feel the issue needs to be resolved. Here is an example: "I was surprised when Jarod said that when I was speaking and it made me mad that he would interrupt me with such a statement."

Step 5. Provide a potential solution or ask for assistance resolving the issue. The phrases "Can you help me understand…?" and "Can you help me resolve this issue?" are both good ways to frame this part of the process when speaking to your professor. Be prepared to listen, take notes, and make a list of steps you can take.

A special word about resolving issues with grades, especially final grades. Your professors are human and may make mistakes as they grade and return your work. While it may be a rare occurrence, it is worth discussing what to do if this happens. Here are a few suggestions to help you resolve questions about grades.

- Reach out as soon as you notice a grade that is lower than expected. Don't wait until the end of the term to question a grade from months earlier.
- If it is a grade on an assignment or test during the term, request a meeting in person or carefully ask in an email if you can get additional information about what you did or didn't do that contributed to the grade.
- If it is a final grade, reach out in person, by phone, or email, but be sure to follow these guidelines:
  - Provide your name; student identification number (if needed); the course name, number, and day/time if you are leaving a message or emailing about the grade.
  - Ask if there has been a calculation error if the grade is lower than you expected.
  - Do not beg, whine, or threaten if the grade is lower than you *wanted*, but what you *earned*. If you did not complete assignments on time, follow directions, or submit quality work, then your professor is not obligated to give you a higher grade.

As with all your relationships in college, think about them in terms of building your network that will help you throughout college and after graduation. While you cannot avoid conflict–or bad experiences–you can manage how you respond to them and how you work with others, especially professors, to resolve issues.

ACTIVITY 56.1

Directions: Emailing a professor about a failing or low grade can be difficult. Consider the two emails below and determine their strengths and weaknesses. Then, write your own email that includes the best strategies that are discussed in the section titled Managing Conflict with a Professor.

Email 1

TO: ajames@college.edu

FROM: rjenkins@college.edu

SUBJ: (no subject)

Hey! Why did you give me an F in your course? I thought I would get a C because I turned everything in. Can you email me back and explain?

Rob

Email 2

TO: ajames@college.edu

FROM: rjenkins@college.edu

SUBJ: Question about Final Grade: R Jenkins Student ID 0325

Prof. James,

I am in your CSCI 1401 Computer Science course on MWF at 9:00 and noticed that my final grade was a 79, but I had it calculated as an 82 after you graded the last project. Can you let me know if this is an error or if I calculated incorrectly? If it is easier to talk by phone or in person, let me know and I will provide some times and my phone number.

Rob Jenkins

Your Email

Write an email to a professor in which you ask about a grade that is lower than you expected.

Developing Relationships with Others

In addition to developing relationships with professors, you will encounter a variety of people in different roles that are part of a fulfilling experience. Don't overlook the opportunity to create deep, meaningful relationships with others as they will be part of your network for support during college. Here are some categories of people you will want to create intentional relationships with and what they can do to help you succeed in college.

- **Classmates.** It seems obvious that you want to develop relationships with people in your classes, but many students overlook their fellow colleagues as potential friends or support networks. Classmates can help you learn the material when they serve as tutors or study buddies, and they can be an emotional support when you suffer a setback in a course.
- **Roommates.** If you live on campus or away from home in off-campus housing, you may have a roommate. A roommate can also become a good friend who can make you feel more at home while you are away from your family.
- **Peers.** Your peers are people who are other students who populate the college campus. You will encounter them when you join organizations, attend events, or use certain services on campus such as tutoring. Many colleges employ fellow college students on campus to manage a residential hall, serve food in the cafeteria, and hand out sports equipment at the gym. Your peers also run organizations such as clubs, professional-interest meetings, and Greek fraternities and sororities. Developing relationships with your peers can help you expand your network and create connections with people who you may find helpful when you launch your career.
- **Mentors.** Many colleges provide opportunities for students to participate in mentorship programs. Your institution may have formal and informal programs that you can participate in to be mentored by a peer, a faculty or staff member, or even an alumnus in a career field that interests you. Mentors can provide you with advice and support as you work on your college and career goals.
- **Advisors.** While there are many different roles on a college campus that could be included in this list, advisors deserve a special place because they are crucial to your success; they are also the first place to go when a student has an issue. Some advisors spend considerable time with students to help them choose a major and create a schedule each semester that will enable them to graduate. Others serve as a sounding board for students who are struggling in a class and deciding whether or not to drop. Developing a relationship with your advisor has obvious benefits: They get to know what your goals are and can help you refine them. They also are very knowledgeable about how to navigate the processes of completing a degree.



Figure 56.2 Even if you choose your own roommate, managing the relationship can be challenging and involve compromise. You'll need to figure out when you study, which items you share, and how close a friendship you'll have. (Credit: Residorm Mugla Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Developing quality relationships takes time, effort, and intentionality, but the rewards are many. Consider expanding your network each semester you are in college so that you have a rich, diverse group of people whom you know and can count on to help you reach your goals.

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Are there any relationships from the list above that will be easier for you to develop? Are there any that will be harder to develop? What do you think will be your biggest challenge in creating a network while you are in college? What can you do to create a network that includes a variety of different people in it?

Addressing Family Matters

A discussion about relationships while you are in college would not be complete without mentioning family (and even friends). For many students, the support they receive from family is key to their feelings of stability and support. However, there may be times that you experience tension or confusion with your family. Pressures arise from differences in experience or perspective, the financial aspects of college, and simply undergoing an evolution in your relationship. You may notice that your emotionally-supportive family is unable to help you navigate the college experience or give advice about what you should do. Other students may experience conflict when they choose a major or career pathway that goes against the wishes or expectations of family members. Finally, college students with children (or younger family members they care for) often feel overwhelmed when balancing their responsibilities; they may at the same time experience guilt or disappointment due to time spent away from the kids. Here are some times in which you may find that dealing with family can be difficult.

- **When you leave the family to attend college.** Moving out can challenge a family if they expect or wish that you were still part of their day-to-day activities.
- **During holidays and breaks.** Adapting to the schedule of the family can be challenging after your freedom to come and go (and go to bed and get up) when you want to.
- **When you experience a failure or setback.** Letting your family know you failed a test or a course or didn't get accepted in a program may concern them.

- **When you decide on a college major.** Choosing a major they are not familiar with or they worry won't lead to a specific job after college can contribute to their anxiety about your success.
- **When you decide to continue your education beyond your undergraduate degree.** Deciding to take on more debt or take longer to be "done" with your education can cause worry about your future.
- **When you choose a career pathway.** Choosing a career that they are not familiar with or do not approve of can cause stress in your relationship.
- **When you choose to participate in another experience rather than return home.** Choosing a different experience (such as studying abroad) instead of going back home could make them feel left out of your life.
- **If you decide to stop out, drop out, or transfer.** Making a major decision that can have emotional and financial implications can upset your family if they have a firm belief in what you *should* do.

While it may seem obvious, it is worth stating this clearly: Your life is *your* life and the choices you make should be the ones you want to make. This may be difficult to do if your family is relying on you or you are relying on them for financial or emotional support. Honest conversations about what you want to do with your life and how you want to get there are always good first steps in managing any potential conflict. You may also want to keep in mind a few of these opportunities for you to help them understand your experience:

- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Clear communication about what you are studying, what you like and don't like, and how you are changing can head off surprises should you find that what you *thought* you wanted to study and what you thought you wanted to do with your life changes. If you experience a setback or a failure, be honest about it and demonstrate how you will get back on track.
- **Share with them some of your experiences.** While you don't have to recreate the lecture that blew your mind, you can share what you are learning or doing that is exciting you and developing your curiosity or purpose.
- **Assure them of the support you are receiving from your network.** Most families worry when they are unsure of how you are making major life decisions. Let them know what resources, offices, and people are providing advice and support as you move through college. If you change your major after talking with your advisor and reviewing what you need to do to still graduate on time, let your family know!
- **Let go of your expectations.** In some cases, your family may just not understand because they haven't gone to college or they have not experienced what you have. You may just need to let go of the expectation that they will be able to provide the type of support that you want or need.
- **Create boundaries.** If you feel as though your family is overstepping their role in your life decisions, set clear, firm boundaries about what help or advice you will and will not accept. Creating boundaries is part of every healthy relationship and parents and family members should be no different. If you have to decide that you cannot discuss your career plans with your family because the conversation devolves into shouting, then you must create boundaries to protect your mental health.

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Modifications: Renumbered figures and table.

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7.4: Working in Groups

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- What are the benefits of working in groups?
- What can I do to work effectively in a group?

Benefits of Working in Groups

When a professor assigns group work, most students initially cringe because they have had poor experiences collaborating on a project. Many of them have tales of group members who didn't contribute equally or who disappeared altogether. It is no wonder that a popular meme includes a photo of a casket being lowered into the ground with the words "When I die, I want my group members to lower me into my grave so they can let me down one last time." We can laugh at this extreme reaction, but there is some truth in feeling apprehension about being disappointed by others. This section makes the case that if you know more about how group dynamics can and should work and how to communicate effectively during the process of completing a group project, you are more likely to have a positive – or successful – experience.



Figure 57.1 Group work will be an important and sometimes high-stakes aspect of many classes and perhaps entire programs. Understanding group work requirements and dynamics, particularly in different learning environments, is important for success. (Credit: Residorm Mugla Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

Why do professors assign group projects if they are often fraught with challenges? Perhaps it is because group projects are probably the most "real world" experience you will do in college. Very rarely will you be asked to create a report, present to a client, develop a new product or treatment, or fix a problem without working with others and depending on them to do their parts in a timely and professional manner. The more practice you have developing your own skills as a group member and troubleshooting when things don't go smoothly, the more nimble you will be when you have to collaborate in your job.

If you approach working in groups by anticipating the challenges and developing strategies to minimize their negative impact, you will be able to weather the stresses more successfully. Table 5.1 provides some common challenges that you may experience working in a group and reviews the strategies you can use to minimize or eliminate the challenges.

Table 57.1 Challenges of and Strategies for Improving Group Work

Challenges of Group Work	Strategies for Improving Group Work
Your grade may be dependent on the quality of others' work.	Divide the assignment into parts, assign everyone a role that plays upon their strengths, and communicate expectations on quality.
You have to wait for others to complete their work before you can finish the assignment.	Create clear due dates for your group and monitor everyone's progress on the project components.
You have to trust that others will fulfill their commitment to do their part of the assignment.	Create a group Code of Ethics or Shared Expectations document that outlines what each group member agrees to do.
Group members don't show up or do not respond to communication.	Develop guidelines regarding missed meetings or lack of communication and implement consequences.

Understanding Group Dynamics

One way to improve your work in groups is to learn more about group dynamics and stages. Bruce Tuckman[1] (1965) developed a model of group development. His initial four phases are forming, storming, norming and performing. In the **forming** phase, group members learn more about the task they must complete as well as getting to know each other. For the most part, members act and think individually and may be polite or quiet when trying to make decisions about what needs to be done. Group conflict arises in the **storming** phase when roles are assigned and a leader emerges. Some members may not voice their concerns and suffer from internal (and unexpressed) conflict while others may openly argue about what needs to be done. Groups may skip this phase altogether if communication is clear and roles are assigned to interest and strengths. The next phase is **norming**, or when group members work collectively to help each other achieve their goal. Members are aware of how their part fits into the whole and are mindful of supporting each other. The last phase is **performing** and is marked by members' competence and confidence to complete goals.

Some groups revert to previous phases when there is unresolved conflict or when communication breaks down. The goal of group work is not to have a conflict-free experience, but to learn how to negotiate challenges, concerns, and changes during the process. When group members set common goals, create clear expectations, and communicate regularly, they are less likely to experience insurmountable obstacles.

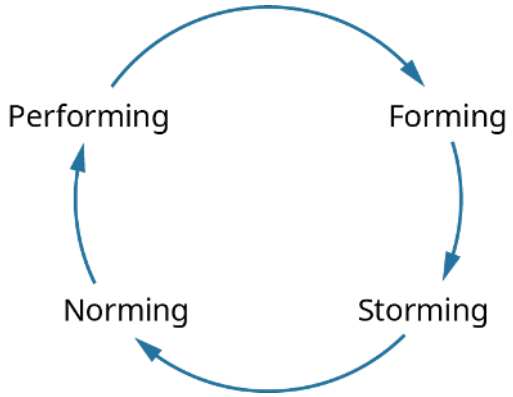


Figure 57.2 Tuckman's (1965) Model of Group Development

Setting Up Your Group for Success

Review Assignment

If we use the Tuckman (1965) model, we can anticipate the steps for creating a successful group. First, review the assignment and ensure that everyone understands the scope of the work, especially the expectations of the final product. Take some time to discuss what the parts of the assignment are and what the expected outcome should be. Will you be writing a paper? Will you be presenting original research? Will you need special equipment, technology, or software to complete the project? Get clarity on the assignment before you get too far into the work.

Choose Roles

Next, your group should determine roles. You may want to first determine the leader, or you may decide to share leadership between two members or choose a "second in command" should the leader not be able to fulfill the duties. Then, you will need to set roles and responsibilities for everyone else in the group. Be sure to discuss each other's strengths, weaknesses, and interests. Different types of group projects call for different roles, so you may need to pick and choose what is appropriate for your project. Table 57.2 provides examples of roles and responsibilities that you may consider when assigning roles.

Table 57.2 Roles and Responsibilities for Group Members

Role	Responsibilities
Leader	Ensures that everyone in the group works towards the objectives of the assignment and stays on task.
Recorder/Secretary	Takes notes and shares them with the group. Keeps track of the work that is completed.
Critic/Evaluator	Provides feedback and evaluation on work. May also play "devil's advocate" when discussing ideas.
Specialist	Uses strengths to take charge of one aspect of the project. Is responsible for coordinating with other specialists or the leader to meet group goals.
Task Leader/Timekeeper	Ensures that deadlines are met. Reorganizes work or renegotiates timelines if needed.
Energizer	Keeps the group's energy high to complete the work.
Completer/Finisher	Checks the work against the assignment or evaluation rubric to make sure all parts are completed correctly. May also serve as a proofreader/editor.

Create a Communication Plan

When you have assigned roles and responsibilities, your group should create a communication plan. Because college students have different schedules and obligations, you will find that a strong communication plan can make working together easier. You may find that you need to work asynchronously, or not at the same time, and clear communication expectations will help your group both in person and online run smoothly. Here are some questions to guide your communication plan:

- How will the group communicate primarily?
- What will be the back-up communication strategy?
- What will you do if a group member doesn't respond to or acknowledge messages?

If group members do not want to share personal phone numbers, then consider using email or a shared drive folder to message each other.

Write a Group Contract

To ensure that all members uphold their responsibilities, create a contract that lists all the expectations for the group. You can use a template or create your own based on the group members' roles, dynamics, and assignment requirements. A group contract can be helpful in managing conflict and directing group members should someone not do their part. Here are the components you will want to consider and an example below of a contract:

1. **Assignment reminders.** Include a description of the goal or project and the final deadline.
2. **General expectations or guiding principles.** Provide a list of general expectations or principles that will guide a successful group. For example, you may determine that acting respectfully, communicating honestly, and giving full effort are important group principles.
3. **Specific expectations or tasks.** List expectations about communicating, delegating, meeting, completing tasks, and managing conflict.
4. **Group members' signatures.** Include signatures or initials of the group members to underscore the importance of the contract.

Group Work Contract

gnment: Information literacy source evaluations and slide presentation on the following topic: Profit Prisons

date: Friday, April 12

ling Principles: The group members commit to the following principles:

ach member will participate fully in each meeting
ach member will do their best work
ach member will ask for help if they are unable to complete their task on time
ach member will seek to resolve conflicts as soon as they arise
ach member will communicate promptly and honestly and professionally
ach member will adhere to academic integrity principles

member will initial each statement below as an indication that they understand and will abide by e commitments.

ach member agrees to attend all meetings in person or online on time and for the duration of the mee
f a member is late or misses part of the meeting, they will [insert consequence].
f a member cheats or plagiarizes, they will be reported to the professor.
ach member agrees to complete all work on time and to the best of their ability.
f a member does not complete work or submits work late, they will [insert consequence].
ach member agrees to listen actively and communicate clearly and professionally.
f a member acts unprofessionally or contributes to a conflict, they will [insert consequence].

:_____

Name:
ature:

Name:
ature:

Name:
ature:

Name:
ature:

Figure 57.3 Sample Group Work Contract

APPLICATION

You have been assigned a group project in which you and three classmates must research the topic For-Profit Prisons over the next two weeks. For the assignment, your group must find 4 academic journals, two of which argue for and two which argue against for-profit prisons as necessary for managing the criminal population, and read them carefully. Using the 4 academic journals, your group will be writing a 3-page summary of the pro and con sides of the topic and creating a 6-slide presentation that shares the key highlights of each source. Create a contract for your group by assigning roles, developing a communication plan, and writing down key milestones to complete your assignment on time.

Roles: What roles will each of you play in the group? Consider the tasks that must be completed to determine what roles you need.

Group Member	Role	Responsibilities
Ex: Group Member 1	*Researcher*	*Search the topic in the library database. Find 4 articles (2 pro and 2 con). Assign each member an article to read.*

Communication Plan: How will the group communicate throughout the project? Consider creating a back-up plan.

Communication Plan	Expectations
Ex: We will use Group Me for scheduling meeting times and to provide updates	Each member will respond via Group Me when asked questions about meeting times or updates on their part of the project.

Key Milestones: How will you plan out the work and keep everyone on track? Be sure to include time to proofread, edit, and practice for the presentation.

Task	Person Responsible	Deadline
Ex: Choose articles to use for the project	*Researcher*	*No later than February 12*

Managing Conflict in Groups

Conflict during group work does not have to be inevitable. With proper planning, clear roles and responsibilities, and a communication plan, your group can minimize a majority of issues that can arise. However, it is important to recognize what kinds of conflict can derail group work and review what steps you can take to get back on course. Here are a few examples of common conflicts:

- **No leader.** When no leader emerges, it may be difficult to move forward. If this happens, each member may need to take a specific task and assume responsibility for that task. Group members who are not comfortable being the leader may also feel more comfortable with co-leaders.
- **Too many leaders.** Many people with good ideas can derail a group project. If there are too many people vying to influence the group's direction, ask all group members to speak openly about the conflict. The group may want to vote on who should assume the leadership positions or what direction the group should take if there are more than one good option.
- **Aggressiveness or hostility.** A group member who tries to take over the project or is openly hostile during the process can make the experience miserable for everyone involved. The leader should take action immediately when the issue arises by clearly naming the behavior, avoiding emotional language, asking the reasons behind the anger, and communicating a plan to move forward with the project. This may mean assigning the member to a specific and limited role, or, in extreme situations, removing (or asking to remove) the member from the group.
- **Lack of communication.** A group member who never responds to messages or who communicates inconsistently can make completing a group project very difficult. The leader should go back to the group contract and reach out to the member, preferably in writing, and describe the missing communication, the tasks that have not been completed, and what the group will be doing to move forward without the group member. Even if the group member never reads or responds to the message, the group will have evidence that they attempted to reach out.
- **Overpromising and underperforming.** A group member that takes on tasks, promises to do them well and on time, and consistently misses the mark should be talked with about the lack of work. A group member may need to take on their responsibilities to meet the deadline.
- **Low work quality.** If a member is not completing quality work, the group leader should step in to work with the other members to revise or edit the work, but the group should communicate with the member as to what has changed and why.

Most conflict occurs when there is a lack of communication about what is expected. Providing your group members with examples of how to deliver bad or difficult news (e.g., "I am not able to meet my deadline" or "I think I need help with my tasks") can help your members feel more comfortable when it does occur. Be sure to treat others respectfully and with kindness even if you are justifiably frustrated by your group members' actions or inactions.

APPLICATION

Your classmate Javier shows up for the in-person meetings, but has yet to complete any of his parts for the project. The rest of your group cannot move forward without his finished work, and you are getting nervous that your classmate's unfinished work will keep you from successfully completing the project on time. Write Garth a clear and kind message in which you explain what has happened from your observation, what you need from your classmate, when you need their work, and the consequence of their not completing their work by the deadline.

Dear Javier,

Completing the Project

The project is complete when all the steps have been taken to submit or present it successfully, but that is not the end of the group work. You will want to also debrief on what worked and what could have been improved. Consider calling a brief meeting to review the process of completing the project or to review your graded work. Ask your group members what they felt were the group's strengths and weaknesses. Use the debriefing to think about how to make changes to the process the next time you work in a group. Spend some time reflecting on what skills you still need to improve and how you can make the most of future group work.

Summary

Developing healthy relationships and expanding your network of support are both important tasks for you to do in college. Without these relationships, your experience may be lackluster at best and lonely and difficult at worst. The first step to creating meaningful connections is to be healthy yourself and acknowledging the importance of community. There are also some ways you can jumpstart a relationship by improving your "small talk" skills. You will develop many relationships with different people while you are in college, but one of the most important is with your professors. Be sure to find ways to connect with them in and out of class. You will also want to be mindful of connecting with classmates, peers, mentors, and advisors as they will all be important to your network for success and support. Finally, there is no better way to really get to know others than when you work with them to complete a goal or a project. While group work strikes fear in some students, it doesn't have to be a conflict-ridden endeavor. Consider what you can do to anticipate challenges and make the process as smooth as possible.

To make the most of the relationships that you will develop or strengthen, consider what else about relationships and working with others that you would like to improve. Choose one of the following to explore further this term:

- Create a self-care routine that you incorporate into your weekly tasks. Read, watch, or listen to articles, books, videos, and podcasts about self-awareness, self-reflection, mindfulness, and stress reduction. These resources can help you build your self-care toolkit.
- Find ways to connect to your community through organizations, clubs, events, and volunteer opportunities. Work on developing a solid sense of belonging academically, socially, and campuswide.
- Get to know at least one professor this term and begin to build your support network of classmates, peers, mentors, and advisors. Commit to reaching out to people to begin developing relationships.
- Talk with your family and friends about what kinds of support you would like from them while you are in college. Be clear about your needs.
- Create a system for managing group work that includes assigning roles, setting goals, and developing communication expectations.

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Modifications: Changed name of classmate in Application, renumbered figures and tables.

1. Tuckman, Bruce W (1965). "Developmental sequence in small groups". Psychological Bulletin. 63 (6): 384–399. doi:10.1037/h0022100. PMID 14314073. ↵

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7.5: Verbal and Non-verbal Communication

Rebecca Heibert

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- understand the cultural impact of different styles of verbal communication, including direct and indirect styles;
- recognize the importance of non-verbal communication.

Why Is This Important?

Communication is culturally dependent. The way that a person uses verbal and non-verbal communication impacts the message they deliver to others as well as how they perceive messages that they receive from others. It is important to be aware of how your verbal and non-verbal communication differs from those around you so that you can adapt your messages to reduce miscommunications and misunderstandings.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is the words and language a person uses to communicate. Words and language are culturally dependent and they send a message about where a person is from. When a person uses the same words and language as those in their group they feel part of a bigger whole; however, when that person is around people from a different group, who are speaking differently from themselves, they feel like an outsider.

What would your life be like if you had been raised in a country other than the one where you grew up? You would have learned another set of customs, values, traditions, and different language patterns and ways of communicating. You would be a different person who communicated in different ways.

Cultural rules about when and how certain speech acts can be performed may differ greatly. In some cultures, speech is highly valued, and it is important to be articulate and well-spoken in personal as well as public settings. People in cultures like Canada tend to use language as a powerful tool to discover and express truth, as well as to extend themselves and have an impact on others. In Canada, people tend to take silence as a sign of indifference, indignation, objection, and even hostility. The silence confuses and confounds Canadians since it is so different from expected behaviour. Many are even embarrassed by silence and feel compelled to fill the silence with words so they are no longer uncomfortable. Or, if a question is not answered immediately, people are concerned that the speaker may think that they do not know the answer.

Direct vs. Indirect

Whether a person communicates directly or indirectly is dependent on their culture. Cultures with direct styles ask for more information, whereas cultures with indirect styles may not feel comfortable either giving or asking for information. If an instructor from a verbally *direct* culture receives a poorly written assignment, they might say, “You have made many errors in this report. Go back and proofread this report to check for errors.” A verbally *indirect* instructor who receives a poorly written report, might say, “Readers may have questions about this report. Can you check this over one more time?” Good intercultural communication involves slowing down and increasing your awareness about the intended meaning from other people’s messages. You should listen and observe how others get information from one another. Remember to watch for variations impacted by status and relationship.

Direct styles are those in which verbal messages reveal the speaker’s true intentions, needs, wants, and desires. The focus is on accomplishing a task. The message is clear and to the point, without hidden intentions or implied meanings. The communication tends to be impersonal. Conflict is discussed openly and people say what they think. In Canada, professional correspondence is expected to be short and to the point. “What can I do for you?” is a common question when a business person receives a call from a stranger; it is an accepted way of asking the caller to state their business.

Indirect styles are those in which communication is often designed to hide or minimize the speaker’s true intentions, needs, wants, and desires. Communication tends to be personal and focuses on the relationship between the speakers. The language may be subtle and the speaker may be looking for a “softer” way to communicate a problem by providing many contextual cues. A hidden

meaning may be embedded into the message because harmony and “saving face” is more important than truth and confrontation. In indirect cultures, long before the topic of business is raised, business conversations may start with discussions of the weather, family, or sports, as the partners gain a sense of each other.

Multiple Perspectives

Direct vs. Indirect in Canada

Communities in Canada tend to speak in a more **direct** manner. This means college students are generally expected to:

- front-load the message by stating the main idea at the beginning (for good news);
- ask their instructor a question when they don’t understand;
- tell group members why they need to reschedule a group meeting;
- ask their instructor for an extension on an assignment before the assignment is due.

Even though direct communication is accepted in North America, when bad or negative news is being shared, a more **indirect** style is preferred. You must add softeners to your language to cushion the negative message. This means college students are generally expected to:

- share a compliment or appreciation before stating the bad news and state the bad news at the end of the message;
- make requests instead of demands, such as, “*Would it be possible to* get an extension on this assignment?” instead of, “*Give* me an extension on this assignment”;
- use softeners to cushion the phrase, such as, “*I wonder if it would be a good idea to* switch assignment topics?” instead of, “*We have to* switch assignment topics.”



Figure 58.1 A person sitting on a couch communicating with someone across the room. Image Source: Unsplash

Non-verbal Communication

Understanding non-verbal communication is important and challenging. It’s important because much meaning is conveyed non-verbally, and challenging because non-verbal communication is often multi-channeled and culturally specific.

Human beings all have the capacity to make the same gestures and expressions, but not all of those gestures and expressions have the same meaning across cultures. Types of non-verbal communication vary considerably based on culture and country of origin. Every culture interprets posture, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, vocal noises, and use of space differently. Non-verbal communication contributes a large part to the message the listener receives. Sometimes we put a lot of effort into choosing the words we use when communicating; however, it is really our body language that is influencing the message the receiver is getting.

Types of Non-verbal Communication

- **Movements**: We use facial expressions, gestures, and posture to enhance our message.
- **Eye contact**: We use our eyes to express emotion, show respect, and demonstrate that we are listening.
- **Physical appearance**: We use our clothing, hair style, and personal grooming to communicate our power level in a particular environment.
- **Proxemics**: We use proximity to the person we are interacting with to communicate relationship level. People from diverse cultures may have different normative space expectations. If you are from a large urban area, having people stand close to you may be normal. If you are from a culture where people expect more space, someone may be standing "too close" to you for comfort and not know it. We recognize the basic need for personal space, but the normative expectations for space vary greatly by culture.

Multiple Perspectives

Non-verbal Communication in Canada

In Canada, a person's non-verbal body language communicates a lot of information to the listener. This means that college students are generally expected to:

- make eye contact to show that they are interested and confident;
- maintain a well groomed, professional appearance with business-casual attire in order to demonstrate respect for the college environment;
- adjust their distance from the listener depending on familiarity.
    - In Canada, intimate space ranges from 0-18 inches. Personal space is the distance we occupy during encounters with friends and ranges from 18 inches to 4 feet. Many people use social space in social situations or with strangers, and this ranges from 4 to 12 feet. In public space, when among strangers, the distance ranges from 12 feet and beyond.

Indigenous cultures may view holding eye contact as a sign of disrespect and/or think it is unimportant when showing that the listener is paying attention.

Communicating Between Cultures

In college you will be communicating with people from many different cultures. Try adapting to other people's communication preferences. Notice how long a turn people take when speaking, how quickly or slowly they speak, how direct or indirect they are, and how much they appear to want to talk compared to you. You may also need to learn and practice cultural norms for non-verbal behaviours, including eye contact, power distance, and touch. Avoid mimicking people directly but instead take note of their behaviours, consider their perspectives, and think about how you can adapt your behaviour to match the culture of your surroundings.

Key Takeaways

Verbal communication (the words and language we use) and non-verbal communication (the facial expressions and body language we use) are culturally dependent and send specific messages to the receiver. As we interact with people from diverse groups, it is important to adapt our verbal and non-verbal communication styles to clearly communicate our message to the listener.

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Hiebert, R. & Jackson, E. (2023). Verbal and Non-verbal Communication.in *College Success for Newcomers.*

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Modifications: Renumbered figure. Removed exercise (formatting issue after content transfer).

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7.6: Active Listening

Erika Torgeson

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, work meetings) and where interaction is limited (lectures, podcasts, vlogs). In interactive situations, you should apply the basic principles of active listening. These are not hard concepts to understand, but they are hard to implement and require practice to use them effectively.

Pin It! Principles of Active Listening

- Focus on what is being said. Give the speaker your undivided attention. Clear your mind of anything else. Do not prejudge. You want to understand what the person is saying; you do not need to agree with it.
- Repeat what you just heard. Confirm with the speaker that what you heard is what he or she said.
- Ask the speaker to expand or clarify. If you are unsure you understand, ask questions; do not assume.
- 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."
- 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 59.1 Listening With Your Whole Body

Take out a piece of paper and create two columns – a left and right column

Think of a person you consider an excellent listener. Picture that person clearly in your mind. Focus on what they do, not what they are saying. Describe what actions and postures they use to show how they are 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 they do, not what they are saying. Describe what actions and postures they use to show they are 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.

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Torgeson, E. (2020). Active Listening. In *Introduction to College and Strategies for Success.* College of the Canyons.

Modifications: Activity renumbered.

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7.7: Interpersonal Skills

Jason Wrench; Narissra Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine Thweatt

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the skills associated with effective interpersonal skills.
2. Explain how to improve interpersonal skills.
3. Describe the principles of ethical communication.

Listening Skills

The most important part of communication is not the actual talking, but the listening part. If you are not a good listener, then you will not be a good communicator. One must engage in mindful listening. Mindful listening is when you give careful and thoughtful attention to the messages that you receive. People will often listen mindfully to important messages or to people that matter most. Think about how happy you get when you are talking to someone you really love or maybe how you pay more attention to what a professor says if they tell you it will be on the exam. In each of these scenarios, you are giving the speaker your undivided attention. Most of our listening isn't mindful, but there will be times where it will be important to listen to what others are telling us so that we can fulfill our personal and/or professional goals.

People Skills

People skills are a set of characteristics that will help you interact well with others. These skills are most important in group situations and where cooperation is needed. These skills can also relate to how you handle social situations. They can make a positive impact on career advancement but also in relationship development. One of the most essential people skills to have is the ability to understand people. Being able to feel empathy or sympathy to another person's situation can go a long way. By putting yourself in other people's shoes and understanding their hardships or differences, you can put things into perspective. It can help you build a stronger and better interpersonal relationship.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to recognize your own emotions and the emotions of others. Emotionally intelligent people can label their feelings appropriately and use this information to guide their behavior. EQ is highly associated with the ability to empathize with others. Furthermore, EQ can help people connect interpersonally. Research has demonstrated that people with higher levels of EQ are more likely to succeed in the workplace and have better mental health. They are often better leaders and effective managers of conflict.

Appropriate Skill Selection

The best interpersonal communicators are the ones who can use the appropriate skill in certain contexts. For instance, if it is a somber event, then they might not laugh. Or if it is a joyful occasion, they might not cry hysterically, unless they are tears of joy. The best politicians can sense the audience and determine what skills would be appropriate for which occasion. We know that humor can be beneficial in certain situations. However, humor can also be inappropriate for certain people. It is essential to know what skill is appropriate to use and when it is necessary to use it.

Communicating Ethically

The last interpersonal skill involves communication ethics. We have seen several people in the business world that have gotten in trouble for not communicating ethically. It is important to be mindful of what you say to others. You do not want people to think you are deceptive or that you are lying to them. Trust is a hard thing to build. Yet, trust can be taken away from you very quickly. It is essential that every time you communicate, you should consider the ethics behind your words. As we will see throughout this book, words matter! So, what does it mean to communicate ethically interpersonally? Thankfully, the National Communication Association has created a general credo for ethical communication.[35] The subheadings below represent the nine statements created by the National Communication Association to help guide conversations related to communication ethics.

We advocate truthfulness, accuracy, honesty, and reason as essential to the integrity of communication.

The first statement in the credo for ethical communication is one that has taken on a lot more purpose in the past few years, being truthful. We live in a world where the blurring of fact and fiction, real-life and fantasy, truth and lies, real news and fake news, etc.

has become increasingly blurry. The NCA credo argues that ethical communication should always strive towards truth and integrity. As such, it's important to consider our interpersonal communication and ensure that we are not spreading lies.

We endorse freedom of expression, diversity of perspective, and tolerance of dissent to achieve the informed and responsible decision making fundamental to a civil society.

You don't have to agree with everyone. In fact, it's perfectly appropriate to disagree with people and do so in a civilized manner. So much of our interpersonal communication in the 21st Century seems to have become about shouting, "I'm right, you're wrong." As such, it's important to remember that it's possible for many different vantage points to have equal value. From an ethical perspective, it's very important to listen to others and not immediately start thinking about our comebacks or counter-arguments. When we're only focused on our comebacks and counter-arguments, then we're not listening effectively. Now, we are not arguing that people should have the right to their own set of facts. As we discussed in the previous statement, we believe in facts and think the idea of "alternative facts" is horrific. But often, people's experiences in life lead them to different positions that can be equally valid.

We strive to understand and respect other communicators before evaluating and responding to their messages.

Along with what was discussed in the previous statement, it's important to approach our interpersonal interactions from a position of understanding and respect. Part of the mindfulness approach to interpersonal communication that we've advocated for in this book involves understanding and respect. Too many people in our world today immediately shut down others with whom they disagree without ever giving the other person a chance. We know that it can be tough to listen to messages that you strongly disagree with, but we can still disagree and, at the end of the day, respect each other.

We promote access to communication resources and opportunities as necessary to fulfill human potential and contribute to the well-being of individuals, families, communities, and society.

As communication scholars, we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to improve their communication. One of the reasons we've written this book is because we believe that all students should have access to an interpersonal communication textbook that is free. Furthermore, we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to develop their interpersonal communication skills, listening skills, presentation skills, and social skills. Ultimately, developing communication skills helps people in their interpersonal relationships and makes them better people as a whole. According to Sherwyn Morreale, Joseph Valenzano, and Janessa Bauer:

> *Communication can help couples connect on a deeper level and feel more satisfied with their relationships. Additionally, competent communication strengthens bonds among family members and helps them cope with conflict and stressful situations. Communication gives family members the tools they need to express their feelings and address their concerns in a constructive way, which ultimately helps when conflicts and stressful situations arise… Better interpersonal communication can improve the social health of a community by strengthening relationships among various community members.*[36]

We promote communication climates of caring and mutual understanding that respect the unique needs and characteristics of individual communicators.

As communicators, we need to take a two-pronged approach to our interpersonal interactions. First, we need to care about the needs of others. We need to understand that our communication can either build people up or tear them down. We should strive to build people up through our interactions with them. This doesn't mean that there aren't times when you have to tell people that they're wrong, but there are ways of doing this that correct people without attacking their self-esteem.

Second, we need to strive for mutual understanding. As we've learned in this chapter, a lot of things can make communication with each other very difficult. However, we should strive to ensure that our messages are interpreted correctly by others and that we're interpreting others' messages correctly as well. We should avoid jumping to conclusions and assuming that someone's messages are always ill-intended.

We condemn communication that degrades individuals and humanity through distortion, intimidation, coercion, and violence, and through the expression of intolerance and hatred.

We believe that any communication that degrades another person should be seen as reprehensible by everyone. For many of us, it's easy for us to clearly label obvious hate messages as disgusting (e.g., anti-immigrant signs, burning crosses, racist graffiti, etc.). However, many people engage in biased language without really realizing that it's happening.

We are committed to the courageous expression of personal convictions in pursuit of fairness and justice.

We live in a world where injustices are still very prevalent. From anti-immigrant rhetoric to laws preventing medical treatment for transgender people, we believe that it's important for people to pursue fairness and justice in our world today. As such, all of us need to remember this when we are interacting with others. Whether it's remembering to call someone by their preferred pronouns or supporting individuals seeking equal rights and protection under the law, we should help those individuals.

We advocate sharing information, opinions, and feelings when facing significant choices while also respecting privacy and confidentiality.

We live in a world where we faced with innumerable choices about the future. As I'm writing this, I'm currently in self-imposed quarantine during the coronavirus outbreak of Spring 2020. During this period, we've all become used to the term "social distancing," or avoiding large crowds of people and keeping at least six feet from others in public. During this period, there are a lot of strong opinions and feelings on this subject. When it comes to our interpersonal interactions, it's important for people to share information, opinions, and feelings and not have them immediately dismissed. Again, this is not to say that we believe that people should have the right to their own facts, but people should be allowed to express their own opinions and feelings.

In addition to sharing information, opinions, and feelings, it's important to remember to respect people's privacy and confidentiality. Not everything we hear from another person is meant to be broadcast openly to the world. It's important to remember not to tell other people's business.

We accept responsibility for the short- and long-term consequences for our own communication and expect the same of others.

Lastly, the National Communication Association's Credo for Ethical Communication advocates that people take responsibility for the consequences of their communication. If you say something that hurts someone else's feelings, it's important to recognize that and apologize. If we accidentally spread false information, it's important to correct the facts when we learn them.

Rodrick Hart and Don Burks coined the term "rhetorical sensitivity" to help explain awareness of our own communicative behaviors. According to Hart and Burks,

> *The rhetorically sensitive person (a) tries to accept role-taking as part of the human condition, (b) attempts to avoid stylized verbal behavior, (c) is characteristically willing to undergo the strain of adaptation, (d) seeks to distinguish between all information and that information acceptable for communication, and (e) tries to understand that an idea can be rendered in multi-form ways.*

When it comes to the ethicality of our communicative choices, it's important to be rhetorically sensitive to more fully understand the short- and long-term consequences that arise from our communicative behaviors.

Key Takeaways

- Skills associated with effective interpersonal communication are listening skills, people skills, emotional intelligence, appropriate skill selection, and ethical communication.
- Improving interpersonal communication skills requires practice and deliberate effort. The ability to identify problems and select appropriate communication skills is key to effective interpersonal communication.
- A set of principles guides ethical communication. These principles teach us that we must respect others, attempt to see the viewpoint of others, take responsibility for our communication, and make an effort to continually improve upon our skills.

Exercises

- Recall a situation in which you experienced conflict. Now that you know some approaches to effective interpersonal communication evaluate the experience your recalled and write down what you could have done differently.

- Recall a situation in which your confidence has been broken. In other words, you asked someone to keep a secret and they didn't. How did this make you feel? In what situations is it acceptable to violate the confidence of another person?
- We all do something well in relation to communication. What are your best communication skills? In what areas would you like to improve?

Key Terms

action model

attending

channel

emotional intelligence

environment

ethics

feedback

interaction model

interpreting

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

model

noise

organizing

perception

receiver

self-concept

source

transactional model

uncertainty reduction theory

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7.8: Mass Media Communication

Enyonam Osei-Hwere and Patrick Osei-Hwere



Figure 61.1. Bronze bust of John Dewey sculpted by Jacob Epstein, 1927. Photo by user known as Cliff, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

More than one hundred years ago, John Dewey wrote in *Democracy and Education* that society is not only supported by various forms of communication but also enveloped in communication. Dewey reiterated what philosophers and scholars had noted for centuries: small groups, larger communities and vast institutions — all the things that make up a **society** — function in relation to how communication flows within and between groups.

There are different forms of communication. At the broadest level, **communication** is an exchange of meaning between people using symbols. The most common symbols we use are verbal and written words, but there are also many forms of nonverbal communication such as American Sign Language. What sign language, verbal communication and written communication have in common is the use of abstract symbols to convey meaning. Whether you say “thank you” in face-to-face communication, send someone a card with the words “thank you” written on it, or use nonverbal cues to express thanks, the meaning is the same.

Interpersonal communication generally refers to the exchange of meaning between two or more people on a personal, often one-on-one, level. Interpersonal communication can be verbal or nonverbal. Most often, it happens in face-to-face settings. It differs from **mass communication**, which involves sharing meaning through symbolic messages to a wide audience from one source to many receivers. Sometimes, particularly in **computer-mediated communication**, messages conveyed using computers, it can be difficult to tell the difference between interpersonal communication and mass communication because individuals can send messages intended only for other individuals that might quickly reach large numbers of people. Social media platforms are often structured in ways that allow interpersonal messages to “go viral” and become mass messages whether the original sender intended to address a mass audience or not.

It is not the type of message that determines interpersonal or mass communication. It is the way the message is distributed and the relationships between sender and receiver(s). This text will continue to grapple with the overlap of interpersonal communication and mass communication structures on networked communication platforms, but first, another form of communication commonly studied in academic settings should be introduced.

Organizational communication is the symbolic exchange of messages carrying specific meaning for members belonging to formal organizations. In practical terms, it is the internal communication that helps governments, businesses, schools and hospitals to run.

People working together in organizations get usually things done by communicating directly with one another or in small groups. Organizations cannot function without communication. Organizational communication effectiveness can influence the success or failure of businesses and other social institutions. Thus, communication does not merely happen within organizations; it is an essential part of the way they are structured. Organizational communication is a separate field of study, introduced well in this video:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=415#oembed-1

Successful communication, whether intended for personal use, for use within an organization, or for a wide audience, can help people to understand each other and to get things done.

If good organizational communication is necessary for groups to function with a formal purpose, mass communication is essential for societies to function. Societies are made up of formal organizations of various sizes. Usually, the larger the group, the more complex its communication structures.

Communication structure refers to a combination of information and communication technologies (ICTs), guidelines for using those technologies, and professional workers dedicated to managing information and messages. In the mass communication field, communication structures are more than computers and transmission networks. The guidelines for using networks to create and distribute messages for mass consumption are a matter of corporate policy as well as law.

It has been noted that a society is made up of small groups, larger communities, and vast institutions. A more complete definition of the term comes from the field of sociology. A **society** is a very large group of people organized into institutions held together over time through formalized relationships. Nations, for example, are made up of formal institutions organized by law. Governments of different size, economic institutions, educational institutions and others all come together to form a society.

By comparison, **culture** — the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of groups large and small **—** is not necessarily formalized. Culture is necessary for enjoying and making sense of the human experience, but there are few formalized rules governing culture.

Mass communication influences both society and culture. Different societies have different media systems, and the way they are set up by law influences how the society works. Different forms of communication, including messages in the mass media, give shape and structure to society. Additionally, mass media outlets can spread cultural knowledge and artistic works around the globe. People exercise cultural preferences when it comes to consuming media, but mass media corporations often decide which stories to tell and which to promote, particularly when it comes to forms of mass media that are costly to produce such as major motion pictures, major video game releases and global news products.

More than any other, the field of mass communication transmits culture. At the same time, it helps institutional society try to understand itself and whether its structures are working.

The Mass Media Dynamic

The mass media system is an institution itself. What sets it apart is its potential to influence the thinking of massive numbers of individuals. In fact, the ideas exchanged in organizational communication and interpersonal communication are often established, reinforced or negated by messages in the mass media. This is what it means for societies “to exist in transmission, in communication.” Different types of communication influence each other.

But the mass media are also shaped and influenced by social groups and institutions. This is the nature of the mass media dynamic.

Individuals and groups in society influence what mass media organizations produce through their creativity on the input side and their consumption habits on the output side. It is not accurate to say that society exists within the mass media or under mass media “control.” Social structures are too powerful for mass media to completely govern how they operate. But neither is it accurate to say that the mass media are contained within societies. Many mass media products transcend social structures to influence multiple societies, and even in societies that heavily censor their mass media the news of scandals and corruption can get out. The mass media and society are bound together and shape each other.

Almost everything you read, see and hear is framed within a mass media context; however, mere familiarity is no guarantee of success. Products in the mass media that fail to resonate with audiences do not last long, even if they seem in tune with current tastes and trends.

The Mass Communication Origin Story

In his book, John notes how, in the early 20th century, the mass media were beginning to connect large institutions in new ways. The production of mass media messages accelerated with the development of the telegraph and the popular newspaper. The spread of telegraph technology that began in the mid-1800s continued through the early 1900s to network the globe with a nearly instantaneous information transmission system. Much of the growth of newspapers occurred as a result of improvements in telegraph technology.

Thus, a primary function of the global mass communication system is to save time. People have a need to understand what is going on in the world, and they desire entertainment. Global electronic telecommunication networks collapse space by transmitting messages in much less time than the older, physical delivery systems.

The dynamic between society and mass media that is so prevalent today developed throughout the 20th century. Starting near the end of the 1800s, communication flows began to move at electronic speeds. More people knew *about* more things than ever before, but scholars are quick to point out that communication is not synonymous with understanding.

Dewey wanted to focus on educating people so that they could live and work well in societies heavily shaped by global telecommunication networks. For him, education was the meaning of life and the global information and communication system needed to be molded into an educational tool. Many of us still hold out hope for Dewey's educational goals, but as ICTs have advanced over the past century or two, it has become clear that the mere existence of global mass communication networks does not ensure that societies will learn to coexist and thrive.

This can be difficult for people to acknowledge. Shortly after the widespread dissemination of the telegraph, the radio, broadcast television and public internet access, some form of communication utopia was imagined or even expected. The telegraph collapsed space. Radio enabled instantaneous mass communication. Television brought live images from one side of the globe to the other for even larger mass audiences, and internet access gave individuals the power to be information senders, not just receivers. At each step hope and imagination flourished, but social and cultural clashes persisted. Communication systems can be used as weapons. The evolution of mass communication tools is the story of increased capacity to do the same good and evil things people have always done in societies and between them.

Looking beyond technological utopianism — the idea that new technologies (particularly ICTs) will lead to greater social understanding and better conditions for the global population — we are left with a tedious but massively meaningful project. We must find ways to coexist with other societies even as we are constantly aware of our differences and of possible threats that may have existed before but now are much easier to see.

Perhaps if we are to make the best of our digital global communication network, it would help to track the evolution of different forms of mass communication. This text very briefly touched on the continuum from telegraph to widespread internet adoption, but the first mass medium was ink on paper.

The First Mass Medium

The first global medium, besides the spoken word, was neither the internet nor the telegraph. In fact, it was not a mass medium at all. It was paper. Via trade routes, messages in the form of letters moved around the world in a matter of weeks or months. It was global communication, but it was slow.

The development of a global telegraph network made it possible for messages to spread in minutes. When the telegraph was wed to mass-consumed newspapers, the world saw the rise of *fast, global, mass* communication that had the power to potentially influence large groups of people at once.

Books transmitted messages widely and inspired literacy, but they did not establish a channel for consistent, timely communication meant for mass audiences. After the Gutenberg printing press was developed around 1440, the Gutenberg Bible was slowly mass produced and disseminated around the Western world. It opened up access to sacred texts that had been bound up for centuries by large institutions like the Roman Catholic Church, and its dissemination helped fuel the Protestant Reformation. Still, it was an outlier. Most other books, even those that were mass produced from around the 1500s to the 1800s were not disseminated as widely as the Gutenberg Bible. They were simply too expensive.

Nevertheless, mass literacy slowly paved the way for mass newspaper readership to emerge in the 20th century. After the telegraph was invented and developed for wide-scale use and after the cost of printing newspapers dropped, publishers could share news from around the globe with mass audiences. The newspaper, specifically the penny press, was the first mass medium.


THE PENNY PAPER.

Figure 61.2. The front page of the Cincinnati Penny Paper from Monday, May 16, 1881. From: George Edward Stevens' article "From Penny Paper to Post and Times-Star: Mr. Scripps' First Link" in the *Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin* No. 27, 1969, public domain. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

What distinguished the **penny press** was affordability. These papers were published in tabloid format, which used small-sized pages and was cheaper to produce. Penny papers were written for and read by working class audiences starting in about the 1830s. They covered all manner of current events. Soon, major institutions such as political parties and unions developed their own papers to cover the topics that suited their agendas and to promote the cultural values that they held dear.

Mass Media Growth and Consolidation

As mass production of all sorts of manufactured goods grew during the 20th century, so did advertising budgets and the concept of brands. Brand advertising became fuel for the mass media, and as profitability rose, newspapers were bought up and organized into chains throughout the 20th century. Many newspapers grew their audience as they merged.

Partisan papers gave way to a brand of news that strived for objectivity. The profit motive mostly drove the change. To attract a mass audience, newspapers had to represent various points of view. This pushed some of the most opinionated citizens, particularly strong advocates for workers, to the fringes of mass discourse. Some advocates developed alternative media offerings. Others went mostly unheard or plied their craft directly in politics.

At the same, throughout much of the 20th century, the journalism workforce became more professionalized. Professional **norms**, that is the written and unwritten rules guiding behavior decided on by people in a given field, evolved. Many full-time, paid professional journalists stressed and continue to stress the need to remain detached from the people they cover so that journalists can maintain the practice and appearance of objectivity. Journalists emphasized objectivity in order to remain autonomous and to be perceived as truthful. The norm of objective reporting still strongly influences news coverage in newspapers as well as on most mainstream radio and television news networks.

That being said, the practice of maintaining objectivity is being called into question in our current hyper-partisan political media environment. Other strategies for demonstrating truthfulness require journalists to be transparent about how they do their work, about who owns their media outlets, and about what investments and personal views they may have.

At the heart of the ethical discussion for professional journalists is a sort of battle between the need to be autonomous to cover news accurately with minimal bias and the need to be socially responsible. **Social responsibility** in the study of journalism ethics is a specific concept referring to the need for media organizations to be responsible for the possible repercussions of the news they produce. The debate goes on even as more and more platforms for mass communication are developed.

Beyond advancements in ink-on-paper newspapers (including the development of color offset printing), technological developments have contributed to the diversification of mass media products. Photography evolved throughout the 20th century as did motion picture film, radio and television technology. Other mass media presented challenges and competition for newspapers. Still, newspapers were quite a profitable business. They grew to their greatest readership levels in the middle-to-late 20th century, and their value was at its high point around the turn of the 21st century. Then came the internet.

Stewing in our Own Juices

With the rise of global computer networks, particularly high-speed broadband and mobile communication technologies, individuals gained the ability to publish their own work and to comment on mass media messages more easily than ever before. If mass communication in the 20th century was best characterized as a one-to-many system where publishers and broadcasters reached waiting audiences, the mass media made possible by digital information networks in the twenty-first have taken on a many-to-many format.

For example, YouTube has millions of producers who themselves are also consumers. None of the social media giants such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Qzone and Weibo (in China), Twitter, Reddit or Pinterest is primarily known for producing content. Instead, they provide platforms for users to submit their own content and to share what mass media news and entertainment companies produce. The result is that the process of deciding what people should be interested in is much more decentralized in the digital network mass media environment than it was in the days of an analog one-to-many mass media system.

The process of making meaning in society — that is, the process of telling many smaller stories that add up to a narrative shared by mass audiences — is now much more collaborative than it was in the 20th century because more people are consuming news in networked platforms than through the channels managed by **gatekeepers**. A mass media gatekeeper is someone, professional or not, who decides what information to share with mass audiences and what information to leave out.

Fiction or non-fiction, every story leaves something out, and the same is true for shows made up of several stories, such as news broadcasts and heavily edited reality television. Gatekeepers select what mass audiences see, and then edit or disregard the rest. The power of gatekeepers may be diminished in networks where people can decide for themselves what topics they care most

about, but there is still an important gatekeeping function in the mass media since much of what is ultimately shared on social media platforms originates in the offices and studios of major media corporations.

On social media platforms, media consumers have the ability to add their input and criticism, and this is an important function for users. Not only do we have a say as audience members in the content we would like to see, read and hear, but we also have an important role to play in society as voting citizens holding their elected officials accountable.

If social media platforms were only filled with mass media content, individual user comments, and their own homegrown content, digitally networked communication would be complex enough, but there are other forces at work. Rogue individuals, hacker networks and **botnets —** computers programmed to create false social media accounts, websites and other digital properties **—** can contribute content alongside messages produced by professionals and legitimate online community members. False presences on social media channels can amplify hate and misinformation and can stoke animosity between groups in a hyper-partisan media age.

Around the world, societies have democratized mass communication, but in many ways, agreeing on a shared narrative or even a shared list of facts is more difficult than ever. Users create **filter bubbles** for themselves where they mostly hear the voices and information that they want to hear. This has the potential to create opposing worldviews where users with different viewpoints not only have differing opinions, but they also have in mind completely different sets of facts creating different images about what is happening in the world and how society should operate.

When users feel the need to defend their filtered worldviews, it is quite harmful to society.

De-massification

The infiltration of bots on common platforms is one issue challenging people working in good faith to produce accurate and entertaining content and to make meaning in the mass media. De-massification is another. Professionals working on mass-market media products now must fight to hold onto mass audiences. **De-massification** signifies the breakdown of mass media audiences. As the amount of information being produced and the number of channels on which news and other content can be disseminated grows exponentially, ready-made audiences are in decline.

In the future, it is anticipated that audiences, or fan bases, must be built rather than tapped into. One path to growing audiences in digital networks is to take an extreme point of view. Producers of news and entertainment information on the right and left of the political spectrum often rail against mainstream media as they promote points of view which are more or less biased. This kind of polarization along with the tendency of social media platforms to allow and even encourage people to organize along political lines likely contributes to de-massification as people organize into factions.

The future of some mass communication channels as regular providers of shared meaning for very large audiences is in question. That said, claims that any specific medium is “dead” are overblown. For example, newspaper readership, advertising revenue and employment numbers have been declining for about 25 years, but as of 2018, there are still more than 30 million newspaper subscribers. Mass audiences are shrinking and shifting, but they can still be developed.

Convergence

As mass audiences are breaking up and voices from the fringe are garnering outsized influence, the various types of media (audio, video, text, animation and the industries they are tied to) have come together on global computer and mobile network platforms in a process called **convergence**.

It is as though all media content is being tossed into a huge stew, one that surrounds and composes societies and cultures, and within this stew of information, people are re-organizing themselves according to the cultural and social concerns they hold most dear.

According to one hypothesis, in a society dominated by digital communication networks, people gather around the information they recognize and want to believe because making sense of the vast amount of information now available is impossible.

This text covers several mass media channels including social media, film, radio, television, music recording and podcasting, digital gaming, news, advertising, public relations and propaganda because these are still viable industries even as the content they produce appears more and more often on converged media platforms.

What we see emerging in networked spaces is a single mass media channel with a spectrum of possible text, photo, audio, video, graphic and game elements; however, the sites of professional production still mostly identify as one particular industry (such as radio and recorded music, film, television, cable television, advertising, PR, digital advertising or social media). Some of these are “legacy” media that have existed as analog industries prior to convergence, while others originated in digital media environments.

For the foreseeable future, we should expect legacy media producers to continue to hold formidable power as elements of larger media conglomerates, which acquired many media companies as a result of industry deregulation. We should also expect audiences to continue to fragment and digital media start-ups trying to build audiences out of fragmented communities to be common even if they are difficult to sustain.

What this means for social structures and for cultural production is disruption, limited perhaps by legacy media traditions and corporate power.

Melding Theories

The world of mass media has witnessed the convergence of media content on digital platforms, the ability of individuals to engage in one-to-many communication as though they were major broadcasters, and the emergence of structures that allow for many-to-many communication. These developments force us to rethink how separate interpersonal, organizational and mass communication truly are.

From a theoretical standpoint, these are well-established approaches to thinking about communication, but in practice, certain messages might fit into multiple categories. For example, a YouTube video made for a few friends might reach millions if it goes viral. Is it interpersonal communication, mass communication or both? Viral videos and memes spread to vast numbers of people but might start out as in-jokes between internet friends or trolls. The message's original meaning is often lost in this process. In a networked society, it can be difficult to differentiate between interpersonal and mass communication. For our purposes, it will be helpful to consider the message creator's intent.

As a user, it is essential to realize the possibility that interpersonal messages may be shared widely. As professionals, it also helps to realize that you cannot force a messge to go viral, although most social media platforms now engage in various kinds of paid promotion where brands and influential users can pay to have their content spread more widely more quickly.



Figure 61.3. Two women discuss a record album selection in a music shop in Amora, Portugal. Photo by Pedro Ribeiro Simões, CCBY. Source: Flikr.

We must also understand that advertisers treat digital communication platforms much the same way whether they appear to users to be interpersonal or mass media environments. Users can be targeted down to the individual on either type of platform, and advertisers (with the help of platform creators), can access mass audiences, even when users are intending only to participate on a platform for purposes of interpersonal communication.

Scholars are still working to define how these platforms mix aspects of interpersonal and mass communication. Here is one takeaway: If you are not paying to use a platform like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube (Google), Instagram or Snapchat, *you* are the product. It is your attention that is being sold to advertisers.

The Big Picture

Society functions when the mass media work well, and we tend not to think about the technologies or the professionals who make it all possible. Interpersonal communication can function with or without a massive technological apparatus. It is more convenient, though, to be able to text each another. When interpersonal communication breaks down, we have problems in our relationships. When organizational communication breaks down, it creates problems for groups and companies. But when mass communication breaks down, society breaks down.

Cultural Production

There is another way of looking at the mass media that needs to be mentioned after looking in some depth at the structural changes going on in and around the field of mass communication. Mass media channels are also huge engines of cultural production. That is, they make the entertainment that helps us define who we are as large and small groups of people. To quote from *Dead Poets Society*: "We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race, and the human race is filled with passion. Medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for." If you replace "reading and writing poetry" with "creating culture," you get a sense of the importance of cultural production. We can define culture as a collection of our knowledge, beliefs and practices. In practice, culture it how we express ourselves and enjoy life's experiences.

In media, there are three main types of cultural works, those associated with "high" culture, popular culture and folk culture. (Some scholars discuss "low" culture, but it is argued here that "low culture" is just another way of describing the low end of pop culture.)

High culture is arguably the best cultural material a society has to offer. Economic class often comes into play in defining what is "high culture" and what is not.

Pop culture is the vast array of cultural products that appeal to the masses.

Folk culture refers to cultural products borne out of everyday life identifiable because they usually have practical uses as well as artistic value. It is often associated with prehistoric cultures, but that is because the folk culture, pop culture and high culture of prehistoric peoples were often one and the same. Their best art may also have been an everyday object like a bowl or a basket or a doll or a mask. Don't confuse prehistoric art with modern folk art.

Modern folk art has the specific quality of trying to capture what is both beautiful *and useful* in everyday life.

Folk music tends to rely on "traditional" sounds and instruments. Topically, it focuses on the value of everyday existence. Folk music is often built around narratives that carry morals much the same way fairy tales do. Fairy tales are probably the best example of folk literature.

So much of the interpretation and the value of cultural production is culturally relative. This means that an object or work's value is determined by perceptions of people in different cultural groups.

In modern society, mass media often drive our perceptions. It is important to recognize that different cultures have different moral values and to acknowledge that some practices should be universally abhorred and stopped, even if they are partially or wholly accepted in other cultures.

The relationship between culture and mass media is complex; it is difficult to distinguish modern culture from how it appears in the various mass media. Culture in the developed world is spread through mass media channels. Just as society forms and is formed in part by messages in the mass media, so it goes with culture. Cultural products and their popularity can influence which media channels people prefer. Conversely, changes in media and ICTs can lead to changes in how we produce culture.

When we discuss digital culture, we will continue to break down different levels of culture and the relationship between cultural forms and mass communication in the networked communication age. To begin to understand the mass media, their role in society and how they shape culture and are shaped by cultural preferences, it helps to think about how the mass media may influence you.

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Media Communication, Convergence, and Literacy. Media, Society, Culture, and You. Access for free at: https://oer.pressbooks.pub/mediacommunication/chapter/chapter-1/

Osei-Hwere, E., & Osei-Hwere, P. Media, Society, Culture, and You. In Media Communication, Convergence, and Literacy.

Modifications: Numbered figures.

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7.9: Cross-Cultural Communication

Jason Wrench; Narissra Punyanunt-Carter; and Katherine Thweatt

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the importance of cultural intelligence.
2. Learn about metacognitive CQ.
3. Identify several different ways to create better intercultural interactions.

Become Culturally Intelligent

One of the latest buzz-words in the business world is "cultural intelligence," which was initially introduced to the scholarly community in 2003 by P. Christopher Earley and Soon Ang. In the past decade, a wealth of research has been conducted examining the importance of cultural intelligence during interpersonal interactions with people from other cultures. Cultural intelligence (CQ) is defined as an "individual's capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity."

Four Factors of Cultural Intelligence

In their original study on the topic, Earley and Ang argued that cultural intelligence is based on four distinct factors: cognitive, motivational, metacognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Before continuing, take a minute and complete the Cultural Intelligence Questionnaire in Table 62.1

Instructions: Read the following questions and select the answer that corresponds with your perception. Do not be concerned if some of the items appear similar. Please use the scale below to rate the degree to which each statement applies to you.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

_____1. When I'm interacting with someone from a differing culture, I know when I use my knowledge of that person's culture during my interactions.

_____2. When I interact with someone from a culture I know nothing about, I have no problem adjusting my perspective of their culture while we talk.

_____3. During intercultural interactions, I am well aware of the cultural knowledge I utilize.

_____4. I always check my knowledge of someone from another culture to ensure that my understanding of their culture is accurate.

_____5. During my intercultural interactions, I try to be mindful of how my perceptions of someone's culture are either consistent with or differ from reality.

_____6. I pride myself on knowing a lot about other people's cultures.

_____7. I understand the social, economic, and political systems of other cultures.

_____8. I know about other cultures' religious beliefs and values.

_____9. I understand how daily life is enacted in other cultures.

_____10. I know the importance of paintings, literature, and other forms of art in other cultures.

_____11. I enjoy reaching out and engaging in an intercultural encounter.

_____12. I would have no problem socializing with people from a new culture.

_____13. Although intercultural encounters often involve stress, I don't mind the stress because meeting people from new cultures makes it worth it.

_____14. I would have no problems accustoming myself to the routines of another culture.

_____15. I enjoy being with people from other cultures and getting to know them.

_____16. I know how to interact verbally with people from different cultures.

_____17. I know how to interact nonverbally with people from different cultures.

_____18. I can vary my rate of speech if an intercultural encounter requires it.

_____19. I can easily alter my behaviors to suit the needs of an intercultural encounter.

_____20. I can alter my facial expressions if an intercultural encounter requires it.

Scoring:

Add items 1-5 (Intercultural Understanding) = _____

Add items 6-10 (Intercultural Knowledge) = _____

Add items 7-15 (Intercultural Motivation) = _____

Add items 16-20 (Intercultural Behavior) = _____

Interpreting Your Scores:

Scores for each of the four factors (intercultural understanding, intercultural knowledge, intercultural motivation, and intercultural behavior) can be added together to get a composite score. Each of the four factors exists on a continuum from 5 (not culturally intelligent) to 25 (highly culturally intelligent). An average person would score between 12-18.

Based on:

Van Dyne, L., Ang, S., & Koh, C. (2008). Development and validation of the CQS: The Cultural Intelligence Scale. In S. Ang & L. Van Dyne (Eds.), *Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and application* (pp. 16-38). Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Table 62.1 Cultural Intelligence Questionnaire

Cognitive CQ

First, cognitive CQ involves knowing about different cultures (intercultural knowledge). Many types of knowledge about a culture can be relevant during an intercultural interaction: rules and norms, economic and legal systems, cultural values and beliefs, the importance of art within a society, etc.… All of these different areas of knowledge involve facts that can help you understand people from different cultures. For example, in most of the United States, when you are talking to someone, eye contact is very important. You may have even been told by someone to “look at me when I’m talking to you” if you’ve ever gotten in trouble. However, this isn’t consistent across different cultures at all. Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Native American cultures often view direct contact when talking to someone superior as a sign of disrespect. Knowing how eye contact functions across cultures can help you know more about how to interact with people from various cultures. Probably one of the best books you can read to know more about how to communicate in another culture is Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway’s book *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: The Bestselling Guide to Doing Business in More than 60 Countries*.

Motivational CQ

Second, we have motivational CQ, or the degree to which an individual desires to engage in intercultural interactions and can easily adapt to different cultural environments. Motivation is the key to effective intercultural interactions. You can have all the knowledge in the world, but if you are not motivated to have successful intercultural interactions, you will not have them.

Metacognitive CQ

Third, metacognitive CQ involves being consciously aware of your intercultural interactions in a manner that helps you have more effective interpersonal experiences with people from differing cultures (intercultural understanding). All of the knowledge about cultural differences in the world will not be beneficial if you cannot use that information to understand and adapt your behavior during an interpersonal interaction with someone from a differing culture. As such, we must always be learning about cultures but also be ready to adjust our knowledge about people and their cultures through our interactions with them.

Behavioral CQ

Lastly, behavioral CQ is the next step following metacognitive CQ, which is behaving in a manner that is consistent with what you know about other cultures. We should never expect others to adjust to us culturally. Instead, culturally intelligent people realize that

it's best to adapt our behaviors (verbally and nonverbally) to bridge the gap between people culturally. When we go out of our way to be culturally intelligent, we will encourage others to do so as well.

As you can see, becoming a truly culturally intelligent person involves a lot of work. As such, it's important to spend time and build your cultural intelligence if you are going to be an effective communicator in today's world.

Engaging Culturally Mindful Interactions

Admittedly, being culturally competent takes a lot of work and a lot of practice. Even if you're not completely culturally competent, you can engage with people from other cultures in a mindful way.

First, when it comes to engaging with people from other cultures, we need to be fully in the moment and not think about previous interactions with people from a culture or possible future interactions with people from a culture. Instead, it's essential to focus on the person you are interacting with. You also need to be aware of your stereotypes and prejudices that you may have of people from a different culture. Don't try to find evidence to support or negate these stereotypes or prejudices. If you focus on evidence-finding, you're just trying to satisfy your thoughts and feelings and not mindfully engaging with this other person. Also, if you find that your mind is shifting, recognize the shift and allow yourself to re-center on your interaction with the other person.

Second, go into an intercultural interaction knowing your intention. If your goal is to learn more about that person's culture, that's a great intention. However, that may not be the only intention we have when interacting with someone from another culture. For example, you may be interacting with someone from another culture because you're trying to sell them a product you represent. If your main intention is sales, then be aware of your intention and don't try to deceive yourself into thinking it's something more altruistic.

Lastly, go into all intercultural interactions with the right attitude. Remember, the goal of being mindful is to be open, kind, and curious. Although we often discuss mindful in terms of how we can be open, kind, and curious with ourselves, it's also important to extend that same framework when we are interacting with people from other cultures. So much of mindful relationships is embodying the right attitude during our interactions with others.

Overall, the goal of mindful intercultural interactions is to be present in the moment in a nonjudgmental way. When you face judgments, recognize them, and ask yourself where they have come from. Interrogate those judgments. At the same time, don't judge yourself for having these ideas. If we have stereotypes about another a specific culture, it's important to recognize those stereotypes, call them out, understand where they came from in the first place, and examine them for factualness.

For example, imagine you're talking to someone from the Republic of Kiribati. Chances are, you've probably never heard of the Republic of Kiribati, but it's a real country in Oceania. But let's say all you know about the people from the Republic of Kiribati is that they like European-style football. During your interaction, you say, "So, what's your favorite football team?" In this moment, you've taken the one stereotype you had and used it to help engage in an interaction. However, if the person comes back and says, "I really don't care. Sports just aren't my thing." How do you respond? First, recognize that you attempted to use a stereotype that you had and call it out for what it was. That doesn't make you a bad person, but we must learn from these encounters and broaden our world views. Second, call out the stereotype in your mind. Before that moment, you may not have even realized that you had a stereotype of people from the Republic of Kiribati. Labeling our stereotypes of other people is important because it helps us recognize them faster, the more we engage in this type of mindful behavior. Third, figure out where that stereotype came from. Maybe you had been in New Zealand and saw a match on the television and saw the Kiribati national football team. In that one moment, you learned a tiny bit about an entire country and pocketed it away for future use. Sometimes it's easy to figure out where our stereotypes evolved from, but sometimes these stereotypes are so ingrained in us through our own culture that it's hard to really figure out their origin. Lastly, it's time to realize that your stereotype may not be that factual. At the same time, you may have found the one resident of the Republic of Kiribati who doesn't like football. We can often make these determinations by talking to the other person.

At the same time, it's important also to be mindfully open to the other person's stereotypes of people within your own culture. For example, someone from the Republic of Kiribati may have a stereotype that Americans know nothing about football (other than American football). If you're a fan of what we in the U.S. call soccer, then you correct that stereotype or at least provide that person a more nuanced understanding of your own culture. Sure, American football still is the king of sports in the U.S., but media trends for watching football (soccer) are growing, and more and more Americans are becoming fans.

Key Takeaways

- Cultural intelligence involves the degree to which an individual can communicate competently in varying cultural situations. Cultural intelligence consists of four distinct parts: knowledge, motivation, understanding, and behavior.
- Having strong intercultural relationships can be very rewarding. When thinking about your own intercultural relationships, some ways to have more rewarding intercultural relationships can include: understanding your own culture better, being interested in other people and their cultures, respecting other people's cultures, becoming culturally intelligent, tolerating ambiguity during interactions, being aware of and overcoming your own ethnocentrism, and being a good example of your own culture.

Exercises

- The Cultural Intelligence Center has created a widely used 20-item measure for cultural intelligence. Please take a second and complete their measure: Cultural Intelligence Scale (see page 366 in the article). What were your CQ strengths and CQ weaknesses? Where would you most want to improve your CQ?
- Visit the National Center for Cultural Competence. Read some of the material on their website. Look for their ideas and compare to what you've learned in this section.
- James L. Mason created a cultural competence tool for service agencies (http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED399684.pdf). Take a look at their tool, which is freely available online. What do you think of their tools for evaluating cultural competence? Do you think cultural competence and cultural intelligence are similar, different, or identical? Why?

Key Terms

behavioral CQ

belief

co-culture

cognitive CQ

collective self-esteem

collectivism

cultural intelligence

culture

culture as normative

dominant culture

ethnocentrism

face

feminine

high-context cultures

importance to identity

indigenous peoples

individualism

indulgence

long-term orientation

low-context cultures

masculine

membership esteem

metacognitive CQ

microculture

motivational CQ

norms

ostracized

power distance

private collective esteem

public collective self-esteem

restraint

rules

short-term orientation

stereotype

uncertainty avoidance

values

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Footnotes:

Ang, S., Van Dyne, L. (Eds.). (2008). Preface and Acknowledgements. In Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and applications (pp. xv-xviii). M. E. Sharpe; pg. xv.
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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Unit 7 - Financial Literacy

8.1: Introduction to Financial Literacy
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8.3: Savings, Expenses, and Budgeting
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8.6: Personal Budget
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8.1: Introduction to Financial Literacy

Amy Baldwin



gure 63.1 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. 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 this chapter's survey 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 University of Central Arkansas

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:

- Align your personal and financial goals through smart financial planning.
- Create a saving and spending plan and track your performance.
- Identify best practices and risks associated with credit cards and other debt.
- Determine the best opportunities for you to finance your college education.

What Would You Do?

Think about this scenario: 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 and 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 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 first-year students 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 to 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 yourself!

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8.2: Personal Financial Planning

Amy Baldwin

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?

> *"One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation."*
>
> *– Arthur Ashe*

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 okay 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, have better marriages, and even have better cognitive functioning.

The 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 64.1 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, any time 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. 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 64.1 Weighing all the factors is critical when deciding on any purchase, especially a major one like a car. (Credit: Greg Gjerdingen / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC-BY 2.0))

3. Write Down Your Financial Plan

Table 64.1 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 going 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? They 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 big purchase. The worst time to buy something is when you need to replace an important item that stops working or is damaged, because you are easier to take advantage of when you are desperate. You will be glad that you have an emergency fund.

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.

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8.3: Savings, Expenses, and Budgeting

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- How is the flow of money best measured?
- How do I keep things balanced?

> *"Excuse me while I save, invest, and build wealth."*
>
> *—Stephanie Lahart*

What is the best way to get to the Mississippi River from here? Do you know? To answer the question, even with a map app, you would need to know where you are starting from and exactly where on the river you want to arrive before you can map the best route. Our financial lives need maps, too. You need to know where you are now and where you want to end up in order to map a course to meet the goal.

You map your financial path using a spending and savings plan, or budget, which tracks your income, savings, and spending. You check on your progress using a balance sheet that lists your *assets*, or what you own, and your *liabilities*, or what you owe. A balance sheet is like a snapshot, a moment in time, that we use to check our progress.

Budgets

The term *budget* is unpleasant to some people because it just looks like work. But who will care more about your money than you? We all want to know if we have enough money to pay our bills, travel, get an education, buy a car, etc. Technically, a budget is a specific financial plan for a specified time. Budgets have three elements: income, saving and investing, and expenses.

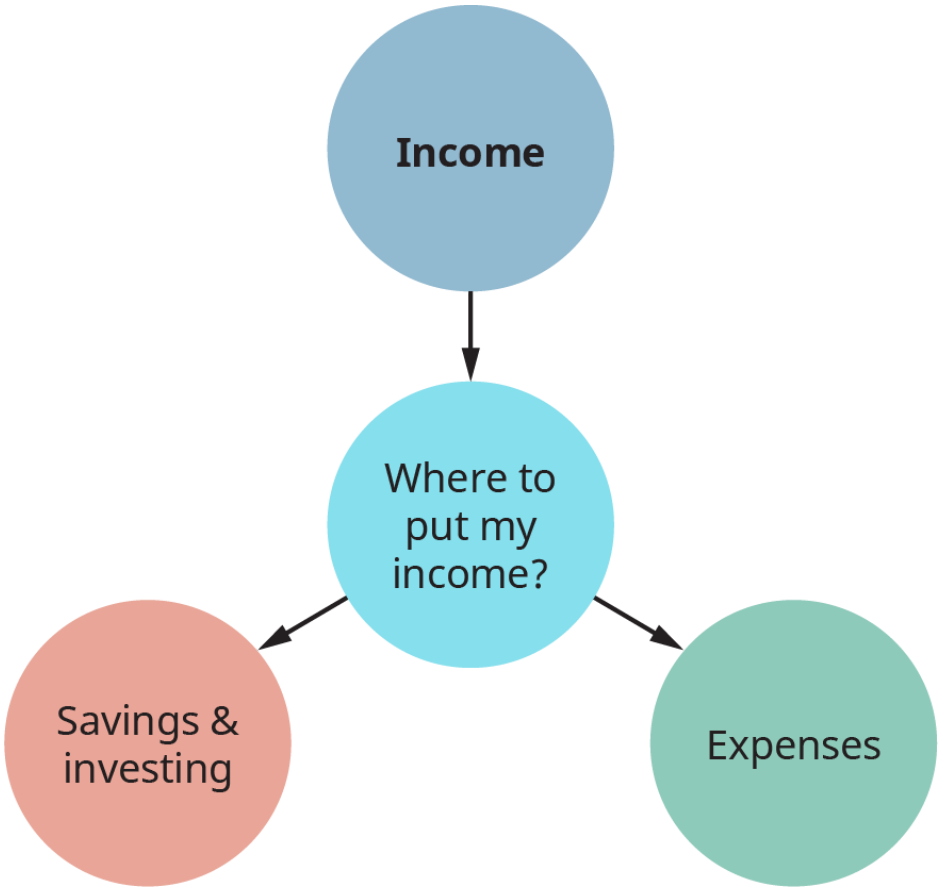


Figure 65.1 A budget is a specific financial plan for a finite amount of time. For example, you can set a budget for a term or longer, but be sure to revisit it to make adjustments as needed.

Income

Income most often comes from our jobs in the form of a paper or electronic paycheck. During school, you may receive support from family that could be considered income. You may also receive scholarships, grants, or student loan money. When listing your income for your monthly budget,

you should use your *net pay*, also called your disposable income. It is the only money you can use to pay bills. If you currently have a job, look at the pay stub or statement. You will find *gross pay*, then some money deducted for a variety of taxes, leaving a smaller amount—your net pay.

Sometimes you have the opportunity to have some other, optional deductions taken from your paycheck before you get your net pay. Examples of optional deductions include 401(k) or health insurance payments. You can change these amounts, but you should still use your net pay when considering your budget.

Some individuals receive disability income, social security income, investment income, alimony, child support, and other forms of payment on a regular basis. All of these go under income.

Saving and Investing

The first bill you should pay is to yourself. You owe yourself today and tomorrow. The quote at the start of this section was said by Warren Buffet who is one of the most successful investors of the 20th century, with a personal fortune of more than $60 billion. Setting aside a certain amount of money for savings and investments, before paying bills and making discretionary, or optional, purchases, will put you on a path to building your own reserve. Savings can be for an emergency fund or for short-term goals such as education, a wedding, travel, or a car. Investing, such as putting your money into stocks, bonds, or real estate, offers higher returns at a higher risk than money saved in a bank. Investments include retirement accounts that can be automatically funded with money deducted from your paycheck. Automatic payroll deductions are an effective way to save money before you can get your hands on it. Make saving money a priority to assure that you will work as hard to make the payment to yourself as you work to make your car or housing payment. The money you "pay" toward saving or investing will earn you back your money, plus some money earned on your money. Compare this to the cost of buying an item on credit and paying your money plus interest to a creditor. Paying yourself first is a habit that pays off!

> ***Pay yourself first! Put something in savings from every paycheck or gift.***

Expenses

Expenses are categorized in two ways. One method separates them into fixed expenses and variable expenses. Rent, insurance costs, and utilities (power, water) are fixed: they cost about the same every month and are predictable based on your arrangement with the provider. Variable expenses, on the other hand, change based on your priorities and available funds; they include groceries, restaurants, cell phone plans, gas, clothing, and so on. You have a good degree of control over your variable expenses. You can begin organizing your expenses by categorizing each one as either fixed or variable.

A second way to categorize expenses is to identify them as either needs or wants. Your needs come first: food, basic clothing, safe housing, medical care, and water. Your wants come afterward, if you can afford them while sticking to a savings plan. Wants may include meals at a restaurant, designer clothes, video games, other forms of entertainment, or a new car. After you identify an item as a need or want, you must exercise self-control to avoid caving to your desire for too many wants.

ACTIVITY 65.1

List the last ten purchases you made, and place each of them in the category you think is correct.

Table 65.1

Item	Need Expense $	Want Expense $
Totals		

How do your total "need" expenses compare to your total "want" expenses? Should either of them change?

Budgets are done in a chart or spreadsheet format and often look like the ones below. Pay attention to how the first budget differs from the second.

Table 65.2 This budget balances because all money is accounted for.

Income (use net monthly pay)	
Paycheck	$2200
Other	$300
Total Income	**$2500**
Saving and Investing	
Savings Account	$120
Investments	$240
Amount Left for Expenses	$2140
Expenses (Monthly)	
Housing	$750
Car Payment/Insurance	$450
Groceries	$400
Restaurants/Food Delivery	$100
Internet	$60
Phone	$60
Medical Insurance and Copays	$120
Gas	$200
Total Expenses	**$2140**
Balance (Amount left for expenses minus total expenses)	$0

Table 65.3 Note that this budget is out of balance because Restaurants, Phone, and Gas are more expensive, so the total expenses are more than the amount available to pay for them.

Income (use net monthly pay)	
Paycheck	$2200
Other	$300
Total Income	**$2500**
Saving and Investing	
Savings Account	$120
Investments	$240
Amount Left for Expenses	$2140
Expenses (Monthly)	

Housing	$750
Car Payment/Insurance	$450
Groceries	$400
Restaurants/Food Delivery	$225
Internet	$60
Phone	$75
Medical Insurance and Copays	$120
Gas	$250
Total Expenses	**$2330**
Balance (Amount left for expenses minus total expenses)	**-$190**

Balancing Your Budget

Would you take all your cash outside and throw it up in the air on a windy day? Probably not. We want to hold on to every cent and decide where we want it to go. Our budget allows us to find a place for each dollar. We should not regularly have money left over. If we do, we should consider increasing our saving and investing. We also should not have a negative balance, meaning we don't have enough to pay our bills. If we are short of money, we can look at all three categories of our budget: income, savings, and expenses.

We could increase our income by taking a second job or working overtime, although this is rarely advisable alongside college coursework. The time commitment quickly becomes overwhelming. Another option is to cut savings, or there's always the possibility of reducing expenses. Any of these options in combination can work.

Another, even less desirable option is to take on debt to make up the shortfall. This is usually only a short-term solution that makes future months and cash shortages worse as we pay off the debt. When we budget for each successive month, we can look at what we actually spent the month before and make adjustments.

Tracking the Big Picture

When you think about becoming more financially secure, you're usually considering your *net worth*, or the total measure of your wealth. Earnings, savings, and investments build up your assets—that is, the valuable things you own. Borrowed money, or debt, increases your liabilities, or what you owe. If you subtract what you owe from what you own, the result is your net worth. Your goal is to own more than you owe.

When people first get out of college and have student debt, they often owe more than they own. But over time and with good financial strategies, they can reverse that situation. You can track information about your assets, liabilities, and net worth on a balance sheet or part of a personal financial statement. This information will be required to get a home loan or other types of loans. For your net worth to grow in a positive direction, you must increase your assets and decrease your liabilities over time.

> ***Assets (Owned) – Liabilities (Owed) = Net Worth***

ANALYSIS QUESTION

Can you identify areas in your life where you are losing money by paying fees on your checking account or interest on your loans? What actions could you take to stop giving away money and instead set yourself up to start earning money?

Table 65.4

Good Practices That Build Wealth	Bad Practices That Dig a Debt Hole
Tracking all spending and saving	Living paycheck to paycheck with no plan
Knowing the difference between needs and wants	Spending money on wants instead of saving
Resisting impulse buying and emotional spending	Using credit to buy more that you need and increasing what you owe

GET CONNECTED

You can write down your budget on paper or using a computer spreadsheet program such as Excel, or you can find popular budgeting apps that work for you. Some apps link to your accounts and offer other services such as tracking credit cards and your credit score. The key is to find an app that does what you need and use it.

Here are some examples:

- Wally
- Goodbudget

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OpenStax College Success Concise 7.2 Savings, Expenses, and Budgeting. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/7-2-savings-expenses-and-budgeting

Baldwin, A. (2023). Savings, Expenses, and Budgeting. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

Modifications: Swapped a quotation. Removed mint example. Renumbered figures and tables.

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8.4: Credit Cards

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- How dangerous is debt?
- What should I think about when getting and using a credit card?
- What is the purpose of a credit score?

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.

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 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 they 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 when lost or stolen. 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 all charges 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 debit 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 in stolen charges you may be responsible for, up to an unlimited amount.

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. Purposeful Finance. “Four Surprising Ways Your Credit Score Will Affect Your Life.”

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 off your credit card in full, meaning you will bring 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.

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 66.1

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.

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OpenStax College Success Concise Chapter 7.3. Credit Cards. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/7-3-credit-cards

Baldwin, A. (2023). Credit Cards. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

Modifications: Numbered table.

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8.5: College Affordability

Amy Baldwin

Questions to Consider:

- What choices should you consider when taking on student debt?
- How do you match debt to postgraduate income?
- What types of financial aid are available?
- How do you apply for financial aid?
- What are the best repayment strategies?

> *"I'm hungry for knowledge. The whole thing is to learn every day, to get brighter and brighter. That's what this world is about. You look at someone like Gandhi, and he glowed. Martin Luther King glowed. Muhammad Ali glows. I think that's from being bright all the time and trying to be brighter."*
>
> *—Jay-Z*

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 the 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. 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 $10,338 while out-of-state students pay $22,698 for the same state college. Private colleges average $38,185 . The local community college averages approximately $3,726. On-campus housing and meals, if available, can add approximately $10,000 per year. See the table below, and create your own chart after you research.

Sample College Costs

Table 67.1

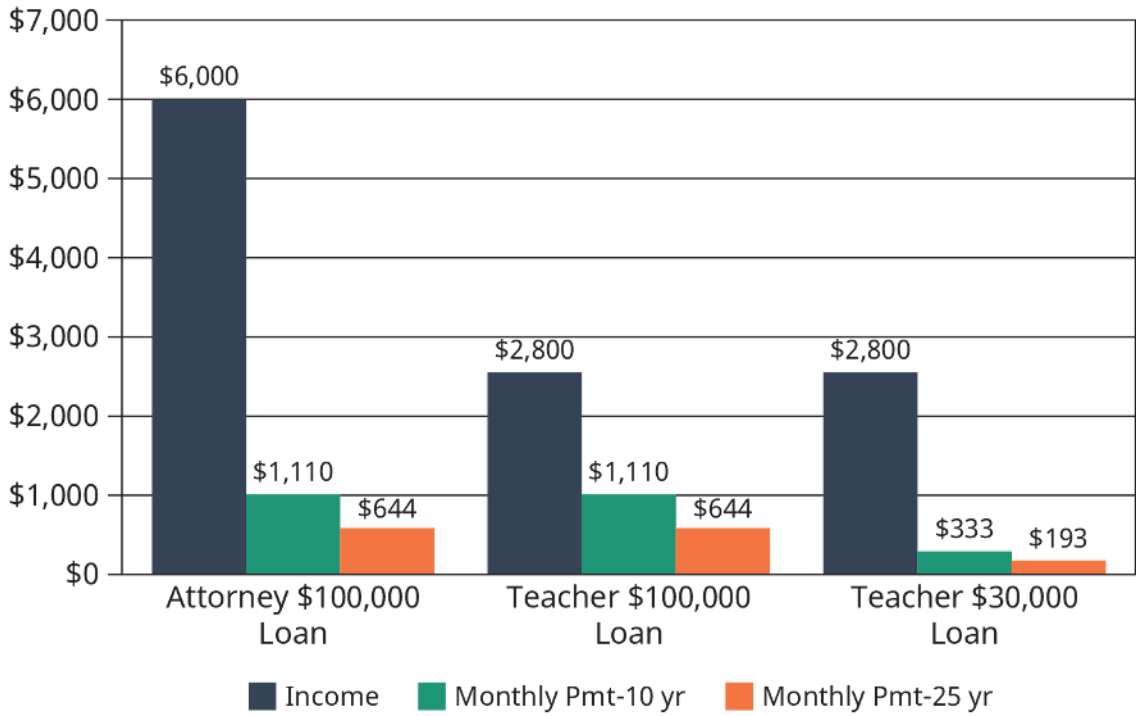
Type of School	Annual Tuition without Housing	Tuition If Living on Campus	Total Cost at Planned Completion
Community College (2 yr.)	$3,726	Live at Home	$7,452
Public University, In State (4 yr.)	$9,716	Live at Home	$38,864
Public University, In State (4 yr.)		$19,716	$78,864
Public University, Out of 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 Post-Graduation 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 $100,000 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 student debt you take on should be tied to the income you expect.



f 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. N
. (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. 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. Another handy tool that gives general information based on your personal experience and location is the PayScale. 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, or 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.

Types of Financial Aid: How to Pay for College

The true cost of college may be more than you expected, but you can make an effort to make the cost less than many might think. While the price tag for a school might say $40,000, the net cost of college may be significantly less. The net price for a college is the true cost a family will pay when grants, scholarships, and education tax benefits are factored in. The net cost for the average family at a public in-state school is only $3,980. And for a private school, free financial aid money reduces the cost to the average family from $32,410 per year to just $14,890.

If you haven't visited your college's financial aid office recently, it's probably worth it to talk with them. You must seek out opportunities, complete paperwork, and learn about then meet the specific criteria, but it can save you thousands of dollars.

Table 67.2 Source: National Center for Education Statistics (https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=76)

Type of College	Average Published Yearly Tuition and Fees
Public Two-Year College (in-district students)	$3,900
Public Four-Year College (in-state students)	$9,400
Private Four-Year College	$37,600

Grants and Scholarships

Grants and scholarships are free money you can use to pay for college. Unlike loans, you never have to pay back a grant or a scholarship. All you have to do is go to school. And you don't have to be a straight-A student to get grants and scholarships. There is so much free money, in fact, that billions of dollars go unclaimed every year.

While some grants and scholarships are based on a student's academic record, many are given to average students based on their major, ethnic background, gender, religion, or other factors. There are likely dozens or hundreds of scholarships and grants available to you personally if you look for them.

Federal Grants

Federal Pell Grants are awarded to students based on financial need, although there is no income or wealth limit on the grant program. The Pell Grant can give you more than $6,000 per year in free money toward tuition, fees, and living expenses. If you qualify for a Pell Grant based on your financial need, you will automatically get the money.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOGs) are additional free money available to students with financial need. Through the FSEOG program, you can receive up to an additional $4,000 in free money. These grants are distributed through your school's financial aid department on a first-come, first- served basis, so pay close attention to deadlines.

Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants are designed to help students who plan to go into the teaching profession. You can receive up to $4,000 per year through the TEACH Grant. To be eligible for a TEACH Grant, you must take specific classes and majors and must hold a qualifying teaching job for at least four years after graduation. If you do not fulfill these obligations, your TEACH Grant will be converted to a loan, which you will have to pay back with both interest and back interest.

There are numerous other grants available through individual states, employers, colleges, and private organizations.

State Grants

Most states also have grant programs for their residents, often based on financial need. Eleven states have even implemented free college tuition programs for residents who plan to continue to live in the state. Even some medical schools are beginning to be tuition free. Check your school's financial aid office and your state's department of education for details.

College/University Grants and Scholarships

Most colleges and universities have their own scholarships and grants. These are distributed through a wide variety of sources, including the school's financial aid office, the school's endowment fund, individual departments, and clubs on campus.

Private Organization Grants and Scholarships

A wide variety of grants and scholarships are awarded by foundations, civic groups, companies, religious groups, professional organizations, and charities. Most are small awards under $4,000, but multiple awards can add up to large amounts of money each year. Your financial aid office can help you find these opportunities.

Employer Grants and Scholarships

Many employers also offer free money to help employees go to school. A common work benefit is a tuition reimbursement program, where employers will pay students extra money to cover the cost of tuition once they've earned a passing grade in a college class. And some companies are going even further, offering to pay 100 percent of college costs for employees. Check to see whether your employer offers any kind of educational support.



Figure 67.3 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 total 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 of 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 non-experts 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.

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 you can use to respond to a debt collector. You can also file a complaint with the CFPB if you believe your rights have been violated.

Applying for Financial Aid, FAFSA, and Everything Else

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 career, 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 non-education 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. These non-education 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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OpenStax College Success Concise Chapter 7.3 Credit Cards. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success-concise/pages/7-3-credit-cards

Baldwin, A. (2023). Credit Cards. In *College Success Concise*. OpenStax.

Modifications: Swapped a quotation.

Footnotes:

Federal Trade Commission. "Lost Or Stolen Credit, ATM, and Debit Cards." 2012.

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8.6: Personal Budget

Erika Torgeson

Budgeting can be a scary word for some people and create strong emotions such as saving for the future or feeling too restricted. 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 have gone through the basics, you will find it gets easier and it can be a very valuable tool for controlling your personal finances and increasing your wealth.

Let's cover some basic information that seem to come up through social media or conversations with friends and family:

- Debt is not something that is a normal part of life – it just seems that way. The normalizing of debt is misinformation that has been passed down for the last few generations due to the increase in how and where credit can be used.
- Budgeting is not about restricting how you live your life, but how well you can live your life.
- Budgeting can seem daunting at first, but there are many different styles and ways people will budget their money (Personally, I follow a Zero-Based Budget because I absolutely hate tracking every little purchase I make).
- There are several people through social media that opening discuss how they budget, walk you through how they create their budget, along with struggles they have encountered when they blow their budget. Instagram and Pinterest are great places to start and you can just search "budget."

Think for a moment when the last time you compared your monthly income to your outgoing expenses? Are you confident about your spending habits and established savings goals for purchases you would like to make in the future? Or, do you feel that you run out of money before the end of the month and cannot seem to break the cycle of living paycheck to paycheck? Understanding where you want to be financially in the next few years will take some assessment of where you are today, financially. It is having the "talk" with yourself about where your money is going and being honest about your spending habits.

Activity 68.1: Budgeting

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	
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:	

Input your total monthly income and include expenses that you have throughout the month (fixed expenses like rent/mortgage and variable expenses like food and entertainment costs).

How are you doing with your expenses? This is a great starting place for you to build your financial awareness and incorporate some good money management skills. If you income exceeds your monthly expenses, what type of financial goals would you want to set for yourself such as building your emergency savings, purchasing a car, or going on vacation? If your monthly expenses exceed your monthly income, it is time to identify areas of your life that you will need to adjust a little to ensure you have enough money to cover your expenses. Once you have this information, the next steps are to build a budget.

Why create and manage a budget? Going to college changes your financial situation. There are many new expenses, and you likely do not know yet how your spending needs and habits will work out over the long term. Without a budget, it is 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 is worth it to research the different types of budgets out there and start creating one!

To help you start exploring different budgeting styles that will fit your needs, we will cover some common ones that show up on social media quite a bit:

1. Traditional Budget: this is where you will total up your monthly income, expenses, and track all your purchases, down to the penny. At the end of the month, you may move any extra money left over into a savings account or decide to spend it. Some people will track their budget on a spreadsheet with charts indicating spending area percentages.
2. Paycheck Budgeting: this method helps to separate out expenses based on the number of paychecks you will receive in a month. For instance, if you get paid twice a month, you may allocate certain expenses to be paid with your first paycheck of the month, and the rest of your expenses with your second paycheck.

3. Zero-Based Budgeting: this method helps to identify were every single penny of your paycheck will be allocated before you even get paid, along with using the envelop system. You identify how much your expenses will be, separate out cash to be used in your envelopes (gas, food, entertainment, eating out, fun money, etc) and once your envelope money is used up, you will either go without for the rest of the month or move money from another envelop.

Pin It! Zero Based Budgeting. Watch this video for more information on Zero Based Budgeting:

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Things to Think About

As mentioned before, budgeting is a skill – it may take a couple of months or even several months to find a budgeting method that works for you and your busy life. And, if you are unsure about if budgeting is for you, start small with taking one area of your life that you know you overspend in such as entertainment or getting out with friends. If you only allocate $50 per month to eating out or entertainment, your choices will shift to try and extend your $50.

Pin It! Why People Spend Too Much, Even On A Budget

- Old habits die hard. Keep monitoring your spending habits and watch for things you are 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 are spending. And, credit cards are not for emergencies. That is what an emergency savings fund is for!
- Easy access to cash. Just put your card in an ATM and get some cash! It is so easy to do, and an automatic habit for so many, that it is easy to bust your budget with small amounts daily.
- Temptations are everywhere. Even when we are careful, we are 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 will feel tomorrow about spending a whole week's food budget on one expensive dinner out probably is not worth the pleasure of it!

Sometimes we buy things to feel good. If that has been a longtime habit for you, it will be hard to break. Often it is 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.

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Introduction to College and Strategies for Success – An Open Educational Resource Publication by College of the Canyons. 6.2 Budgeting 101. Access for free at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NHDA1m6eGnbpG9o4u1DSs0rE_xw6bbmr/edit

Torgeson, E. (2020). Budgeting 101. In *Introduction to College and Strategies for Success.* College of the Canyons.

Modifications: Numbered activity.

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8.7: Retirement Savings

J. Zachary Klingensmith

Learning Objectives

1. Describe and employ different money market accounts to meet personal saving goals.
2. Define income tax and describe helpful tax planning strategies.
3. Recognize the benefits and options of retirement planning at an early age.

Why Should You Save Money?

In short, it allows you to enjoy greater security in your life. In this chapter, we will take a look at savings. Why save? When to save? How to save? These are all critical questions, especially if you want to be financially secure in retirement.

Death and taxes are two certainties in life. While we cannot avoid death, we can take steps to minimize our tax liability. In this learning unit, we will also discuss the basics of taxes, how to determine your tax liabilities, and how to reduce, eliminate, or defer your income taxes legally.

In the previous chapter, we talked about developing a budget. When you have a budget surplus, you gain some flexibility with your funds. You can increase your spending, savings, or investment. In this chapter, we will look at savings in more depth, focusing on retirement savings.

Retirement is when you stop selling your labor, and your primary source of income changes from earned income to retirement benefits, personal savings and investments, and Social Security. It is never too early to start planning for retirement so that you can enjoy your golden years without financial worry.

Five Benefits of Savings

1. It helps in emergencies (e.g., car repair expenses).
2. It cushions against sudden job loss.
3. It helps finance big-ticket purchases (e.g., a new car or a first house) and major life events (e.g., going to college or starting a family).
4. It limits the amount of debt incurred.
5. It helps prepare for retirement.

What Should You Save For?

A rainy day

- It is used to pay for **unexpected** expenses.
- Ask yourself: If your income disappeared, what essential bills and obligations would you still have to meet?
- To have a fully funded emergency fund, you must save enough to cover 3 to 6 months of those expenses.
- The fund needs to be accessible immediately on demand.

Planning irregular expenses

- Annual membership: Sam’s Club ($50)
- Semiannual expense: Auto insurance premium ($300/semiannual)
- Your car tires are beginning to wear thin; replacement cost is unavoidable in the near future.
- **Strategy:** Divide the cost and save part of the total each month. (e.g., Save $50 each month for auto insurance premiums.)

Planned large expenses

- Example: You want to work on home repairs or buy a new leather sofa.
- **Strategy:** Estimate the expense, and save part of the total each month until you can pay in full.

Retirement

- 401(k) or 403 (k)
- Traditional IRA, Roth IRA

Savings Rate

The savings rate measures savings over the period in comparison to disposable income.

Savings Rate Formula

For any given period of time:

<span id="”MathJax-Element-1-Frame” class="”mjx-chtml MathJax_CHTML” tabindex="”0″ role="”presentation” data-mathml="”

$\frac{\text{Savings}}{\text{Disposable income}} \times 100\%$“>SavingsDisposable income×100%

Savings Instruments

There are many different ways to save your money until you use it. The primary difference is the level of liquidity. **Liquidity** refers to how easy it is to turn an asset into cash without losing value.[2]

Liquid Asset Examples

- Cash (on hand) and cash equivalents
  - *Cash equivalents:* Low-risk, near-cash items that can quickly be converted into cash (e.g., checking account and savings account)
- Securities: CDs, MMMFs, bonds, stocks

Non-liquid Asset Examples

- Real estate
- Vehicles
- Jewelry
- Collections of valuable items

Table 69.1: Comparison of Savings Instruments

Source: “ Personal Finance, Chapter 7” by Saylor Academy | CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

	Low	**High**
Liquidity	CDs	Checking, Savings, MMMFs
Risk Level	Checking, Savings, CDs	MMMFs
Interest Earned	Checking, Savings	MMMFs, CDs

When Should You Start Saving Money?

The answer is **now**! The earlier you start saving, the more quickly your money can grow.

How does your money earn money over time?

Money earns money through the magic of compounding. Compounding is the process of earning interest on interest. Watch the video [1:27] to learn more.

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Why Pay Taxes?

Taxes are mandatory contributions levied on individuals or corporations by a government entity—whether local, regional, or national. Taxes provide revenue for governments to fund essential services—national defense, highways, police, a justice system—that benefit all citizens. Taxes also fund programs and services that benefit only certain citizens, such as Medicare, job training, schools, and parks.

Types of Taxes

To learn more, view the article, Types of Taxes.

Income Taxes

Most individuals pay federal, state, and local income taxes.

Federal Taxes

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) administers the federal tax system. The tax year for federal income tax ends on Dec. 31. If you earn income, you must file a Form 1040, 1040A, or 1040EZ to determine your tax liability by April 15 of each year.

Additional information on federal taxes is available by viewing these resources.

- To learn more about IRS 1040 form, view What Is an IRS 1040 Form?
- To learn how to file your 1040 form, visit the IRS webpage, How to File
- To estimate your tax liability and tax refund, if applicable, visit TurboTax
- Watch this video from the IRS on How to Pay Your Taxes [1:51 minutes]

States Taxes

As of 2022, Alaska, Florida, Nevada, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming are the only states that do not have a state individual income tax.

Local Taxes

About a third of all states allow their counties, municipalities, and other local jurisdictions to impose an income tax. Tax rates are often lower than at the federal or state levels.

As of 2022, states with local income taxes are Alabama, Colorado, Delaware, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

Tax Liability

Progressive Tax

Income tax is usually a progressive tax. The higher the taxable income, the greater the tax rate. Those income categories are called tax brackets.

There are seven federal income tax brackets for the 2023-2024 season: 10%, 12%, 22%, 24%, 32%, 35%, and 37%. Your filing status (single, married filing separately, married filing jointly, etc.) and taxable income determine your bracket.

Table 69.2: Income Tax Brackets in 2023 (Single Filing Status)

Source: " IRS Provides Tax Inflation Adjustments For Tax Year 2023 by Internal Revenue Service | Public Domain

If taxable income is	The tax due is
Not over $11,000	10% of taxable income
Over $11,000 but not over $44,725	$1,100 plus 12% of the excess over $11,000
Over $44,725 but not over $95,375	$5,147 plus 22% of the excess over $44,725
Over $95,375 but not over $182,100	$16,290 plus 24% of the excess over $95,375
Over $182,100 but not over $231,250	$37,104 plus 32% of the excess over $182,100

If taxable income is	The tax due is
Over $231,250 but not over $578,250	$52,832 plus 35% of the excess over $231,250
Over $578,125	$174,238 plus 37% of the excess over $578,125

Determine Your Preliminary Tax Liability

1. Determine filing status (i.e., single, married filing separately, married filing jointly, etc.)
2. Refer to the appropriate tax brackets and find your tax on base and tax rate.
3. Apply the formula: Preliminary tax liability = Tax on base + Tax rate on excess × (Taxable income − Base)

Example—Determine Mohammed's Preliminary Tax Liability

1. Mohammed's filing status = **Single** and his taxable income = **$31,000.**
2. Using the table above, his taxable income falls into the second tax bracket: tax on base = **$1,100** and tax rate on excess = **12%**
3. Preliminary tax liability = $1,100 plus 12% of the excess over $11,000

$1,100 + 12% × ($31,000−$11,000) =

$1,100 + $2,400 = $3,500

Mohammed's tax liability: he owes $3,500 in taxes

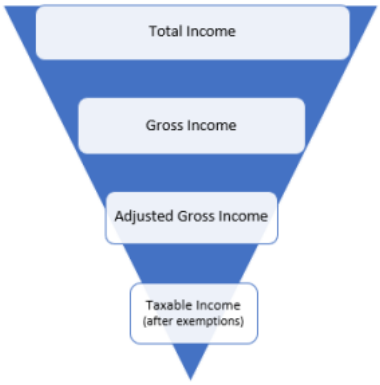
Income Tax Planning

There is no obligation to pay any more in taxes than legally required. Tax planning seeks legal ways to reduce, eliminate, or defer income taxes. To achieve this goal, you can 1) reduce taxable income, 2) apply for tax credit, or combine these two.

Reducing Taxable Income

Your income tax is calculated based on your taxable income. Reducing your taxable income, not your total income, is the key to paying less income tax.

We must differentiate between total income, gross income, adjusted gross income, and taxable income.



Deductions

Deductions: Standard deduction and itemized deduction. The IRS adjusts the standard deduction for inflation for each tax year.

Table 69.3: Standard Deduction Amounts for 2023 Taxes

Source: "IRS Provides Tax Inflation Adjustments For Tax Year 2023" by Internal Revenue Service | Public Domain

Filing Status	Standard Deduction 2023

Filing Status	Standard Deduction 2023
Single; Married Filing Separately	$13,850
Married Filing Jointly & Surviving Spouses	$27,700
Head of Household	$20,800

The standard deduction is the simplest way to reduce your taxable income on your tax return. You simply claim a flat dollar amount determined by the IRS.

Here is what that means: If you earned $75,000 in 2023 and file as a single taxpayer, taking the standard deduction of $13,850 will reduce your taxable income to $61,150. Use the itemized deduction **only** when it is greater than the standard deduction.

Exemptions

Personal exemptions are based on the number of people supported by the taxpayer's income—one exemption each for the taxpayer, the spouse, and each dependent child. In 2017, for example, the exemption was $4,050 per person in the household. Personal exemptions have been eliminated beginning after December 31, 2017, and before January 1, 2026.[11]

Reduce Your Preliminary Tax Liability

Final tax liability = Preliminary tax liability − Tax credits

Examples of tax credits are:

- Health insurance premium tax credit
- Hope scholarship credit
- Section 529 college saving plan
- Child tax credit
- Retirement savings contribution credit
- Mortgage interest credit

Strategies To Reduce Income Taxes

Reduce taxable income through your employer.

- Premium health insurance plan
- Transportation reimbursement plan
- Flexible Spending Account (FSA)
- 401(k) retirement plan—Contribute to your employer-sponsored 401(k) plan at least up to the employer's matching contribution amount.

Make tax-sheltered investments.

A tax shelter is a place to legally store assets so that current tax liabilities are minimized. A tax shelter may permanently reduce the tax amount or simply defer the taxes owed to a future period. Returns of tax-sheltered investments are tax-advantaged.

Examples of tax-sheltered investments:

- Traditional IRA
- Section 529 college saving plan
- Government savings bonds
- Capital gains on housing

How Tax Planning Fits Within Your Financial Plan

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What tax savings are currently available to me?
- How can I increase my tax savings in the future?
- Should I increase or decrease the amount of my withholding?
- What records should I keep?

Table 69.4: Financial Plan Example

Category	Current Situation	Long-Term Plan
Gross Income	$38,000	$38,000
− IRA Contribution	$0	$5,000
= Adjusted Gross Income	$38,000	$33,000
− Deductions	$6,300	$6,800
− Exemptions	$4,000	$4,000
= Taxable income	$27,700	$22,200
Tax liability (based on applying tax rates to the taxable income)	**$3,693.75**	**$2,868.75**

Then revise your financial plan.

Approximate Total Tax Savings = $825.00 per year

Why Should You Start Saving for Retirement Early? To Reduce or Defer Income Tax

We'll look at two options to reduce or defer income tax: **employer-sponsored retirement plans** and **individual retirement accounts (IRAs).**

Employer-Sponsored Retirement Plans

Examples of employer-sponsored retirement plans that we'll explore include:

- 401(k) plan:
  - Traditional 401(k)
  - Roth 401(k)
- 403(b) plan
- Simplified Employee Plan (SEP)
- Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees(SIMPLE) Plan
- 457 plan. Visit 457 Plan to learn more.

Retirement Plans for the Self-Employed

Examples of retirement plans for the self-employed that we'll explore include:

- Keogh Plan: contribution from pre-tax income. To learn more about the Keogh Plan, read Keogh Plan: Definition Types, Advantages & Disadvantages .
- Individual Retirement Account (IRA)
- Traditional IRA

- Roth IRA
- Simplified Employee Plan (SEP) IRA. To learn more about the SEP, read Simplified Employee Pension (SEP) IRA: What It Is, How It Works

How Much Do You Need To Retire?

Watch How Much Do I Need to Retire? Retirement Planning 101 [5:08] for some valuable insight on this topic.

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Key Takeaways

- Project your taxable income and total withholding for this year.
- Sign up for tax-advantaged employee benefits at your workplace.
- You are never too young to start saving money.
- Save for emergency fund first: Start with a $1,000 goal and save until you have a fully funded emergency fund to cover 3–6 months of essential expenses.
- The higher the number of compounding periods, the greater the amount of compound interest.
- Depending on your income, you can contribute to your employer-sponsored retirement plan and an IRA.

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Financial Literacy – 3 Making Your Savings Decisions. Access for free at: https://fscj.pressbooks.pub/financialliteracy/chapter/making-your-savings-decisions/

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Further Reading & References

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Self and Cultural Awareness

9.1: Introduction to Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence
9.2: Appreciation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
9.3: Diversity and Accessibility
9.4: Studying at a Predominately White Institution (PWI)
9.5: Why So Many Questions?
9.6: Cultural Competence
9.7: Cultural Humility
9.8: Navigating the Diversity Landscape and Discrimination
9.9: Cultural Competence and Self-Awareness
9.10: Anti-Racism

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9.1: Introduction to Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence

Amy Baldwin



Figure 44.1 (Credit John Martinez Pavliga / Flickr / Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC

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 44 survey 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 Unit

In this unit 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 unit, 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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OpenStax College Success Chapter 9. Understanding Civility and Cultural Competence – Introduction. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/9-introduction

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Modifications: Renumbered figure and survey chapter reference.

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9.2: Appreciation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Amy Baldwin

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?

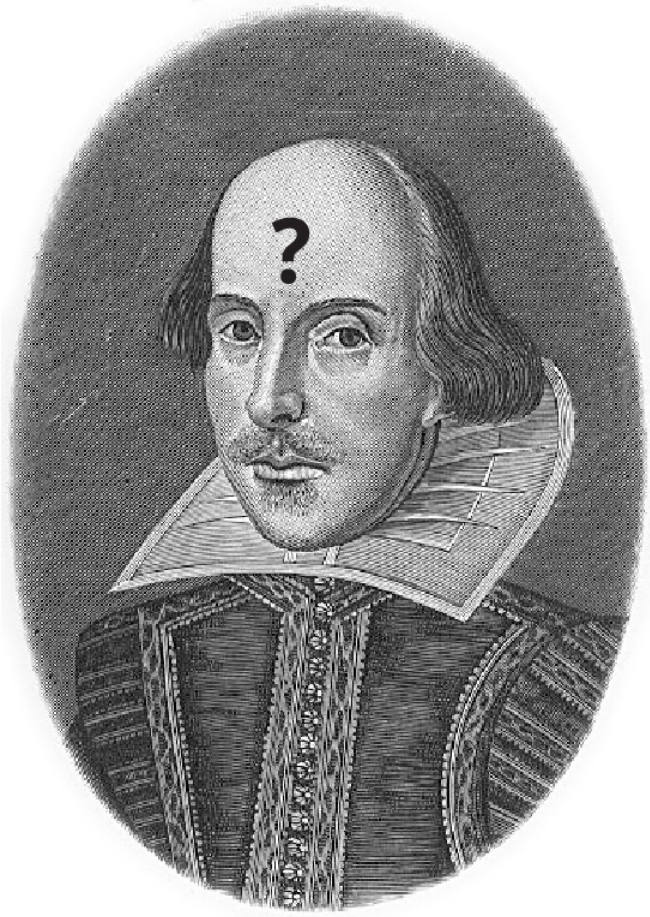


Figure 45.1 (Credit: Sourced originally from Helmolt, H.F., ed. History of the World. Dodd, Mead and Company, 1902 / Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas at Austin / Wikimedia Commons / Public Domain).

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 they have 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.

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 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?

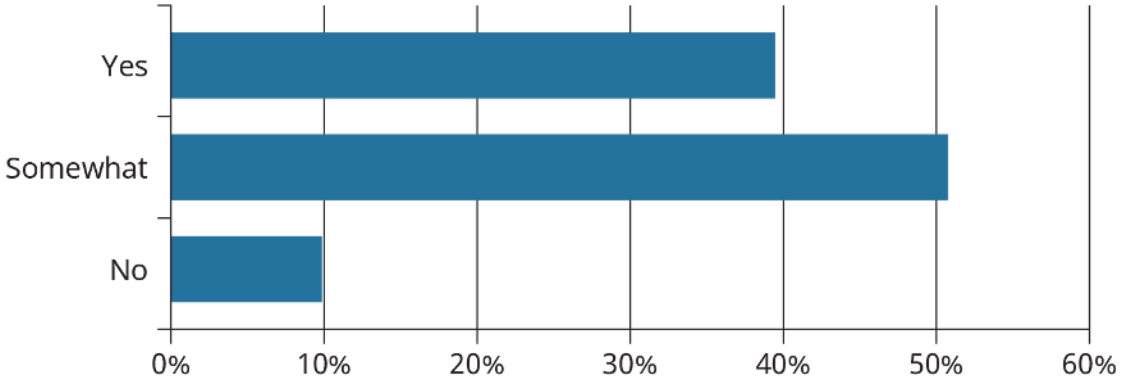


Figure 45.2

How comfortable are you when discussing issues of race, sexuality, religion, and other aspects of civility?

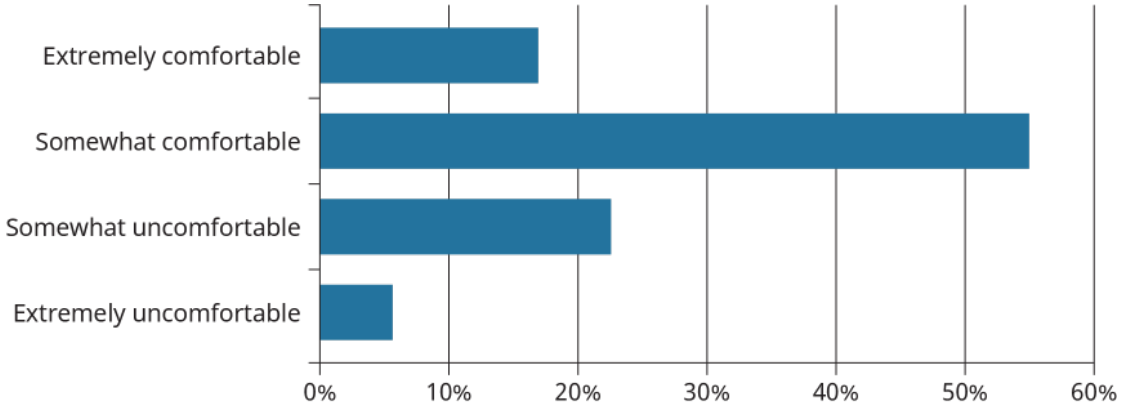


Figure 45.3

Do you generally feel welcomed and included on campus?

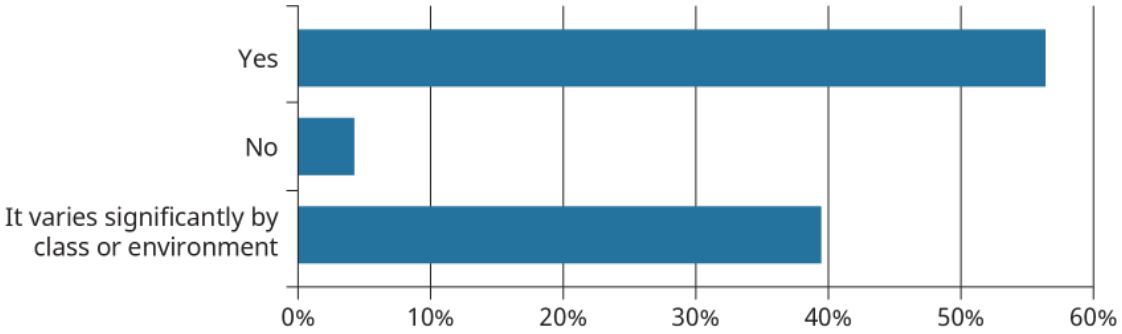


Figure 45.4

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.


VIMIENTO POR LA

Figure 45.5 (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*

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.

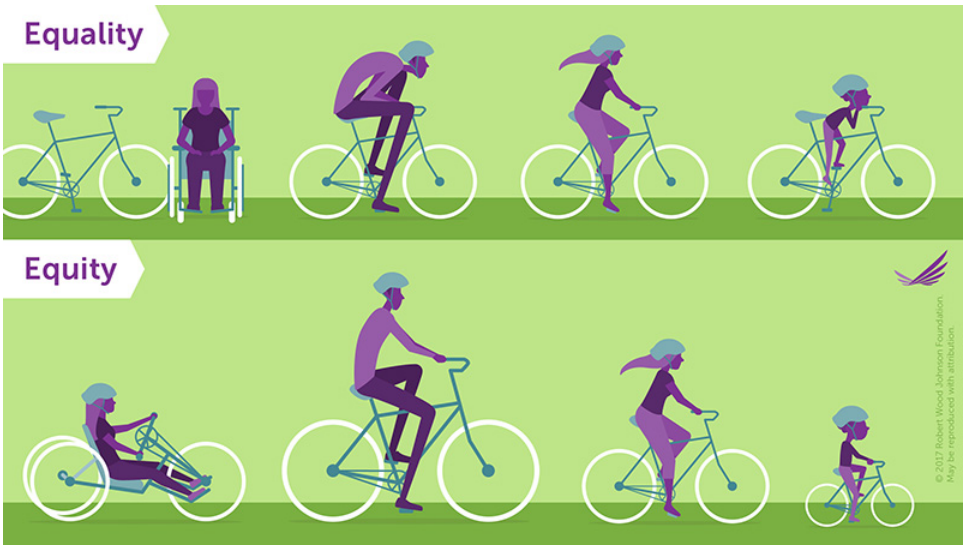


Figure 45.6 Equality is a meaningful goal, but it can leave people with unmet needs; equity is more empowering and fair. In equality portion of the graphic, people all sizes and a person who uses a wheelchair are all given the same bicycle, which is unusable for most. In the equity portion, each person 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 "majority minority" 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 White people will be approximately 46% of the population. The majority of Americans will be the non-White majority, 54% Hispanic/Latino people, Black people, and Asian people.

The changing face of America, 1965–2065

% of the total population

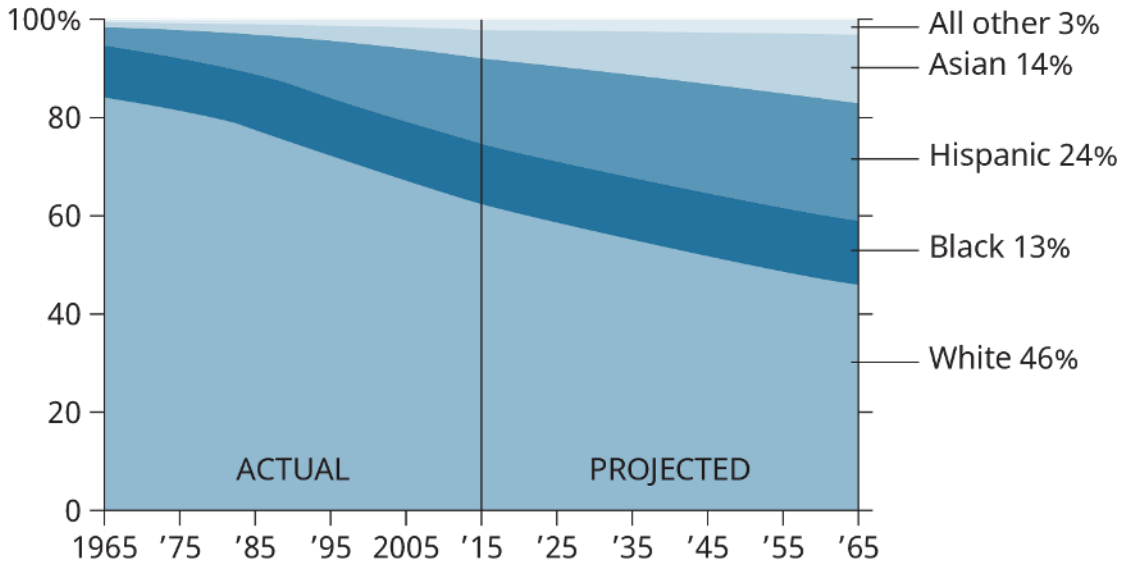


Figure 45.7 United States demographics (or statistical characteristics of populations) are changing rapidly. In just over 35 years, the country as a whole will be a "majority minority" nation, with ethnic/racial minorities making up more than half of the population. (Credit: Based on work by the Pew 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 non-White 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

What changes do you think will take place in the United States as its demographics shift?

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 45.8 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 because 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 understand, 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 discussion, 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 45.1

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 45.9 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.

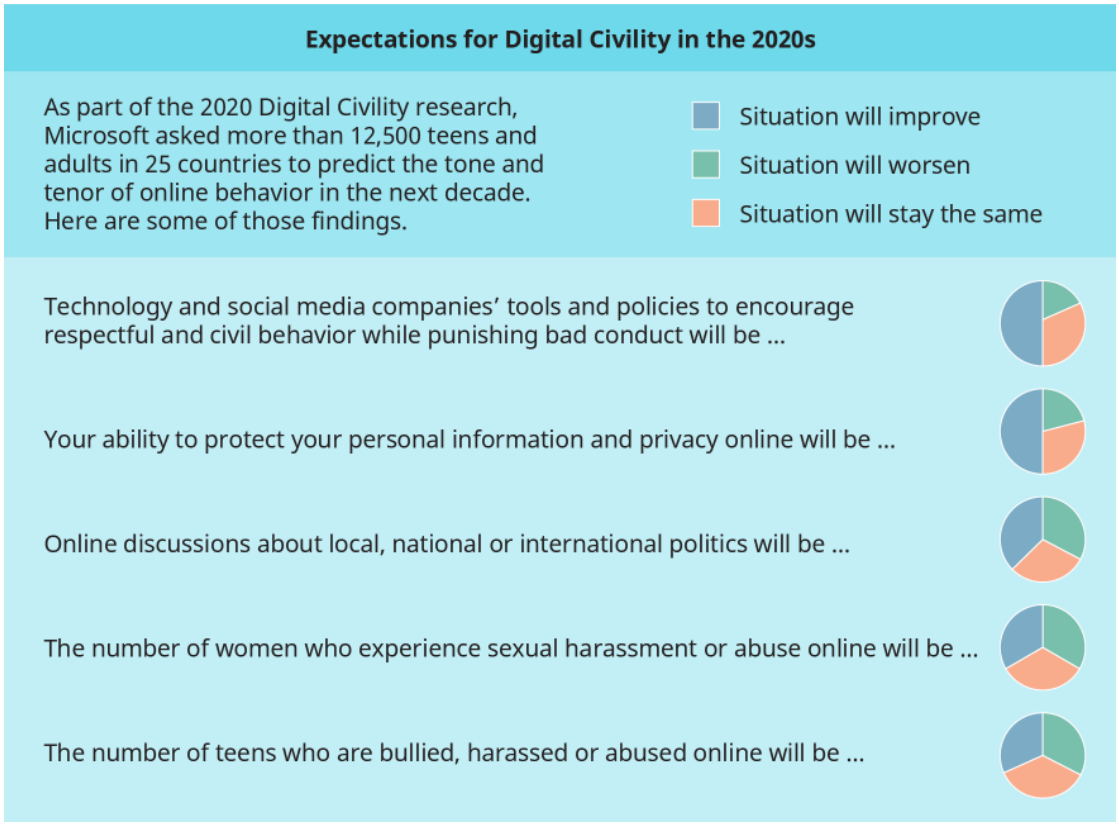


Figure 45.10 Microsoft's Digital Civility Research survey asked people their opinions on the future of online behavior and communication. While in some cases, the respondents thought circumstances would improve, predictions about the others, such as harassment and bullying, are more bleak. (Credit: Based 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. Following, 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.*

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OpenStax College Success Chapter 9.1. What is Diversity, and Why is Everyone Talking About It? Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/9-1-what-is-diversity-and-why-is-everybody-talking-about-it

Baldwin, A. (2020). What is Diversity, and Why is Everyone Talking About It? In College Success. OpenStax.

Modifications: Figures and Activity renumbered.

Footnotes

https://www.nad.org/resources/americ...ked-questions/

https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/info...html#/download

2017 National School Climate Survey, GLESN. https://www.glsen.org/research/school-climate-survey

Expectations for Digital Civility. Note: Link leads to direct download.

Modifications: Renumbered figures. Removed references to chapter 8.

9.2: Appreciation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is shared under a CC BY 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

9.3: Diversity and Accessibility

Lumen Learning; Linda Bruce Hill; and Dave Dillon

"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."

– Audre Lorde

What Is Diversity?

There are few words in the English language that have more varied interpretations than diversity. It's become a catchall term. What does diversity mean? Better yet—what does diversity mean to you? And what does it mean to your best friend, your instructor, your parents, your religious leader, or the person standing behind you in a grocery store?

Since the late 1960s, diversity assumed a unique meaning when students of color pushed for campus diversity. The term has evolved, but new terms are needed to address specific lived experiences and relationships. Below are a few of the many definitions offered by college students at a 2010 conference on the topic of diversity. Which of these definitions stands out to you as most accurate and meaningful? Which definitions could use some embellishment or clarification, in your opinion? You will find that the definition draws from your own personal experience and story.

> *Diversity is a group of people who are different in the same place.*
>
> *Diversity to me is the ability for differences to coexist together, with some type of mutual understanding or acceptance present. Acceptance of different viewpoints is key.*
>
> *Tolerance of thought, ideas, people with differing viewpoints, backgrounds, and life experiences.*
>
> *Anything that sets one individual apart from another.*
>
> *People with different opinions, backgrounds (degrees and social experience), religious beliefs, political beliefs, sexual orientations, heritage, and life experience.*
>
> *Dissimilar*
>
> *Having a multitude of people from different backgrounds and cultures together in the same environment working for the same goals.*
>
> *Difference in students' background, especially race and gender.*
>
> *Differences in characteristics of humans.*
>
> *Diversity is a satisfying mix of ideas, cultures, races, genders, economic statuses and other characteristics necessary for promoting growth and learning among a group.*
>
> *Diversity is the immersion and comprehensive integration of various cultures, experiences, and people.*
>
> *Heterogeneity brings about opportunities to share, learn and grow from the journeys of others. Without it, limitations arise and knowledge is gained in the absence of understanding.*
>
> *Diversity is not tolerance for difference but inclusion of those who are not the majority. It should not be measured as a count or a fraction—that is somehow demeaning. Success at*

> *maintaining diversity would be when we no longer ask if we are diverse enough, because it has become the norm, not remarkable.*

In the context of your college experience, diversity generally refers to people around you who differ by race. The definition of diversity has broadened to include ethnicity, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, abilities, politics, and in other ways. When it comes to diversity on the college campus, we also think about how groups interact with one another across differences. How do diverse populations experience and explore their differences?

Under the umbrella of diversity, diversity accounts for representation, inclusivity, and equity. Colleges and universities may "look diverse" without "being diverse," if it doesn't truly support non-white communities and change policies and practices. So-called "diversity" is actually tokenization that falls short of fostering inclusion. To learn more, student organizations offer diversity and inclusion workshops. The following videos explore aspects of diversity. They highlight the passion and excitement about diversity and the many ways in which diverse groups can support one another.

The following videos explore aspects of diversity. They highlight the passion and excitement about diversity and the many ways in which diverse groups can support one another.

Video: The Danger of a Single Story, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie TED Talk

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Video: *Color blind or color brave?* Mellody Hobson TED Talk

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=131#oembed-3

Video: *When To Take a Stand and When To Let it Go,* Ash Beckham TED Talk

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=131#oembed-4

Video: *How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them,* Vernã Myers TED Talk

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Video: 'Ask Me': What LGBTQ Students Want Their Professors to Know

(View this video by clicking the subheading above or at Chronicle.com)

Surface Diversity and Deep Diversity

Surface diversity and deep diversity are categories of personal attributes—or differences in attributes—that people perceive to exist between people or groups of people.

Surface-level diversity refers to external differences you can generally observe in others, like ethnicity, race, gender, age, culture, language, disability, body size, etc. They are also aspects you cannot change about yourself or have any control over. You can quickly and easily observe these features in a person. And people often do just that, making assumptions and subtle judgments at the same time, which can lead to bias or discrimination. For example, if a teacher believes that older students perform better than younger students, she may give slightly higher grades to the older students than the younger students. This bias is based on perception of the attribute of age, which is surface-level diversity.

Deep-level diversity, on the other hand, reflects differences that are less visible, like personality, attitude, beliefs, and values. Traits that are invisible include immigration status, neurodiversity, and disabilities. These attributes are generally communicated verbally and nonverbally, so they are not easily noticeable or measurable. You may not detect deep-level diversity in a classmate, for example, until you get to know them, at which point you may find that you are either comfortable with these deeper character levels, or perhaps not. But once you gain this deeper level of awareness, you may focus less on surface diversity. For example, at the beginning of a term, a classmate belonging to a minoritized ethnic group, whose native language is not English (surface

diversity), may be treated differently by fellow classmates in another ethnic group. The surface-level diversity leads to stereotyping and "othering". But over time, classmates begin interacting with the person and learn about their values and beliefs (deep-level diversity) and multiple aspects of their identities or intersectionality. When the surface-level attributes of language and perhaps skin color become more "transparent" (less important), a recognition of deep-level diversity will challenge your thinking and preconceptions.

Positive Effects of Diversity in an Educational Setting

Why does diversity matter in college? How might diversity differentially impact Black and white students? It matters because when you are exposed to new ideas, viewpoints, customs, and perspectives—which invariably happens when you come in contact with diverse groups of people—you expand your frame of reference for understanding the world. Your thinking becomes more open and global. You become comfortable working and interacting with different people. You gain a new knowledge base as you learn from people who are different from yourself. You think "harder" and more creatively. You perceive in new ways, seeing issues and problems from new angles. You can absorb and consider a wider range of options, and your values may be enriched. In short, it contributes to your education.

In other words, diversity of perspective for white students is a commodity. Black students favor diversity because it ensures they belong, they are included, and they have an equitable experience. Attention to equity and inclusion ensures that support and resources are provided to increase graduation rates of Black students.

Consider the following facts about diversity in the United States:

- More than half of all U.S. babies today are people of color, and by 2050 the U.S. will have no clear racial or ethnic majority. As communities of color are tomorrow's leaders, college campuses play a major role in helping prepare these leaders.
- But in 2009, while 28 percent of Americans older than 25 years of age had a four-year college degree, only 17 percent of African Americans and 13 percent of Hispanics had a four-year degree. More must be done to adequately educate the population and help prepare students to enter the workforce.
- Today, people of color make up about 36 percent of the workforce (roughly one in three workers). But by 2050, half the workforce (one in two workers) will be a person of color. Again, college campuses can help navigate these changes.

With in-depth consideration, increased diversity can help overcome the structural and cultural obstacles so all students reap the benefits.

Activity 46.1: Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity in Practice

Objective

- Identify ways in which you can make diversity more personal.

Instructions

This activity will help you examine ways in which you can develop your awareness of and commitment to diversity on campus. Answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

- What are my personal and intellectual goals in college?
- What kind of community will help me expand most fully with diversity as a factor in my expansion?
- What are my comfort zones? How might I expand them to connect more diversely?
- How can I be challenged by new viewpoints? How can I resist connecting with people who are like me?
- What are my biggest questions about diversity?
- Write several paragraphs reflecting on the questions above.
- Submit this assignment according to directions from your instructor.

Consider the following strategies to help you answer the questions:

- Examine co-curricular activities. How can you get involved with clubs or organizations that promote and expand diversity?
- Review your college's curriculum. In what ways does it reflect diversity? Does it have departments and courses on historically unrepresented peoples, e.g., cultural and ethnic studies, and gender and sexuality studies. Look for study abroad programs as well.
- Read your college's mission statement. Read the mission statement of other colleges. How do they match up with your values and beliefs? How do they align with the value of diversity?

- Inquire with friends, faculty, colleagues, and family. Ask people about diversity. What does it mean to others? What positive effects has it had on them?
- Research can help. You might consult college literature, websites, resource centers and organizations on campus, etc.

Accessibility and Diversity on Campus

The idea of "accessibility" is an important force of change on college campuses today. Progress on "accessibility," both visible disabilities and hidden ones, in spaces on college campuses has been limited. *Accessibility* is about making education accessible to all, and it's particularly focused on providing educational support to a diverse group of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities. According to the American with Disabilities Act, you can be considered disabled if you meet one of the following criteria:

- You have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as seeing, hearing, walking, learning, and others.
- You have a history of such impairment.
- Others perceive that you have such impairment.

If you meet one of these criteria, you have legal rights to certain accommodations on your campus. These accommodations may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Academic accommodations, like alternate format for print materials, classroom captioning, arranging for priority registration, reducing a course load, substituting one course for another, providing note takers, recording devices, sign language interpreters, a TTY in your dorm room, and equipping school computers with screen-reading, voice recognition, or other adaptive software or hardware.
- Exam accommodations, like extended time on exams
- Financial support and assistance
- Priority access to housing
- Transportation and access, like Wheelchair-accessible community shuttles

Disability as an identity is about the whole college experience, including intersection with other identities, and goes beyond minimum compliance with the law.

Intellectual disability

Students with cognitive disabilities, low reading literacy, and people who are encountering an unknown topic or language need content that is meaningful and understandable to them. For example, plain language is clear, simple communication for audiences with a range of fluency in English, and even learning or cognitive skills. The video below provides the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) example, which is 100-questions, and 80-pages of instruction.

Video: *Demand to Understand: How Plain Language Makes Life Simpler*, Deborah Bosley TED Talk

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Assistive technologies and Web-accessibility accommodations are critical in today's technology-driven economy and society. The following are some examples of assistive technologies:

- Software like Dragon Naturally Speaking, Kurzweil, Zoom Text, CCTV Magnifier, Inspiration Software
- Computer input devices, like keyboards, electronic pointing devices, sip-and-puff systems, wands and sticks, joysticks, trackballs, and touch screens
- Other Web-accessibility aids, like screen readers, screen enlargers, and screen magnifiers, speech recognition or voice recognition programs, and Text-to-Speech (TTS) or speech synthesizers

Students in the following video share some of their experiences with the Web-accessibility.

Video: *Experiences of Students with Disabilities*

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For more information about Web-accessibility, visit http://webaim.org/.

For further information about race and ethnicity, visit Chapter 11 (Race and Ethnicity) of the OpenStax Sociology 2E OER textbook: https://cnx.org/contents/AgQDEnLI@12.3:H023hgwT@7/Introduction-to-Race-and-Ethnicity.

For further information about gender, sex, and sexuality, visit Chapter 12 (Gender, Sex, and Sexuality) of the OpenStax Sociology 2E OER textbook: https://cnx.org/contents/AgQDEnLI@12.3:T_-LTWXd@7/Introduction-to-Gender-Sex-and-Sexuality.

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Adaptions: Relocated learning objectives, added videos, removed Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom video as it appears elsewhere in the text.

Adaptions: Relocated learning objectives, added videos, removed Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom video as it appears elsewhere in the text.

Added link to OpenStax Sociology 2E Chapter 11: Race and Ethnicity.

OpenStax, Introduction to Sociology 2e. OpenStax CNX. Feb 19, 2019 http://cnx.org/contents/02040312-72c...9333f3e1d@12.3

Added link to OpenStax Sociology 2E Chapter 12: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality.

OpenStax, Introduction to Sociology 2e. OpenStax CNX. Feb 19, 2019 http://cnx.org/contents/02040312-72c...9333f3e1d@12.3

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9.4: Studying at a Predominately White Institution (PWI)

Linnea Spitzer

Although many colleges and universities promote values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, actually attending classes may not feel very diverse, equitable, or inclusive. This is because colleges and universities in the United States were established primarily in order to educate White upper class men and still maintain many values inherent in dominant White culture. These values influence everything from the ways classes are taught (few hours in class, lots of individual work) to the ways the quarter or semester system is organized (for example, why does everything shut down for spring break?) (Anthony Jack). They also include expectations of ways of being, like the prioritization of independence and individualism over interdependence and collectivism (Vox).

If you are not an upper class White man, attending a predominantly White institution (PWI) can feel confusing and isolating. However, it doesn't mean that you don't belong there. The question is what makes these institutions so inhospitable for people from non-dominant racial, ethnic, economic, or linguistic groups?

Video: Anthony Jack "On Diversity: Access Ain't Inclusion"

In this TED Talk, Anthony Jack explains how PWIs often overlook the needs and experiences of students from less privileged backgrounds.

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The Hidden Curriculum

One of the major challenges faced by students from non-dominant groups who are attending PWIs is navigating the "hidden curriculum" (also discussed in Chapter 6: Evolution To College: Becoming A College Student). The Glossary of Education Reform defines the hidden curriculum as "the unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives" that are part of an educational experience. The hidden curriculum "consists of the unspoken or implicit academic, social, and cultural messages that are communicated to students while they are in school" (https://www.edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum/). The problem is that these messages are rarely explained because a shared cultural understanding is generally assumed by professors, advisors, and administrators. Navigating the Hidden Curriculum

It is certainly challenging to navigate the hidden curriculum, but this doesn't mean it can't be done. You deserve to understand the material and the expectations in your classes. Here are some ways to make sure that you have the support you need to figure out all the implicit expectations of college life:

1. **Ask your professors lots of questions.** Make note of anything that is unclear, then stay after class or go to office hours. As mentioned in many chapters of this textbook, professors expect students to visit their office hours and are often happy to clarify their expectations.
2. **Get to know Juniors and Seniors.** You can meet students in later years of their programs at social events held by your department or by cultural affinity groups. Relationships with students who have already "been through it" can be invaluable. They can tell you about classes to take and classes to avoid, about scholarships, clubs, internships, or other ways to get involved with university life.
3. **Identify potential mentors.** As you are meeting people (students, faculty, advisors), notice who in your circle 1) seems to "get it" or understand what's going on, and 2) is some you trust to give you good advice. Work on building relationships with these people, so they can support you in your studies. Building these kinds of trusting relationships may take time, so start by identifying people you think you might be able to work with, and then cultivate relationships with them. Reach out to them at least once per term to meet up and chat informally.

Microaggressions

In addition to needing to navigate the hidden curriculum, many students also commonly encounter microaggressions from other students, faculty, advisors and university staff. The idea of microaggressions was first defined by Chester M. Pierce and was further developed by Derald Wing Sue, who writes that racial microaggressions are, "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and

insults toward people of color. Perpetrators of microaggressions are often unaware that they engage in such communications when they interact with racial/ethnic minorities."

Video: Derald Wing Sue explains microaggressions

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According to Sue, there are three primary types of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Microassaults are the most overt and direct of the three, and can involve name-calling, threats, or very obvious acts of discrimination. Microinsults are comments or behaviors that "convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity". They might include a white person asking a person of color "how did you get your job," implying that the person of color was not qualified, or may be an "undeserving" recipient of an affirmative action program. The third type of microaggressions is "microinvalidations," which are comments that invalidate the experience of being a member of a minoritized community. They might include a white person saying that they "don't see color" or asking a non-white person "where are you from?" implying that the target of this question does not belong in the US. These microinvalidations can actually be more harmful than overt acts of discrimination because they are hard to prove, and because the perpetrators often think they are acting with good intentions.

According to the University of Washington, people who are the target of microaggressions often react in three ways:

- **Cognitive** – internal dialogue about whether to respond
- **Behavioral** – careful attention to word choice, tone, posture, and body language
- **Emotional** – exhausted, angry, anxious

Video: How students have experienced and responded to microaggressions

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=127#oembed-3

Activity 47.1: What have you learned about microaggressions?

1. Watch the video above about student experiences with microaggressions.
2. What types of microaggressions (microassaults, microinsults, microinvalidations) do the students report experiencing?
3. How did they respond to these microaggressions?
4. How would you have responded if you had been one of these students?

How to address microaggressions

Whether a microaggression is targeted at you or at someone you know, it is important to have strategies to deal with it. Whether or not you deal with a microaggression head on will depend on how safe, supported, and emotionally resilient you feel in the moment. It may also depend on the relationship you have with the person committing the microaggression. The following section provides some tips on how to handle microaggressions you experience or witness.

1. **Report bias, harassment, or discrimination**
   Everyone has the right to feel safe and validated in their college experience. No one should make you or anyone else feel uncomfortable or unsafe. If comments or behaviors that someone has made make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, it is very important to report them. Most universities and colleges have confidential or anonymous reporting hotlines for biased behaviors, including harassment and discrimination. For example, Portland State University has a Bias Incident Report Form and a process for filing a complaint of discrimination by a faculty or staff of the university. You will not get in trouble for filing such forms, and the team in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion will work with you to determine the best course of action.
2. **Call out microaggressions**
   If you feel like you can do so safely, it is important to call out incidents of microaggressions. Doing so can not only help the perpetrator understand why such comments or actions are harmful, but also provide resolution for the recipient of a microaggression. If you experience a microaggression directly, or if you witness a microaggression, Ganote, Cheung and Souza suggest responding with a technique like Open The Front Door to Communication (OTFD). These steps include:
   ▪ **Observe**: Concrete, factual, and observable (not evaluative)

- **Think**: Thoughts based on observation (yours and/or theirs)
- **Feel**: How this makes you feel in the moment
- **Desire**: Specific request or inquiries about desired outcome

***Example OTFD**:*

*I noticed (**Observe**) that you asked me where I was from. I think (**Think**) that you are assuming I was not born in the US. This comment makes me feel **(Feel)** like I don't belong here. Can you tell me (**Desire**) what your intention was with that question?*

3. **Identify who you can rely on for support and validation**
   Studying at a PWI can be exhausting. Many students have to contend with daily microaggressions and other forms of discrimination, both overt and subtle. As mentioned in previous chapters and later in this unit, having a community that you can rely on will help you process these feelings and build reserves for another day. Maintain regular connections with your family and friends, and try to build new connections with people at your university.
4. **Talk about your experience**
   If you have experienced microaggressions or have witnessed them, it's important to talk about this experience and how it made you feel. Diversity, equity, and inclusion expert, April Allen, argues that that sharing experiences helps build empathy, which can help people relate to each other better. She says that empathy makes people ask themselves:
   1. How would I feel if this happened to me if I were in a similar situation?
   2. How would I want to be treated if I were them?
   3. Have I ever experienced a similar emotion that can help me better show support through my actions?

Another way to share your experience is through Racial Climate Surveys, which are often conducted by universities to learn more about how students are experiencing race and racism on campus. It is important to complete these surveys, if you receive them in your email. Your experience is important and can help the university understand how best to support all students on campus.

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Spitzer, L. Studying at a Predominately White Institution (PWI). In *Blueprint for Success in College and Career, Oregon Edition*. Access for free at: https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/oregonblueprint/chapter/9-time-management-theory/

Dillon, D., Cárdenas, N., & Spitzer, L. (2021). *Blueprint for Success in College and Career, Oregon Edition*. Open Oregon Educational Resources.

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9.5: Why So Many Questions?

Fatima Rodriguez Johnson

Fatima Rodriguez Johnson

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

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

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

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

We were also asked questions that made us angry:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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9.6: Cultural Competence

Amy Baldwin

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.[5] 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 49.1 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 49.2 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 Gender Pronoun Examples

Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example

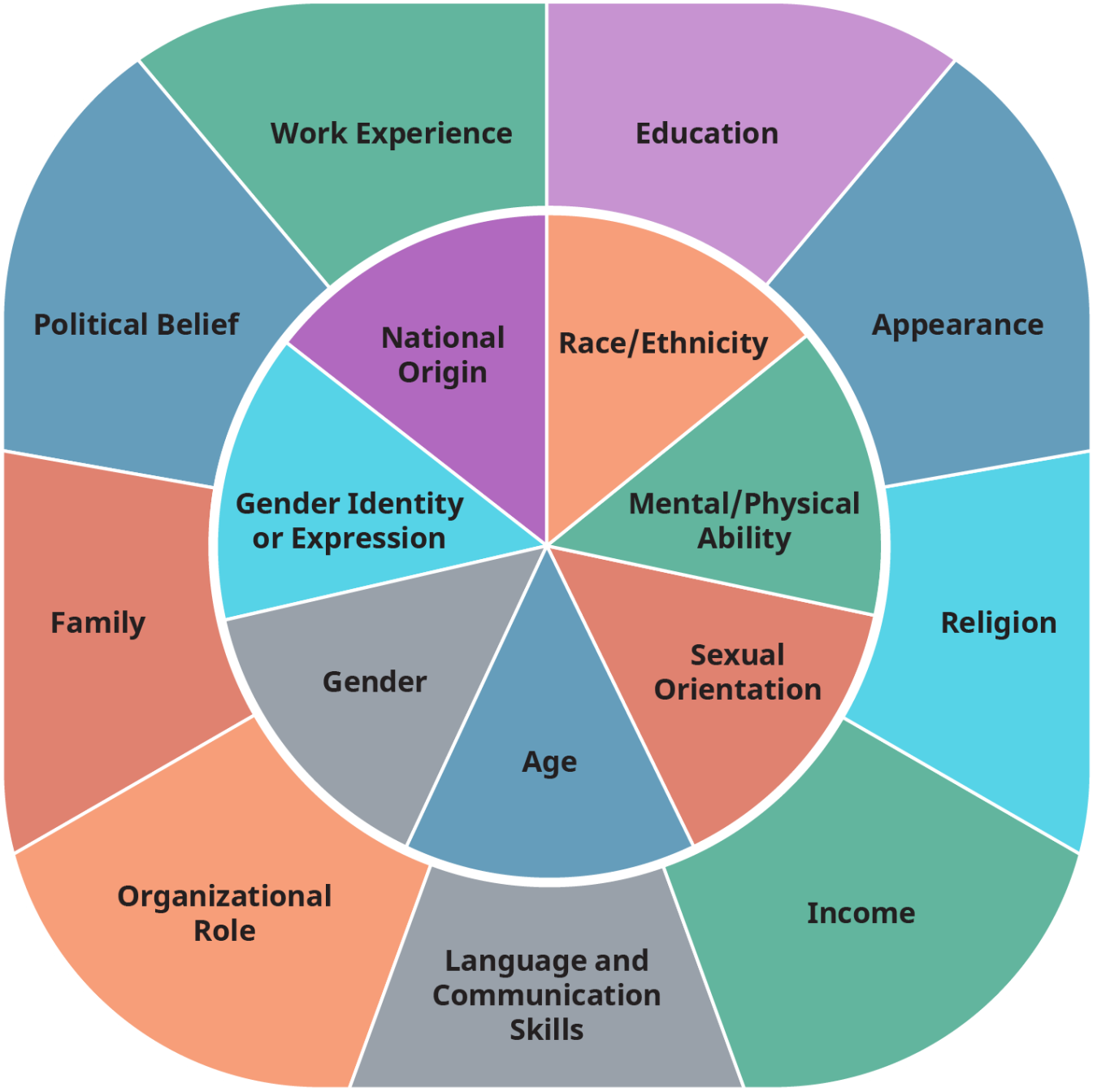
Subjective	Objective	Possessive	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themself	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

Table 49.1 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.

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.



https://socialsci.libretexts.org/@go/page/365079

Figure 49.3 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?

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OpenStax College Success Chapter 9.2. Categories of Diversity. Access for free at: https://openstax.org/books/college-success/pages/9-2-categories-of-diversity

Baldwin, A. (2020). Categories of Diversity. In *College Success*. OpenStax.

Modifications: Renumbered figures and tables.

Footnotes

APA Dictionary of Psychology https://dictionary.apa.org/identity proper citation to come

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9.7: Cultural Humility

Linnea Spitzer; Norma Cárdenas; and Dave Dillon

The words “culture” and “humility” are common, and most people would be able to define these two words separately. Culture is usually defined as shared ways of being, including beliefs, food, language, and traditions, as well as many other things. Take a moment and think to yourself, what is my culture? How would I define it? What kinds of examples could I give to demonstrate the uniqueness of my culture?

Humility can be typically thought of as not putting yourself above others, considering carefully the worth and value of others around you. But what does it mean to have “cultural humility”? People who study intercultural communication say that learning to respect and interact with people from other cultures is a life-long endeavor.

Cultural Humility vs. Cultural Competency

Cultural competence is the social awareness that everyone is unique, that different cultures and backgrounds affect how people think and behave, and that this awareness allows people to behave appropriately and perform effectively in culturally diverse environments. Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to function effectively.

The idea of cultural competency has been popular as a way of helping people interact with those who are culturally different from them. However, a 1998 article by Drs. Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-Garcia, titled “Cultural humility versus cultural competence: A critical distinction in defining physician training outcomes multicultural education” suggested that approaches emphasizing humility, rather than competency might be better at helping people avoid stereotyping or generalizing other groups. Although Tervalon and Murray-Garcia focused mostly on healthcare workers, their findings have been also used in training for social workers and educators.

The following video shows how cultural competency is a goal, whereas cultural humility is a mindset. How might this be a more helpful way to approaching interactions with different cultures?

Video: What is Cultural Humility?

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.pub/modernblueprint/?p=135#oembed-1

As a college student, you are likely to find yourself in diverse classrooms, organizations, and – eventually – workplaces. It is important to prepare yourself to be able to adapt to diverse environments.

Cultural humility can help you learn to be aware of your own cultural practices, values, and experiences, and to be able to read, interpret, and respond to those of others. Such awareness will help you successfully navigate the cultural differences you will encounter in diverse environments. Cultural humility is critical to working and building relationships with people from different cultures; it is so critical, in fact, that the ability to interact with other cultures is now one of the most highly desired skills in the modern workforce. [2]

To learn more about cultural humility, visit this training page from Boston University and download their PowerPoint and Curriculum: https://ciswh.org/chw-curriculum/cultural-humility

Cultural Quotient (CQ)

Cultural Quotient (CQ) helps us understand and communicate with people from other cultures effectively. It is one’s ability to recognize cultural differences through knowledge and mindfulness, and behave appropriately when facing people from other cultures. **Mindful** is defined as being conscious or aware of something. The cultural intelligence approach goes beyond this emphasis on knowledge because it also emphasizes the importance of developing an overall repertoire of understanding, motivation, and skills that enables one to move in and out of lots of different cultural contexts[1].

Due to the globalization of our world, people of different cultures today live together in communities across our many nations. This presents more opportunities to interact with diverse individuals in many facets and thus, today’s workforce would need to know the customs and worldviews of other cultures. Therefore, people with a higher CQ can better interact with people from other cultures easily and more effectively.

Intersectionality

In considering culture and cultural awareness, it is important to recognize that no person is just one culture. Instead, scholars like Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins argued that people are made up of multiple, intersecting identities and cultures. Crenshaw called this frame "intersectionality." Intersectionality is the idea that your identity might be influenced by any number of these factors:

- Gender
- Race
- Linguistic background
- Sexual orientation
- (Dis)ability
- Religion

All of these factors not only influence how you see yourself, but also how others might see you. Very often, race and gender are at the top of this list because they are the most visible to people who don't know you. However, your personal and cultural identity is likely influenced by a mix of these factors, rather than just one or two.

Take a minute to think about these questions:

- What do you think people assume about you when they see you?
  - What are these assumptions based on?
  - What would you add or change to correct these assumptions?
- Have you ever assumed something about someone else's culture that was later proven wrong or incomplete?
  - What did you assume?
  - What background did you have that led you to that assumption?
  - How was this assumption corrected?

Example Scenarios:

Minh's case:

Minh grew up in Vietnam where the classroom environment is quite different from that of the US. He was taught that looking someone in the eye (especially a superior, like a teacher), is rude and that students should be quiet and take notes in class. Students in his high school classes did not engage in class discussions or ask the teacher questions, especially during class. He was taught only to offer an answer if he was called upon.

The American classroom experience was completely disorienting for Minh. He is frustrated with how much the students talk and how little the professor actually "teaches." It seems like the professor is just letting students dominate the class with discussion, even when they don't know what they are talking about. He struggles to break into group discussions, even though he is fluent in English. It just seems like everyone is talking over each other.

Around midterm, Minh checks his grade on the learning management system and sees that he has a 30% for participation. What cultural assumptions have the professor and other students made about the classroom learning environment? What would you do if you were Minh? How could the professor and other students in the class create a more inclusive environment for students like Minh?

Asma's case

Asma is from a Muslim family. She grew up in Beaverton, Oregon, and attended an all girls high school in Portland. In Asma's culture, it is considered inappropriate for men and women to have physical contact, if they are not related or married. This extends to shaking hands.

Asma is really interested in studying Spanish and traveling in the Spanish speaking world, so she signs up for Spanish classes and begins attending events put on by La Casa Latina, the cultural resource center for Spanish-speaking students. She wants to fit in and meet people, but many people she talks to find her stand-offish and not friendly. How might cultural norms around physical contact affect Asma's ability to make friends in this new community?

Cultural humility is a skill that you can learn and improve upon over time and with practice. What actions can you take to build your cultural humility skills?

- **Acknowledge the many aspects of your culture that are both unique and shared.** Beyond language, religion, and food, you may have a wealth of other cultural identities that will help you connect with other people. Think about your work, your major, your goals, or your hobbies, or think about other aspects of your identity, like your race, gender, or ability. How do these aspects of your identity intersect with the identities of others around you? How do they make you unique? Understanding that you and others around you are unique, complex individuals can help you both find common ground and build an understanding of the value of difference.
- **Consider your own (possibly unconscious) biases.** Biases and stereotypes are fixed, simplistic views of what people in a certain group are like. These beliefs are often the basis for prejudice and discrimination: behaving differently toward someone because you stereotype them in some way. Biases are generally learned and emerge in the dominant culture's attitudes toward those from outside that dominant group, but they can also be shared by non-dominant groups in ways that uphold the power of the dominant elite. 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? We develop biases from many sources, including media, the influence of family, and/or peers. Thinking about and identifying your biases are the first steps in breaking out of these ingrained thought patterns.
- **Do not try to ignore differences among people.** Some people try so hard to avoid biases 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.** This can be challenging, especially because biases are often unconscious and can come out in many subtle ways. When you meet people for the first time, try to think of them as individuals first, members of a group second; remember that any given generalization simply may not apply to an individual. Be open-minded and treat everyone with respect as an individual with their own ideas, attitudes, and preferences.
- **Develop cultural sensitivity for communication.** Realize that your words and body language 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. Similarly, since body language often varies among different cultures, pay attention to the body language of the people you are communicating with. Pay special attention to whether or not people want to have physical contact (shaking hands, hugging) or how easily people are willing to make eye contact. Noting the responses and behaviors of people around you will help ensure that they 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 you are attending a Predominantly White Institution, it may feel safer, emotionally and physically, to stay close to people you identify with. However, there are many opportunities to build connections with others in your classes who are not like you. 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.
- **Give others the benefit of the doubt.** Many college students have not had the opportunity to interact with people who are different from them in some way. Because of this, initial interactions may be a little awkward, and microagressions may be made in both directions. Be honest with your classmates if they have said something inappropriate. Likewise, be open if someone gives you similar feedback.

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9.8: Navigating the Diversity Landscape and Discrimination

Amy Baldwin

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.

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.

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.
	"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."

Category	Microaggression	Why It's Offensive
	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.
	"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.

Table 51.1 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.)

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."

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 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 51.1 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.

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.”

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?

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9.9: Cultural Competence and Self-Awareness

Amy Baldwin

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,"[9] 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.

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Baldwin, A. (2020). Inclusivity and Civility: What Role Can I Play? In *College Success*. OpenStax.

Footnotes:

Golbach, Jeremy. "A Guide to Discussion Identity, Power, and Privilege." https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/dive...and-privilege/

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9.10: Anti-Racism

Rebecca Heibert

In the past, Europeans colonized many different countries in the world. This resulted in a redistribution of world resources through the actions of the dominant Europeans. In other words, the Europeans held racist beliefs and used them to justify the exercise of power in many areas of life, thereby producing dramatic negative economic and social impacts for many peoples around the world. The effects of racism are still felt all around the globe today because racialized people, or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour), continue to face barriers when accessing education, healthcare, and employment, and experience an overall lack of influence in decision making in government and business.

While you read, consider the following:

- What information is new?
- What did I used to think?
- How can I use this information to welcome others?

Racism is a set of economic, political, and ideological practices whereby a dominant group exercises control over subordinate groups.

Racism is a concept founded on the scientifically incorrect idea that there are biological inequalities between people of different races. Racism is informed by the belief that some races are superior than others and that the superior races should be able to control so-called inferior races. Scientifically, all human beings are from the same species and therefore have the same abilities and potentials. Only when one group of people exercises control over another group does that limit their access to opportunities and therefore the abilities of that group.

For those who come from a privileged racial background, unpacking what it means to be white can prove a challenging and confronting task. The privilege of being white in a Euro-centric cultures means that a person doesn't need to be aware of their culture. They have been designed for the culture and the culture has been designed for them. Effective change lies in making whiteness visible by exploring it as a racial or cultural construct, and defining whiteness in a non-defensive and non-racist manner.

In order to break down the barrier of racism we need to be anti-racist. This means white society must be willing to look at themselves honestly, to confront the truth about themselves and the world, and to realize that non-white people experience the world differently than white people. Being anti-racist means taking action to make space for racialized peoples' voices and recognizing when systems have not been set up to support racialized people.

Exercise

Consider the following questions:

- How has racism affected my life?
- What can I do to be anti-racist and break down barriers to make space for everyone's voices?

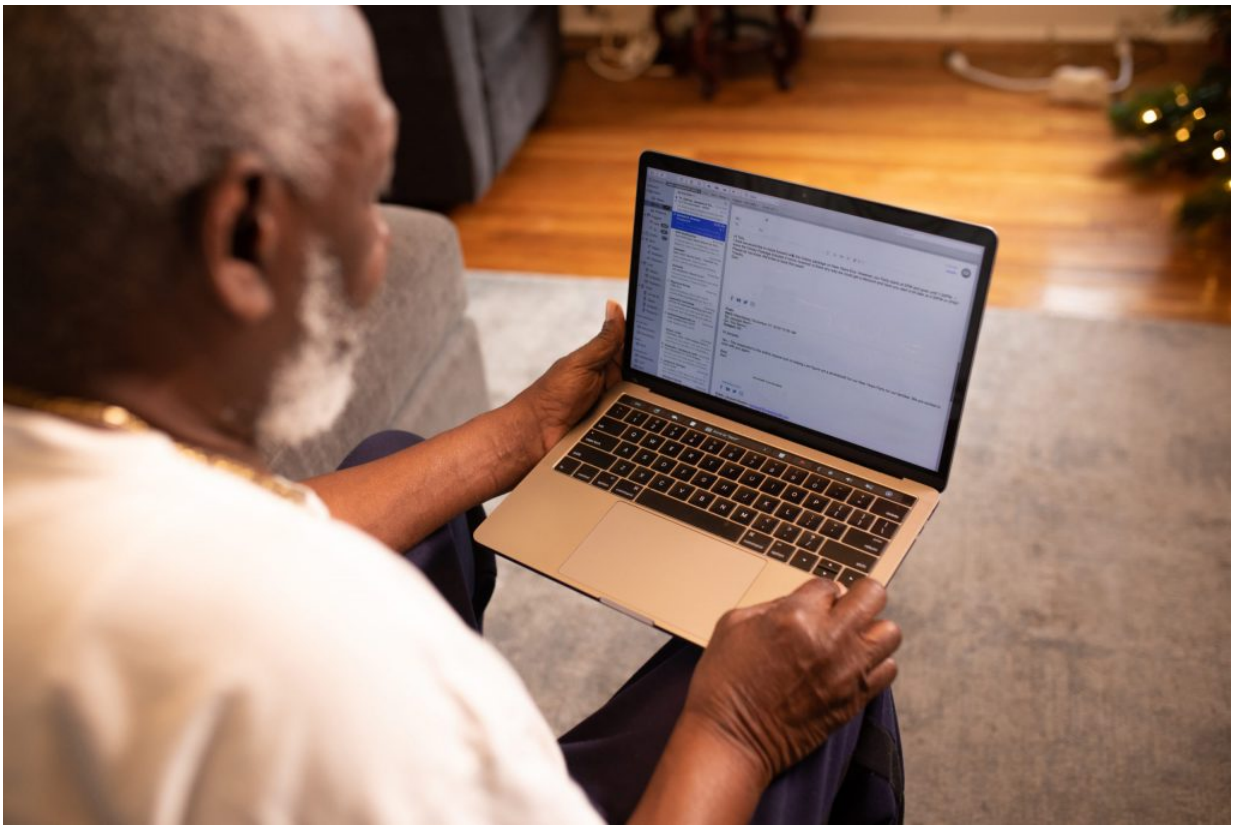


Figure 53.1 Older man using laptop. Author: Nappy Co. Image source: https://nappy.co/photo/346. License: CC0 (Creative Commons Zero)

Key Takeaways

Europeans colonized many different parts of the world and exercised control over many groups of racialized people. This colonization continues to be felt by racialized people when they face barriers to community supports such as healthcare and education. People with privilege need to increase their awareness of what that privilege affords and how a lack of privilege can increase barriers for others. In college, we can work toward being anti-racist by ensuring that everyone's voice is heard and by breaking down barriers that create oppression for racialized people.

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