

THE SUCCESSFUL SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR (2nd Ed.)

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THE SUCCESSFUL UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the next stage of your life; one which you are hoping will be everything you've imagined your whole life up until this important moment. New beginnings, especially during major life transitions, are incredibly exciting. They hold the promise of all of your dreams fulfilled! What could be more important than this? On the other hand, these transitions can also be quite anxiety-provoking. Will I meet people I like? Will they like me? Will I do well in my classes? Will I succeed in my major? Will I be happy in college? These questions are normal and expected for new students, and just about every new student you meet, no matter how confident s/he appears from the outside, will likely be experiencing the same fears.

It is not just a roll of the dice that determines whether you'll be happy and successful in college, however. You don't have to just cross your fingers and hope for a good outcome! In fact, successful, satisfied college students actually share many similar characteristics and what it comes down to is not so much how *smart* the best students are, but rather what their *actions* are, and the small daily habits they *practice*. The good news? These traits *can* be acquired and, with a little daily practice, will quickly become part of your normal "academic self:" the behavior of a satisfied and successful university scholar.

Successful student behavior is broadly classified here into eight general categories: 1) the mindset and daily habits of a successful student, including student-professor and student-university "etiquette;" 2) the foundations on which learning occurs, including organization, time management, and understanding academic expectations; 3) understanding and acting on the differences between "homework" and "studying;" 4) managing the day-to-day business of your classes; 5) demonstrating effectively what you know in how you prepare for and take exams, completing assignments or writing papers; 6) monitoring your academic progress and your progression toward your degree; 7) where and to whom you go, for what; and 8) how to be resourceful in how you use the supports around you to achieve your academic goals.

This manual is intended to be used multiple ways. It can be read straight through by first-year or transfer students to get a multi-faceted and unified understanding of what it means to be a successful university student. The manual is also intended for use when students encounter different situations as they progress through their first few semesters at university. To do this, students are encouraged to use either the Table of Contents at the beginning or the Index at the back to locate the specific information they need for their current situation. Finally, it is designed to be used as a refresher course and gentle reminder of the basic principles involved in being a successful college student. Priorities clash, things are put off, and good intentions fall under the wheels of familiar and perhaps not-so-helpful habits. It will serve as a friendly prod to

re-set your compass and re-commit to your high achieving college-student self. All satisfied and high-achieving students were once where you are now. Not all started their academic career at the top of their game; but all of them *have* learned to master the behaviors and attitudes of a successful student, and they now have fulfilling and academically successful lives to show for their efforts.

You will, too.

HOW DO *YOU* MEASURE SUCCESS?



“You are what you repeatedly do. Excellence is not an event. It is a habit.” (Aristotle)

CHAPTER 1. THE MINDSET OF A SCHOLAR

What Successful Scholars Share

High school is in your rear view mirror and college stretches out ahead. If you're like most students you have hopes of high grades and a successful, happy experience. But high grades and “academic success” are endpoints; destinations in the future. How do you get from here, a new high school graduate to there, a successful college student? What is between is a long series of distinct and separate “now's,” countless individual moments in which you will make choices and take different actions that lead to a long term result.

These countless daily decisions are largely determined by your mindset, an already-existing frame of mind that is founded upon your moral and religious values, your goals, your upbringing and your culture. It informs what future you attempt to create, the values with which you create it, and with what means and quality. For example, if your mindset embraces your university's mission of wanting to create a world that is “harmonious, just and merciful,” how might that mindset determine the academic behaviors you engage in today, this week, or this year?



It is worth taking time to consider what you believe about being a college student and university scholar; about what it takes to become one at deeper, more meaningful levels. **The clearer you are about who you are, what you value and what your mindset is, the easier and more consistent your individual choices will become, leading you to become the person, and scholar, you want to be.**

Take some time to consider here: What do I value most in the world? What are the gifts I am bringing that I want to put to work in college and beyond? What is my college's mission statement and how does that connect to who I am? What would it look like for me in my college experience if I am learning, acting, and making decisions that accurately reflect who I am as an individual? Who do I truly want to be in this new setting that is the doorway to the rest of my adult life?

Thoughts:

As it turns out, many successful college scholars share certain characteristics that reveal themselves in many of their daily or repeated actions. Here are some of these:

1. **Successful, satisfied students get involved early in their academic careers.** Getting involved is a quick and effective way to meet and form friendships with people with similar interests, and to get fired up about your chosen field. It doesn't require an extroverted personality to achieve but can result in satisfying, long-term relationships.
2. **Successful students stay mentally and physically “present.”** They don't mentally check out and let their college experience just happen *to* them. They go after *it*.
 - a. They check their email *at least three times* a day and *respond promptly* to communications to them from professors, advisors, administrative staff, etc.
 - b. They attend all classes except when contagious with illness or have an unavoidable emergency. They notify their professors in advance and make concrete plans for completing missed work or assignments.
 - c. They review nightly what's coming the next day as well as later in the week.
3. **Successful students educate themselves about what is expected of them.** They read their course syllabi completely to understand their professors' mindsets and expectations. They note how their final course grades break down into different assignments and tests that are worth x% of the final grade. They transfer important dates into a separate planner where the whole list is in one location, and look at it daily - reassigning long-term projects into concrete, shorter-term goals as due dates approach. Many students put reminders into their smart phones or iPads and use audible alerts to alert them when things are due or about to happen.
4. **Successful students keep careful records.** They record all grades they receive, along with noting what percentage of the final grade each of them represents (not all A's & C's are created equal if one is worth 5% of your grade and another is worth 35%!). If they are missing information they ask their professor or a reliable classmate for it. They store all materials, handouts, course information, returned papers & tests, etc. in chronological (or other meaningful) order in separate folders, or in one or two larger binders. They can put their hands on important papers in 30 seconds or less.
5. **Successful, satisfied students avoid “Debbie-Downers,”** people who try to establish superiority and popularity by being loudly negative about things. This attitude is usually a thin mask hiding a deep insecurity, so don't be fooled by the superior tone. Step back from the pull of the feigned confidence and ask yourself if this is who *you* are, or the people *you* really want to be affiliated with. Even if it looks like they're getting the attention/results they

seek, remind yourself that there are very many students who, like you, don't buy their game. Go and find *those* people.

6. **Successful students discover how to have fun and to take care of their academic responsibilities.** This is probably one of the most important skills to master, which you will want to emulate. They stay clear of those students who respond to their college freedom with excessive partying, acting out, skipping classes and/or not studying. Even if it appears like they're getting away with it, evidence shows that it invariably catches up to them. It *is* possible to enjoy your college social life *and* do well in school. Good students do it every day; watch them and notice how they do it.
7. **Self-reliant, successful students are resourceful.** They know who and what is available to them to help them achieve their goals. They find out what resources/supports the university has to offer and they make frequent use of them.
8. **Above all, successful students are flexible.** They know that progress will often be two steps forward, one step back. Mistakes are inevitable but good students don't let setbacks rattle them deeply. They learn to regroup, adjust, and move forward again. Like the hour hand on a clock, at some point they look around and suddenly notice that things are very different and they're not the person they used to be; they're better. We're each a work in progress.



COLLEGE ETIQUETTE...



“Etiquette” is a word one doesn’t often hear these days. It calls to mind which spoon to use at a formal dinner or when and how to write a thank-you letter. In reality, though, etiquette refers to how one is expected to act, according to present social norms, under particular circumstances or in different contexts. Although the kind of etiquette of “Dear Abby” may be passé, behavioral expectations in different contexts are still very much alive.

The context of the university is no exception. There is an etiquette to behaving in college that is different from high school which informs students how they should carry themselves in the university setting. This is particularly true when interacting with professors or professional staff at the university. In general, these interactions now happen at a more adult and formal level than that to which you may be accustomed. If in doubt, you might ask yourself, “How would my parents or other mature adult behave in this situation?” Your answer to this question will likely be a reliable guide. Three main types of interpersonal interactions at a university are the most common: in-person interaction (one-to-one and in the classroom), email communication, and telephone contact.

IN-PERSON COMMUNICATION:

- **One-to-one meetings:** Successful students who have mastered the expectations of college know that there are only three times when you simply show up without an appointment to see a professor, a staff person in a particular department, or to speak to someone about the services of the office itself:
 1. You have an appointment that was scheduled in advance;
 2. You are there during posted office or drop-in hours;
 3. The office is set up with a reception desk designed to greet walk-ins (e.g. Registrar, Business Office, Student Affairs Office, Library, etc.).

Other than these three instances please show your professors and other university staff the courtesy that you yourself would want and schedule an appointment. If you are in a crisis you should at least call ahead and see if someone is available to see you right away or use one of the services that has a reception desk. Otherwise, you could end up more upset than when you started.

How should you act during a meeting with a professor or other university staff member? If you want the meeting to go well:

1. Be on time.
2. If you can't keep the appointment and it is the same day, call to cancel *and* send them an email so as to make sure they get the message. If the appointment is not until the next day or later you can either call *or* email your cancellation. This allows the person you're scheduled to see to offer that time to someone else. No-shows for scheduled appointments are not acceptable, especially if you want your professor to think well of you. If you do forget, however, send a sincere apology and request to re-schedule. Life happens!
3. Come to your appointment prepared. Know what it is you are asking for or want to discuss, as well as what you need or want from them in return (e.g., "I was wondering if you could look over my introduction and tell me if I'm on the right track..."). Do not just lay your complaints at their feet expecting they will solve your problem for you. This is called "shifting the monkey" from your back to theirs. In all likelihood your person will be glad to help you figure out what to do about your monkey, but it is still your monkey!



- **In-class communication:** Successful students handle themselves maturely in the classroom in interactions with their professor and with their fellow students. The days of adolescent acting out in class are long gone; you're now paying dearly to sit in that class! Here are some tips for in-class etiquette:
 - Silence your cell phone and store it out of sight (not on your desk). Don't even think about looking at it.
 - If you need your laptop so you can access course materials online during class or take lecture notes, stay on these page(s)! Do not stray to social media or surf the web. It is disrespectful and rude to both your professor *and* to your fellow classmates.
 - Raise your hand to speak unless there is a free-flowing class discussion taking place.

- When commenting on another student's contribution, you are welcome to disagree but be respectful by disagreeing only with the *content* of the contribution, not attacking the *person* who made it.
- Not all opinions are created equally. Some are more educated, well-informed and well-reasoned than others. Go for those.
- If you are one who tends to raise your hand all the time, try and limit yourself to 'x' number of comments per class (three or four is usually plenty). The more dominant you are, the more passive your classmates will be, making for a lopsided and unsatisfying experience for everyone.
- Conversely, if you tend to hold back for fear of sounding stupid, challenge yourself (participation is often part of your course grade so this stretch will be worth it). Start with contributions about which you are confident, and then get a little bolder with time and venture into areas where there are no right or wrong answers or about which you feel strongly. This will encourage other students to do the same, making for a stimulating and thought-provoking discussion and a more enjoyable class experience for everyone.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE:

Alice approaches Professor Einstein before class.

Alice: "Did you get my emails? You never replied. Now I've missed the course Withdraw deadline because of it."

Prof. Einstein: "When did you send them?"

Alice: "Last night."

Prof. Einstein: "I don't work at night, Alice, although I usually check email at least once during the evening. But I don't remember seeing an email from you. What time did you send it?"

Alice: "I sent the first one at 11:15 and the second one at 11:45."

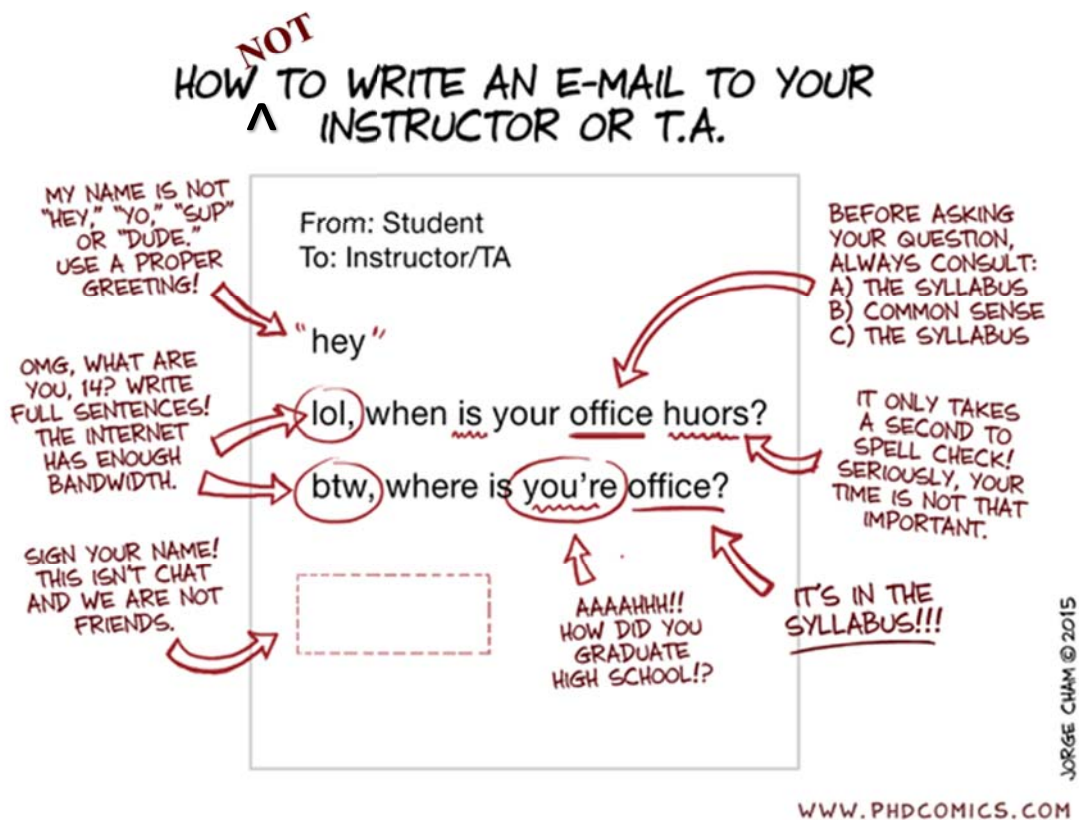
Prof. Einstein: (silence).

Exchanges like this one occur frequently on college campuses and reveal a common disconnect between students and their professors. What's wrong with this picture?

- Students do their work late at night. They often start studying long after their professors have gone to bed or are watching their favorite crime drama (yes, some do). Professors and university staff don't generally work at night or on weekends unless those are their regular work hours. Communication by email should always be sent during business hours if you need or expect a response quickly but you must also give your professor time to respond, generally up to a day. Replies to your emails will usually come during the

school day. If time is of the essence then you are advised to plan ahead, mark your email as high importance, or pair it with a phone call.

- University deadlines (course withdrawals, etc.) are widely published months in advance, however many students often don't think about deadlines until they're almost upon them. Plan accordingly if you need a professor's signature or an office's official permission for something. It will not be their fault if they can't be reached and you miss a deadline, especially if you have given them less than 24 hours' notice.
- When you write to a professor, university staff member or administrator take your language to a higher level and take responsibility for the issue you are presenting.



Try this instead:

Dear Prof. Einstein:

I'm sorry for the late notice but I have a bad sore throat and fever, and will not make it to class today. I've submitted the assignment that was due today in the class drop box and will also check with Tom S. to get copies of today's notes and find out what took place in class.

Sincerely,

Levi Vygotsky

In short, your emails to professors, or any other University staff person or administrator should:

1. Open with a greeting (Dear....);
2. Be written in complete sentences with proper grammar;
3. State clearly what it is you need or want to express while also accepting ownership for the situation; don't ramble or get into blame speech, long explanations or excuse-making;
4. Let them know clearly and succinctly how they can help you (if relevant);
5. End with a formal closing (Sincerely...).

TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE:



- Give the person you're calling time to check their messages as well as time to get back to you. This could take up to a day, so be patient.
- At the start of your message say who you are and when you are calling. ("Hi, this is Annie Oakley from your PSY100 class; it's Tuesday afternoon around 2:30"). Give them a brief synopsis of what you want them to know, enough so they know generally what the call is about and are prepared to respond.
- Ask politely (don't order them) to return your call. Give them a range of times that they can call you back, during *business* hours.
- Give them your phone number S-L-O-W-L-Y, and then repeat it!

THE LAST WORD ON ETIQUETTE: Venting & Complaining vs. Problem-solving

Everyone needs to vent feelings of frustration, anger, or hurt on occasion. How, when, and to whom you do it makes all the difference, however. Mature, successful students choose carefully those people with whom they air their feelings. They often choose close friends and confidants, trusted advisors or family members for their emotional "download". It is generally understood at these times that they are just venting and that it will go no further. Then later, once the feelings are out and the air has cleared, mature problem-solving can begin. Here are some other general guidelines for problem solving difficult situations on campus:

Do not:

- Go on Facebook, Twitter or other social media and start bashing your professor or other university person (student or staff), university office or the university itself. It makes you look bad, the university *which you represent* look bad, is usually a violation of the university's official Code of Conduct, *and* it lives online forever. "Say it, forget it; write it, regret it!"
- Start trash-talking openly in public about a professor, staff person or university office. Again, it only makes you look bad, and, if you're in mixed company, makes the university look bad as well. Most importantly, it encourages you to get – and stay - stuck

in the problem itself, and never moving past it to a solution. This is not healthy for you! Own that this is *your* experience and these are *your* feelings, and they are not necessarily those of the students or others around you who may have had a very different experience with the subject of your venting.

Do:

- Go into problem-solving mode once your feelings have been aired, *in private*. If you feel the need to take action, and not all situations call for it, first clarify to yourself what you feel is the problem, what *your* part in it may have been, and what you would like to see happen. Present this to the person or office with whom you have the conflict, being careful to make “I” statements, not “You” statements. Keep your cool no matter what! Attacking or losing your temper will surely get you nowhere.
- Seek support from your academic advisor, a dean, or another trusted adult if you need help getting clarity on the situation and figuring out a solution. They will offer you suggestions, and may even refer you to another person or office on campus who can more effectively assist you, but they will not take on your problem *for* you except under the most rare and serious circumstances. This is not to say they don’t care or do not want to help. This is them saying, “You can do this!”
- Be willing to consider options or solutions that may not perfectly match the solution you had in mind. A different solution may actually be a better one. Does it get the job done? Does it address the primary concerns? Be less attached to what the solution looks like and focus more on its effectiveness. In other words, focus less on *being* right and more on *doing* what is right.



CHAPTER 2. ORGANIZATION: THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS

Having the mindset of a successful university student is necessary, but not necessarily sufficient, to get you the success you desire in college. With your good attitude and set of interpersonal behaviors next you will need some concrete tools. First and foremost, and underlying everything, is organization. Organization will be key to creating the conditions under which you will maximize your chances of academic success. In high school much of the organization was done for you. Your day was divided into neat blocks of time. Your assignments were often given on one day and collected the next. There were often parents at home to make sure that things got done. Even the most disorganized student had multiple mechanism at work – people, systems, etc. – to help them stay on track. Much if not most of that disappears in college, however. It now becomes *your* responsibility.

There is too much to keep track of - too many odd times for things to happen, large gaps of time between classes, even larger gaps of time between an assignment given and an assignment due, myriad academic and non-academic details to monitor, etc. - to expect to keep it all in your head or shoved into a single binder or backpack in no particular order. Here again are some of the organizational habits of successful students:

I. SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS CREATE, AND CONSISTENTLY USE, A SYSTEM OF ORGANIZATION.

The specifics of the system are less important than the fact that a student has one and uses it regularly.

- Many students use binders with three rings, not spiral notebooks. They may have one binder for Mon/Wed/Fri classes and another for Tue/Thur classes.
- Each course in the binder has a labeled divider, with a pocket folder at the start of the section. Students purchase an inexpensive three-hole punch and clip all materials – syllabi, handouts, PowerPoint print-outs, etc. – into the binder in *chronological order* alongside their class notes.
- They use a daily planner to keep track of assignments and update it daily.
 - Ideally the planner should have either month-at-a-glance and week-at-a-glance pages (or some way of looking at both long-term and short-term).
 - Enter the important university calendar dates (last day to add/drop classes; last day to withdraw from classes; final exam dates; special university events, etc.)

- # OCT

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9

ASSIGNMENTS & TASKS

MON 5 French: First paper draft due ✓

Got math test back A- !!! yay me!

TUE 6 Art History: Test ✓

Work study job interview @ 3:00
(rescheduled for next Monday at 3:00)
Calc test study group @ 7, library ✓

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
8:00 INTERM FRN		8:00 INTER FRN		8:00 INTERM FRN
	9:00 ART HIST		9:00 ART HIST	
10:00 CALC I		10:00 CALC I		
2:00 COMP I	1:00 DRAWING II	2:00 COMP I	1:00 DRAWING II	2:00 COMP I
	4:00 Programming		4:00 Programming	

WED 7

Biblio for research paper due in Comp I
Calc test Chs. 5-7
Make appt. with advisor for next week

THU 8

Programming class cancelled!

Meet Mom for lunch at 11:30
Work on drawing project

FRI 9

French irregular verbs conjugation test

To NY with José and Kelsey!

- Once important due dates are entered into the planner, good students will often break the long-term projects/papers into intermediate deadlines *by working backward* from the due date. For example, if a student has a ten page paper due at the end of the month s/he might:
 1. Determine how long the final edits will take. Let's say it will take two days. This means that two days before the due date is when the rough draft needs to be completed. This date gets entered into the planner.
 2. How long will the rough draft take, once all the research is done, materials have been gathered and the outline/concept diagram of the paper has been created? Let's say one week. This means that a week before your rough draft is due you need to have completed all your research and have all your notes and outlines, and such. You enter this date into your planner.
 3. How long will it take for the research, taking notes, and creating an organizational structure for the paper? Let's say two weeks. This means that two weeks before you need to start writing your rough draft, you need to begin your research. Enter that date into the planner.

Assuming you stick roughly to your schedule, sufficient time for successful completion *with a high degree of quality* has been built in. The tricky part happens when students have multiple projects to plan or when unforeseen events take place that throw the plan off track. **If this happens, do not panic or let go of the plan altogether!** Instead, just re-group, move things around, and create a new plan. Remember, successful students have learned to be flexible. Resist the temptation to think of your plan as a static, immovable bully that exists to shame you and continually remind you of what you haven't done. This is why people resist schedules! Your plan exists to serve *you*. Therefore, work with it so that it helps you get done what *you* need and want to have done. You're in charge of *it* – not the other way around.

- Finally, good students think of time on three different levels that constantly meld into each other: long range, mid-range, and short-term.
 - Long range: the things that you put into your planner that are far off but will gradually move closer;
 - Mid-range: the things that you are working on but which are not yet upon you;
 - Short-range: the things you need to accomplish today, or this week.

As things get closer and then ticked off on your list, new projects will emerge on the horizon and the whole process repeats. Keep updating your planner to reflect this continual shifting.

- The short-term “assignments” you give yourself will always need to be balanced against current demands on your time: events, appointments, classes, athletic games, etc. **Good students have a weekly calendar with all of their “fixed” commitments on it so they know how much time they have available.**
- Many students ignore the mid-range planning altogether and suddenly find themselves up against deadlines with not enough time to get the job done with any degree of quality. Even procrastinators can still keep their procrastinator identities intact! They simply use their 11th hour energy to complete the *intermediate* goals instead of risking the entire project with a single last-minute push of time and energy!



THE PARADOX OF TIME MANAGEMENT AND GOOD PLANNING:

You, like many, may think of time management systems as restrictive and confining, like dancing in a strait jacket. In fact, the opposite is true. Consider the following scenarios:

Scenario 1: You're dancing on a raised platform about four feet square and six feet off the floor. The problem is, you are wearing a blindfold. You don't know where the edges of the platform are and you're afraid you're going to fall off. How freely do you dance?

Scenario 2: You're dancing on the same raised platform. Your eyes are open and you have a clear view of the entire platform space. You know exactly how much room you have to dance. You do so, freely and with energy.

Working without a plan is like dancing blindfolded on a raised platform. You never know when you're going to fall into an abyss of bad news such as discovering that the paper was due yesterday, the midterm exam is tomorrow morning, or the deadline to drop that sinking course was two weeks ago. Even when you're out having fun with friends you never quite completely relax, with worries grumbling in the background about what you may have overlooked, forgotten or put off until too late. How free and fun is that?

On the other hand, successful students closely monitor their courses and events and the deadlines and due dates of their lives. When they go out to have fun they do so guilt-free and they enjoy themselves fully. The difference is, they know what is due and when, and are aware of exactly where they stand on their academic affairs. Their schedules do not feel restrictive or confining to them because **their schedules and planners serve *them*, not the other way around.**

Students do inevitably experience stress from time to time, but many more are surprisingly relaxed. Their work is done and they're prepared for what is coming next. What's to worry? You see them in the dorm, knowing that they have the same 10 page paper due tomorrow as you have and yet they're socializing or watching TV. The difference between you and them? Their paper was finished earlier today, with just a few last-minute edits. This could have been you...

CHAPTER 3. WHAT'S SO DIFFERENT? CLASSES, TEACHERS & HOMEWORK, RIGHT?

The truth is, it *is* different. While it is true that college students still have classes, teachers and out-of-class work, the difference in how these things manifest in college vs. how they occurred in high school is huge, rendering the two settings difficult to equate except in the broadest strokes. There are many online charts and such out there that portray the differences between learning in high school and learning in college but they contain similar themes:

HIGH SCHOOL Mainly teacher-directed	UNIVERSITY Mainly student-directed
Teachers remind students of assignments & tests	Students are expected to use the syllabus to check for assignments and tests
Teachers tell students what and how to study	Students determine what and how to study course material
Teachers provide frequent feedback to students	Students monitor their own performance; some colleges have midterm warnings or midterm grades, but not all.
Homework usually takes 1-2 hours per night, and often just before a test	Many courses require 2-3 hours of study time for every 1 hour of class (25+ hrs. per week!)
Teachers often seek out students to discuss performance, and see students almost daily	Students must seek out their professors during office hours or by special appointment
Teachers offer, and sometimes require, extra help for students	Students must take the initiative to seek help from their professors or use services like tutoring or a writing center.
Effort counts toward a student's final grade	Grades are based on content and results, not effort.
Teachers often give short reading assignments for homework and class time frequently duplicates the content of the reading	Lectures are designed to extend, supplement, analyze and critique reading, not to duplicate its content
Teachers will provide needed background knowledge	Background knowledge is assumed for college courses. Students must fill any gaps on their own
Teachers cover in class all information that students are expected to know	Students are accountable for all the information contained in lectures and readings, regardless whether it has been reviewed in class.
Homework and readings are relatively short, and are usually due the next day or class.	Papers, projects and other assignments are often on a larger scale and not due for several weeks. It is the student's responsibility to know when things are due.

Clearly, there is a lot that takes place in high school that is heavily teacher-directed. Classes often meet five times a week, with short assignments and readings due the next day. The teacher does a lot of reminding. Tests take place frequently and students generally know exactly how they're doing in a given class. Teachers are hands on, and intervene quickly when a student begins to do poorly, even getting the parents involved when necessary. Overall, high school students are told what to do, how to do it, and when. Students have some choice about *what* they take, but once their classes have begun the 'what,' 'how' and 'when' are pretty well fixed. On the other hand, in college the responsibility for student learning shifts from teachers and parents to the students. Some students are ready and eager for this increased freedom and responsibility, whereas others may be unprepared for it and it takes them by surprise. The adage "with freedom comes responsibility" has truth to it.

At the heart of these differences between high school and college is the issue of where the control and power over a student's learning is located, a term psychology calls "locus of control." In high school that control is still largely external, in the teachers' and parents' hands. Children are not yet developmentally ready to assume total control over their learning and only gradually are they given more freedom and control as they demonstrate an ability to handle the increased responsibility of it. In other words, the locus of control for students in high school begins to move inside, to become internal. In the last year or so of high school you may have noticed the academic reins loosening. When you did well with the increased freedom and responsibility the reins may have loosened a little more; on the other hand, if you occasionally made a mess of things the reins may have tightened back up for a time. The goal is that by the time you enter college you will be well on your way to developing a healthy internal locus of control, with you in the driver's seat of your college education and of your life – not somewhere in the back seat flopping back and forth as your car careens out of control with no driver at the wheel.



Are you ready to learn how take control of your learning? Are you prepared to learn how to keep track of your own assignments, grades, and test dates? Are you ready to learn how to plan out long-term papers and projects and divide 100+ pages of reading over several days? Are you ready to not just do "homework," but to actually learn how to study? If so, then you are ready to be a successful college student. Notice that the questions above didn't ask you if you *already* know how to do these things; rather, they ask if are ready to learn *how*. This is an important difference. If you already know, that's great. You're off and running. If you're like many students however, and are somewhere in the process, you're in good company and right where you should be.

If you're like many students, you hear the word 'study' and you think of things like reading (more likely skimming) a chapter in the textbook or, if there is a test or quiz coming up, reading over your class notes and making flash cards. Then, maybe you'll spend time memorizing definitions, conjugating verbs, or listing off the 10 types of x, y, or z. You wouldn't be entirely wrong if this is what you think. But you're not right, either.

Your job is to understand and retain the stories. Deeply and well.

Your professors have chosen the textbooks for your classes, and have organized the presentation of the lectures for particular reasons, often because the textbooks they choose tell the story of the discipline in a way that best reflects your professor's own understanding of it. Might there be other ways to tell the story? Different organizational frameworks, topics and subtopics? Certainly, as with any story. Your professor has chosen *this* textbook and readings, however, and organizes his or her lectures the way she or he does, because the story makes good sense to him or her this way.



You would do well to tap into how your *professor* sees the story of this particular discipline, and follow along, trying to see and think about the content through his or her eyes, in the same way that you'd experience a novel through an author's mind and words. When you do this you will begin to discover something very important:

The content is all connected, just as it is with every story.

When the connections between the facts, concept, theories and ideas start to unfold in your mind the information becomes meaningful. They are telling you a story. It may or may not have a concrete tie to the "real" world that you can readily discern but, if you stay with it, it will always reveal a logic and a pattern, and an internal coherence to it that you can tap into. Math, chemistry, philosophy, Russian, accounting, music theory, political science – it doesn't matter the discipline. Learn the stories and vast quantities of information and ideas that seem at the outset like so many dried up leaves or total science fiction turn out to be very real and very important, indeed – and endlessly fascinating.

So run with it. Take the journey and see where it takes you. Have you ever watched the TV program about the man who takes you through the filthiest jobs there are in the world? Would you have ever thought that worms grunting or city sewers could be so interesting? So be curious and let your professor take you through the story of...

Everything is fascinating when examined closely enough.

What takes place when you tap into the underlying patterns and connectedness within the discipline is that you'll suddenly find yourself remembering parts of the story, the words and terms that describe the story, the importance and relevance, as well as the critiques of the story, much more easily than you ever would have had you dissected the same information up and doled it out onto 3x5 flash cards, and then set about memorizing what was written on them.

We remember more information when we tap into the connectedness of a story because, by design, **our brains are pattern detectors**. Our brains endlessly seek out pattern, structure and meaning so that it can make sense of the sensory input that bombards it, from without and within, every second of every minute of every day, awake or asleep. This is what the brain does: it makes sense out of nonsense. When you tap into the patterns or organizational structure – the story - of the material you are learning the brain will much more readily absorb, understand and remember it.

How does this all translate into everyday schoolwork: attending classes, spending time with your notes and books in the evening, and so on? Taking a typical academic day in one course, this is how things might go for you if you are actively listening for the underlying story:

1. **You go to class.** Hopefully you've read or at least thoroughly previewed the chapter, or completed any assignment that forms the basis of today's lecture. Maybe the professor used a PowerPoint presentation and you were able to download a copy of it into your notebook. You now have a broad stroke sense of the outlines of the story: the purpose, the structure, the relevance. Now you go to class, you take your lecture notes and participate in the class



discussion. All the while as you listen you continually search for the meaning and the structure of the lecture: “Do I understand the story being told today? Do I understand how it connects to the last class’ lecture? Do I grasp what’s meaningful or relevant about this topic? Do I understand how it compares or contrasts to previous information we’ve covered?”

As you answer these questions to yourself you start annotating your notes, right there in class. You likely have a system of symbols, codes, capital letters, colors, lines, arrows, stars, exclamation or question marks, or page spacings that tell you what things mean, what’s important and how some concepts relate to other concepts. You think of examples as the lecture is taking place and you quickly right them down in the margins of your notebook in brief two-three word phrases.

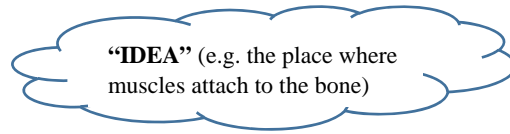
You notice that your professor may use the board to emphasize key points only, and *not* to deliver the main body of information - another important difference from high school. You carefully listen for those supportive details and write them down in your notebook to support the main ideas. Because you’ve been listening for the underlying story, though, you notice that it isn’t too difficult to pick these supportive details out. This is because, like any story structure, the topic follows a logic, and as you listen for that logic you intuitively know what needs to be written in your notebook as well as what you can leave off.

It’s later, and it’s now time to “study.” With no “homework” due, what exactly do you do?

1. **Study by topic**, not by type of material (e.g. notes only, textbook only, etc.). Assuming you previewed the reading for today’s lecture, you should place *all* the material that you have pertaining to that day’s lecture topic (notes, PowerPoints, textbooks, etc.) on the table in front of you. Learning a topic at a time, using all the materials at your disposal related to that topic, will keep your focus on the connectedness of the ideas and not on isolated, miscellaneous facts.
2. **Work to understand the story of that day’s lecture**. Approach it from the perspective of *all* your materials: your class notes, PowerPoints, textbook chapters, supplementary readings, etc. Highlight and work to understand key concepts, terminology, formulas, etc. so you know what’s most important, but don’t worry yet about committing the information to memory. Today’s task is simply to understand the material as deeply as you can. Terms are merely words that describe ideas. *What* those terms are, e.g. “Zone of Proximal Development” or the “Potsdam Treaty” are less important than *what they mean and why they are significant*. At this stage this is what you need to focus on, not memorizing lists of words and definitions.

Example:

Term: “Styloid Process”



Can you describe what a Styloid Process is in words different than those of the textbook or in your lecture notes? Name and describe different types of Styloid Processes in the human body? Why are Styloid Processes important? How does the Styloid Process fit into the overall material of today’s class? How does it fit with the current unit we’re studying? Why did the professor spend so much (or so little) time on it? Don’t memorize it, just understand the underlying idea. *That’s* the story. It may not be Stephen King perhaps, but it’s a story nonetheless.

3. Repeat this process each evening after each day’s lectures – supplement your notes, annotate your PowerPoints, put examples into your notebook margins, highlight and underscore; insert symbols and code words that have meaning only to you. Begin each study session with a brief look back at the information that came before so as to pick up the thread of the story. Do you ever re-read that last couple of pages of the previous chapter of a book to refresh your memory? Do that here as well. As you do you this, over time you will discover that the information is staying with you more completely and meaningfully - much more so than if you had just set your notes aside each day after classes and hadn’t looked at them again until the just before the exam. The best news? This will also cut your exam study time and the amount of memorizing you need to do by halves, and you’ll earn higher grades. What better payoff could there be?
4. A later chapter will go into more detail about preparing and studying for exams but in truth, good quality studying on a regular basis and studying for exams are not so very different. When you learn material in this way there is a much greater likelihood that your emphasis on meaning, understanding, analysis, comparison/contrast and connection to other concepts will prepare you much better for the types of questions you are likely to encounter on college exams. Memorizing definitions on flashcards surely will not get you this result.

This is studying.

CHAPTER 4. MANAGING YOUR ACADEMICS

You may think that handling the daily business of college classes is pretty much the same as it was in high school, but you would be mistaken. In light of the fact that college students are now expected to assume responsibility for their own learning, such things as attendance, due dates, illness, communication with professors, and questions/problems with your courses take on different meaning. In high school your parents may have been there as back-up when you couldn't make it to school, meet a deadline or resolve a serious problem in a class. Sometimes they took care of these things entirely. In college these matters will be up to *you* to handle. The university is aware that for many students this is new territory, however, and you do have people available to advise you on what actions to take or options you have. Here are some of the most common daily responsibilities you will experience and how to manage them:

ATTENDANCE.

Many, if not most professors have clear attendance policies and these policies are written into their course syllabus. Pay attention because attendance policies vary from one course to the next due to the fact that professors have what is known as “academic freedom” to create their courses in the ways that make the best professional sense to them. These policies take different forms but you need to know that they **DO** apply to you and no one at home will be able to fix it for you (many have tried and lost!). To be completely safe, **make attending classes as automatic as brushing your teeth**. Don't even think about it. If you are genuinely too sick or too contagious to attend, contact the professor. You'll find that these instances are not nearly as often as they might be otherwise.

Other professors may seem to be less clear about their attendance policies and you might be tempted to believe that there isn't one. Hooray, I can just show up for the midterm and final and I'm home free! This would be a bad, even possibly fatal assumption, to make. There's every chance that although they might not be taking attendance in class that they are still noticing who's there, as well as who isn't.

The vast majority of students who wind up in academic difficulty have trouble with class attendance. They weren't there to:

- Get “the story;”
- Take class notes;
- Participate in discussions and small group work;
- Hear announcements;
- Turn in assignments and papers that were due.

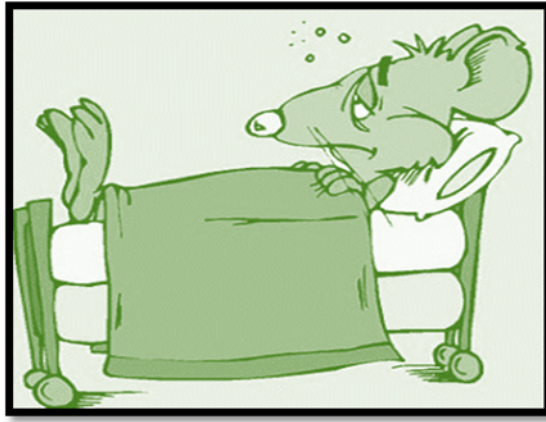
“Excused Absences” are a myth. There is no such thing! The course goes on, with you or without you. Assignments and papers are still due and tests still occur whether you’re there to turn the papers in and take the tests, or not. Professors aren’t heartless, however; this is why most will say something to effect of “absences beyond three will impact your grade,” or provide some other cushion to account for the fact that life sometimes gets unavoidably in the way of our plans.

What your professor wants you to know, though, is that *you are accountable for the material of the course* – **all** of it – and it doesn’t get waived because you were out sick with a cold. This is why there is no such thing as an “excused absence.” It is just an absence. Good reason or poor, you were not there to get the material, participate in the discussion or take the test, and it will be up to you to *work with your professor* to get caught up.

So what do you do if you’re really and truly sick, have an accident, need surgery, have a crisis at home that pulls you away from campus for a time? For one day, two days, a week? Three weeks? More?

If you must miss classes:

1. **Mild illness** (e.g. you’re contagious), usually a one day absence:
 - a. Contact your professor as soon as you know you’re not going to make it to class, *in advance if at all possible*.
 - b. Submit any work that is due, electronically (Canvas or email). Invest in a printer with a scanner so you can scan and email material. Your illness is not a valid reason not to turn in work, unless you have a verified condition that clearly prevented you from completing the work that was due. Yet another good reason not to procrastinate!
 - c. If there is a test scheduled you should try hard to rouse yourself enough to make it to class but if you simply can’t, or you’re really contagious, then ask the professor if you can make up the test. Be prepared, though: not all professors permit make-up tests. Many do, but not all. You might be told that the professor drops the lowest test grade at the end of the semester anyway so you can use that one as the dropped test. Or they might have another way of handling it. **They’re in charge of their course so you’ll have to work with them.**
 - d. Your professor may require a note from your college’s health services or from a doctor, although most do not. While they do care about your general health and well-being they usually care less about the reason for the absence than about the course material that was missed.



2. **Serious illness, accident, or crisis** that keeps you out of class for a week or more:

Your professor is still the most important person to be in constant communication with. Depending on the size of your campus, the university may also ask that you notify someone in the Dean of Students or similar office. If this happens, call your Dean and ask if there is a suggested protocol and someone will advise you.

- a. Scheduled absences: If you know in advance that you need to be out for a time for a scheduled surgery or other pre-arranged event, work with your professors *in advance of leaving* to arrange to do work while you're out, or make some other plan for keeping you current with your coursework if at all possible.
- b. Unscheduled longer absences: If your illness or crisis is sudden, and if you are unable to write individual emails to your professors, you or someone in your family with a release to act on your behalf (*not* your best friend!) should notify your professors as well as to ask the Dean's Office if there is anyone else who needs to know. Later, when you are able to resume control over your academic affairs you must contact your professors personally to arrange getting caught up. You are going to need to be flexible and work with them; getting back on track may not take the precise form that you've imagined but together you can work something out to get you back up to speed in your classes or find an alternate solution.

The guiding principle when considering absences and their handling is this:

To be considered minimally educated in any given course, a certain amount of information must have been studied, learned, and assessed. If for any reason you are unable to attend class and participate in the above activities for a significant period of time there will eventually come a tipping point when your professor(s) may be forced to say that you are no longer able to learn the material sufficiently enough to be considered educated in their course. They are not trying to be unkind, although it may come as difficult news for someone who may have just been through a trying time. You're not

without options, however, and students should always consult with their professor and with their academic advisor for advice pertaining to their individual situation.

Exploring your options when you've missed too many classes:

- Every class must be dealt with individually. Different options may apply in different classes.
- The option that is best for you in each class will emerge out of discussions with your professors and your academic advisor. Only your professors know what is required, what's been done, what remains, and how you've performed so far.
- Be flexible. You probably have ideas about what your college career is "supposed" to look like to you, and when illness or other crises occur these tend to upset those plans. It may be possible that you can continue your studies with no more than a small hiccup, or you may experience a more significant setback in your plans. Try and take the long view, consult with trusted adults, your advisor and others, and regroup and move forward again.

If you cannot attend class for several weeks or more:

- 1) **Consult with each of your professors and your academic advisor. Together you can decide which of the following (or other) options would be most appropriate for you:**
 - i. **Request an Incomplete** grade for the class. An Incomplete means that you have completed the majority of the course and the professor believes you are able to finish the rest on your own, or through some other means. This may not always be the case, however. Each university has its own policies regarding Incompletes. You can either find it in your campus' student catalogue or by consulting your professor or academic advisor.
 - ii. **Withdraw from the class.** If it is still before the final Withdraw deadline. Consult your professor and advisor first before doing this to make sure it is necessary. "W" (Withdraw) on your academic transcript carries no penalty. You want to try and avoid amassing too many of them, however.
 - iii. **Register for the class again with the same professor the next time the class comes around** (not all classes are offered every semester), especially if you need that particular class for a requirement. The second time through you'll virtually fly through it to the point at which you stopped the first time around and you'll likely perform even better on the exams. You'll thank yourself later.
- 2) **Request a Leave of Absence from your university.** This is a temporary leave from the University and withdraws you from all classes for the remainder of the

semester with the assumption that you would return when your health or personal situation has been satisfactorily addressed and you and the Dean of Students determine you are ready. ***This option is only granted in consultation with, and support from, the Dean of Students or other official representative of the university.***

- 3) **Request to Withdraw from the University.** This option would separate you from the University altogether and would presumably only occur in the most serious of circumstances and/or crises.¹

¹ Students should always consult with their academic advisors before taking any of the above steps or actions.¹

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR PROFESSORS

Many students are intimidated by their professors, especially in their first semester in college. Be assured, however, they are people just like yourself with likes, dislikes, kids, hobbies, and all the things that make us human. Your professors are here because they want to educate you and most look forward to the working relationships with students that their teaching creates. That said, there are some important differences between your previous teachers and your current college professors of which you should be aware. These differences have implications for how you interact and communicate with them.

High School Teachers	College Professors
Monitor students' overall well-being and development as well as their scholastic achievement; they tend to be approachable and involved.	Responsible to educate students in specific disciplines; often have hundreds of students that rotate every semester, making it difficult to get to know many students well.
If there is a problem that needs discussing a parent is often the one to contact the teacher.	If there is a problem that needs discussing the student is expected to contact the professor.
Students can be fairly informal about interacting with and approaching their teachers.	Students need to make an appointment to see a professor or drop by during posted office hours. Behavior is a little less casual.
Teachers reach out to students if they have concerns about academic performance.	Students are expected to reach out to their professors if they have concerns about their academic performance.
Most teachers are referred to by Mr., Mrs. or Ms. Only a few are Dr.	Professors are referred to as "Dr. So-and-so" or "Prof. So-and-so." If you're not sure if they are a Doctor (Ph.D.) use the title "Professor."
Teachers are formally schooled in teaching and learning theories as part of their teacher education preparation.	Professors are experts in their fields of study; they work to develop better and more effective teaching strategies but may not be formally or explicitly trained in them.
Teachers have frequent contact with parents and work closely with them.	Professors almost never have contact with parents. Their relationship is with the student.

As you can see, while professors do have interactions with their students outside of class, by and large professors are more removed and have less direct responsibility for the well-being and achievement of individual students. This is not because they do not care about their students but because of the structure of university systems which hold that students are responsible for their own learning. The professor's failure to approach you after having done poorly on a test is not

because they are not concerned, but because at this level it is *your* responsibility to approach *them* to ask for assistance and suggestions. They want you to come to them – believe it!



Approaching your professors instead of them approaching you is a role reversal for many students and can feel awkward or intimidating for some students. This is when it helps to remember that they are people with dogs and sneakers just like you! As long as you treat your professors with respect and courtesy, and take responsibility for yourself and your learning, you will be fine. The principles of university etiquette reviewed earlier apply strongly here. When interacting with your professors (or any university staff or administrator) you can and should be yourself, but not quite the informal self you might be with your best friend. In other words, take it up a notch both in tone and formality.

You may be surprised at how warmly you are received by most professors and how willing your professors are to be of assistance to you. The more often you interact with them the more natural it will feel, and the intimidation factor will disappear quickly.

If it should happen that a professor gives you advice or feedback that you didn't expect or don't care for, sit with it a while before deciding to accept or reject it. Cull it for possible useful ideas or information that you may not have entertained before. Talk things over with your academic advisor, your tutor, your parents or another trusted adult if you are unsure of what to do with the information you were given. Avoid simply complaining, though, or asking someone to fix it for you. College is about exposure to new ideas and experiences, and about developing different ways of thinking about and viewing the world. Just because someone has presented you with uncomfortable ideas doesn't necessarily mean they are wrong.

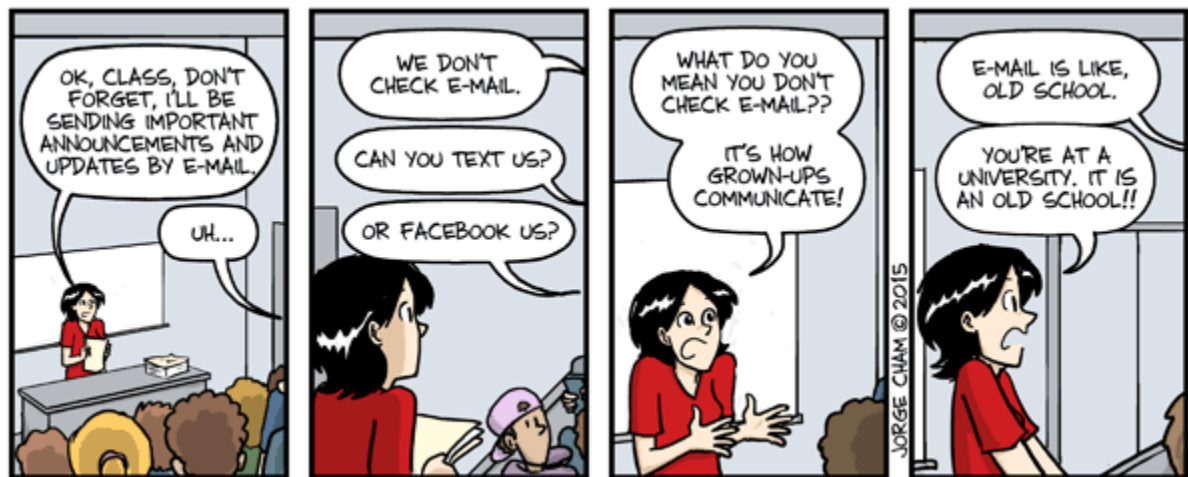
Be prepared to encounter many different personalities, nationalities, ages, teaching styles and other differences among your faculty. Learning from a professor whose style or manner is very different from what you've experienced before can be unsettling at first, but if you are open to the experience you will gain a broader perspective and a new appreciation for the diversity among your professors and in the world of higher education overall.

In general, when meeting with your professors:

- 1. Make an appointment in advance or use their posted walk-in hours.**
- 2. Cancel in advance if you can't make it. Everyone's time is valuable!**
- 3. Introduce yourself and tell them the problem you're having or the issue you want to discuss. Own your part.**
- 4. Ask for the assistance, help or advice you came for and be open to the response you receive; it may not always be in the form you had initially wished or hoped.**
- 5. Thank them when you leave.**

Using Email:

The university communicates by email therefore you need to as well. Professors will not give out their cell phone numbers so you cannot text them. If your professors have an important announcement (test cancelled for today!) it will come via email. Therefore you should **make a habit of checking your email at least three times every day**: morning, mid-day and evening.



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Emailing your Professors:

1. Don't expect an email response or expect that s/he will have read your email if it is sent at night or on the weekend, unless that is when the course is scheduled.
2. If you need something from your professor that is time sensitive (e.g. signature on an Add or Withdrawal form) start communicating with them *at least three class days* ahead of time. Your last minute action should not become their crisis.
3. Give your professor 12-24 hours before sending another email if you haven't gotten a reply. Two emails sent within an hour of each other do not constitute two attempts to reach someone!
4. See "Etiquette" for how to open close, and word your emails.
5. If you need an appointment, give your professor a range of options when *you* are available so they can select one that fits their schedule. Simply asking "When are you available?" is an impossible question for a busy professor to answer.
6. When you ask your professor a question, or ask for an appointment, be sure to *check your email frequently* for a response.

7. Avoid asking broad questions like, “I was out sick for a week. What did I miss?” Do your homework and locate answers to your question to the best of your ability first (speak to a classmate, check the syllabus) and then approach the professor with whatever *specific* questions remain.
8. Be as brief as you can while still conveying essential information. Don’t use your email as the place to download all your frustration or go into long, complex or detailed explanations. Long discussions are always more effective done in person.

Example:

From: Marcus Mendel

Sent: Monday, June 01, 2015 11:36 AM

To: Marie Curie

Subject: Request an appointment

Dear Professor Curie:

I am in your CHEM 112 class on Tues./Thurs. from 10-11:15. I am wondering if there is a good time for me to come see you for about 30 minutes. Unfortunately, my classes conflict with your office hours. I am available M/W/F between 2-4, and Tues. after 1:00. I am worried about my low grade on the last Chemistry test (69) despite working very hard (I thought!), and would like to get your ideas about what I can do to improve my grade so I am better prepared for the next test. The best way to reach me is to reply to this email.

Thank you,

Greg Mendel



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OVERWHELMED, UNDER-PERFORMING OR FALLING BEHIND?

It may happen occasionally that you don't perform as well as you'd like in a course or courses, that you find yourself slipping behind, or that you're simply overwhelmed with everything you have on your plate. This can be upsetting, especially if you are accustomed to being a high-achieving student. It does not mean you're failing in your role as a college student! There are many reasons why students experience a dip in their academic performance from personal problems to taking on too much, to insufficient academic preparation, ineffective study strategies, or more. The most important issue when this happens is what you *do* about it. What you do next may mean the difference between a problem resolved versus one that deteriorates into full-blown crisis. Non-action is the **ONLY** action that you must not take!

Managing academic issues.

1. Identify and understand the problem:

The first thing to do when you are not performing as well as you'd like in your class(es) is to take time to figure out the problem and what may be causing it. It may not always be what you initially believe it is. Sometimes you can do this on your own with good quality self-reflection, and other times it may require the help of another perspective: a tutor, your academic advisor, a professor or counselor, a parent, or some combination of the above. To seek additional advice is not showing weakness. On the contrary, when you do this you're merely doing what all mature, successful, independent adults are expected to do when they encounter problems: you're being a resourceful adult. In other words: you don't like what's happening, you want to change it, and you need people and resources around you to help you do it. This is resourcefulness, and it *is* a *sign of strength and resilience, not weakness.*



Understanding a problem involves understanding what specific, concrete things are creating the problem, which is not always easy. Sometimes all we can feel is our upset. Everything starts to feel connected to it, feeds it or seems to make it worse. You can become engulfed in one giant, non-specific cloud of misery.

To get clarity, try and answer this question to yourself: If I could wave a magic wand and make one (or two) very specific and concrete things magically better, different or gone altogether, what would it be?

You might come up with answers similar to those of these three students:

Allie: *If I could make something magically better it would be having less work to do and classes to attend. I'm fine in most of my classes but that sixth class, European History, is putting me over the edge. I thought I could handle 18 credits but it's just too much. I thought I could do it – thought I should be able to do it – but I just can't. I'm drowning!*

Brett: *If I could make anything magically better I would understand my Accounting class. I'm think I'm failing it and I've never failed a class before in my life! I don't understand what the professor's talking about in class and when I read the textbook my mind goes anywhere except on the reading. I've studied days for the upcoming test and it's like I never saw any of it before!*

Camille: *If I could make something magically better I would stop worrying and feeling guilty all the time. I can't think, I can't concentrate, I can't read, do my homework or even sleep. I can't do anything except worry about dad's health and wanting to be at home. I feel guilty being here and leaving mom to take care of him alone. I should be there to help but they want me to stay here. How can I be here, never mind be a good student, when all I can think about is home?*

As you can see there are many legitimate reasons why students might feel overwhelmed and fall behind in their schoolwork. Rarely is the cause laziness, stupidity or inadequacy, although these are often the reasons students come up with to explain their lack of performance. “If I was a better student,” “If I was smarter,” “If I was better at managing my life,” etc. Are you sure this is what it is? Maybe not...

One temptation many people have, and understandably so, is wanting to go into “fix-it” mode before they truly understand the problem. We all want to feel better as fast as possible and you may experience an overwhelming urge to do something quickly - even something extreme - to make the discomfort go away. You **MUST resist the urge to act until you fully understand what the problem is, what your options are and which of those options is best for you in your situation.** Allie may be tempted to drop History. Brett might want to do the same and drop his Accounting class. Camille is probably fighting the urge to just get in her car and drive home, regardless of the consequences. These are understandable reactions, but they are also “knee-jerk” reactions and not necessarily the best solutions to their problems. So notice your reaction and the powerful desire to act, but don't do it – not yet.

2. Understand the source, or cause of the problem:

Now that you've identified some of the 'what' of your troubles (and don't be surprised if others surface) it's time to begin identifying some of the 'why's.' Here is a chart that can help identify the source of the difficulties you're experiencing:

Inventory of Factors that Can Lead to Academic Difficulty

Goals and Directions

- ☐ Unsure of interests
- ☐ No clear goals
- ☐ Unable to decide on a major
- ☐ Unsure of present major
- ☐ Not sure I want to be in college
- ☐ Not sure this college is best for me

Academic Issues

- ☐ Not sure what or how to study
- ☐ Weak reading/writing skills
- ☐ Weak math skills
- ☐ Learning disability/ADD or ADHD
- ☐ Poor note-taking skills
- ☐ Too heavy a course load
- ☐ Have not used subject tutoring
- ☐ Have not used the writing center
- ☐ Did not take the prerequisite course
- ☐ Unable to meet with instructor
- ☐ Class attendance issues

Time Management

- ☐ Difficulty organizing my time
- ☐ Poor study environment
- ☐ Lack of dedicated homework and study time
- ☐ Working too many hours outside of school
- ☐ Too much time away in travel
- ☐ Too much time socializing/leisure events
- ☐ Athletics takes away from study time

Personal Issues

- ☐ Overwhelmed
- ☐ Physical illness
- ☐ Physical injury
- ☐ Financial problems
- ☐ Transportation problems
- ☐ Family problems
- ☐ Other personal problems
- ☐ Substance/alcohol overuse
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Excessive stress
- ☐ Child care

3. Identify solution alternatives:

Having identified the source(s) of your struggles now you can begin to identify solutions and sources of support. Many students will have identified more than one factor that is contributing to their present problem(s). Therefore, there is also probably more than one solution that should be considered as well. What are those sources of support? Check off ones you might investigate:

Assistance with Personal Goals & Direction:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Advisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual or religious guidance
<input type="checkbox"/> Career service office	<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling services
<input type="checkbox"/> Parents	<input type="checkbox"/> Another trusted adult: _____
Assistance with academic issues:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic advisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Professor
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Center for Excellence (study skills, test-taking)	<input type="checkbox"/> Disability accommodations
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Center for Excellence: Subject Tutoring & Writing Center	
Assistance with time management:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Center for Excellence	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic advisor
Assistance with personal matters²:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling services	<input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual or religious guidance
<input type="checkbox"/> Athletic coach	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Aid Office/Business Office
<input type="checkbox"/> Health services	<input type="checkbox"/> Dean of Students
<input type="checkbox"/> Residence life office	<input type="checkbox"/> Disability Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Office of multicultural affairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Another trusted adult: _____
Other Sources of Assistance:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Student Activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Fraternity/Sorority organization
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer & technology help center	<input type="checkbox"/> Registrar
<input type="checkbox"/> Community service office	<input type="checkbox"/> Study Abroad and International Programs
<input type="checkbox"/> Intramurals/Fitness Center	

² If you feel you are in crisis and need help you should contact Counseling Services or your Resident Advisor or Area Coordinator right away. Your campus safety & security office is also there 24/7 to help in case of emergency.

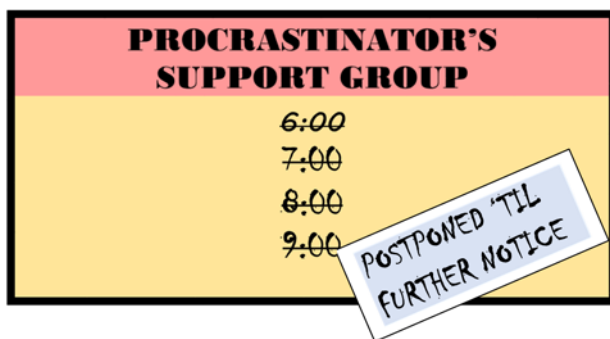
COLLEGE'S QUIET DESTROYERS

Two things are very often present when students don't do well in college:

1. They don't attend class (enough), and
2. They procrastinate until it's too late.

More academic lives have been destroyed because of poor attendance and procrastination than almost any other cause. As stated before: Attend class - religiously. Take it out of the "optional" category and move it to "non-negotiable." You may feel like it or you may not, but as it turns out this is irrelevant anyway. So just do it because this is who you are and what you do. You'll be amazed at how quickly things improve simply by being in class every day.

Procrastination is tricky because sometimes it pays off. You get to have your free time *and* get your assignment done! As with slot machines, the underlying power of procrastination lies in the fact that it does pay off, **sometimes**, and this is a very difficult force to resist (what psychology calls 'intermittent reinforcement'). What needs to be understood is that, by definition, as with slot machines, you lose far more often than you win. The predictable problem then is that you also may end up failing the exam or the paper, or even the course. At the least your performance (and grade) will be compromised. Are you willing to make that gamble?



People procrastinate for different reasons. The one most people think it is, though – laziness – is rarely the true reason.

The good – and bad – news is that since you can sometimes get away with last minute efforts it makes it that much easier to procrastinate the next time. That is, until you get to that inevitable exam, paper or project that this time is just too big to accomplish in the time you've left yourself.

We procrastinate because:

- **We feel overwhelmed: the task is too big, too hard, and will take too long.**
- **We doubt our ability to do the job well, or at all.**
- **We don't understand exactly what it is we're supposed to do and we feel embarrassed to ask.**
- **There are other things that need doing so you tell it'll get done somehow, some way, but without any real plan for doing so.**

It's happened. Your procrastination backfired and the assignment, test or paper is now overdue. Once a major project or paper is overdue **you cannot assume the professor will accept it late.** To turn in a late assignment or paper always requires permission from the professor *before* the deadline and, even if you ask, you must be prepared that the answer might be No. These policies are also often in your syllabus.

Now you easily get a domino effect. That paper or project is overdue but new ones keep coming at you; the daily work starts getting put off so you can focus on the large overdue work, but now the daily stuff is overdue, you're falling behind on your readings, you haven't had time to study for an upcoming test or focus on your other classes, and everything is starting to go into a slide. You start falling down the rabbit hole...



What happens now? Students can often start to give up at this point. They may let go of everything and go into hiding. They may stop attending class because they don't want to face their professors. They stop reading email because they don't want to hear bad news or read that "someone" wants to "see" them. Finally, they begin to withdraw because they feel so badly about themselves and start avoiding all contact. Many might self-medicate with alcohol or drugs, or start sleeping all day. On and on it goes, and deeper and deeper they fall down the hole...

How can procrastination be worth such a high price?

But if not that, then what? What do you do instead? Here are some strategies that work:

Avoiding procrastination:

- 1. Be honest**
- 2. Use the back door**
- 3. Plan backwards**
- 4. Chunk it down**

1. Be honest. With yourself and with others. Don't deceive yourself with "magical thinking" that says "Tomorrow I'll be a different student. Starting tomorrow I'm never going to procrastinate again. I'm going to do all my work before it's due from now on. I'm going to stay home when my friends go out and do all my work."

Will you really? Probably not. You say this to yourself only because it makes you feel better in the moment, but in the end it only fuels your "I'm a loser" voice because it sets up unrealistic expectations that you have no hope of achieving.

Also, get in the habit of telling the truth to others about the small things you're not proud of, instead of hiding them because you think the other person will judge you for it. Most people actually respond positively to this kind of honesty because they identify with making mistakes! They end up being supportive rather than critical. Being routinely honest about the small stuff instead of hiding the truth then becomes a powerful habit, which makes it much easier to be forthcoming when larger mistakes occur.

2. Use the "Back-door". To use the back door means to pick a small job that is related to the larger task, but which is relatively inconsequential, doesn't take a lot of mental energy and can be done quickly and easily. You enter the task through the back door, as it were. Then, once you're inside, it becomes much easier to continue. You might not dig into the heart of your research paper immediately but you *can* sit down and organize all your sources and notes, maybe even create your citations page. By doing so, you'll probably start looking at the sources and notes and start to look to see if each part of your outline has information and notes to support it. This then leads to arranging your notes by topic and thinking about how you want to organize your paper, etc. etc. Before you know it, you're into the heart of the paper!

There are infinite ways to "back door yourself" - as many ways as there are people and tasks. The secret is in choosing a task that feels do-able to you, that is harmless and relatively easy. Then, once through that door, you will be much more able to continue.



3. Plan Backwards. Mentioned earlier, backwards planning means starting with the due date and working backward, calculating how much time each section of the project or paper will take and creating interim “due dates” for yourself based on this information. This will guarantee you sufficient time to do the job, do it well, and with relatively little stress.

Example: You have a 7-10 page research paper due October 28 (Friday).

Q: How much time does your final draft take?

A: Two days

Interim goal: Rough draft finished October 26

Q: How much time does the rough draft take, once you have all the notes?

A: Seven to ten days

Interim goals: Finish gathering sources and taking notes by October 14

Create outline or concept diagram by October 16

Q: How much time does it take to get a topic approved and the bibliography created?

A: Two days

Interim goal: Get topic approved and create outline by October 6

We make plans and the universe laughs. Therefore, expect the unexpected. Things *will* happen. If you’re wise you will build in an extra cushion by overestimating slightly how much time you need for each part of the project. Then when life gets in the way you simply move things around. What you *do not* do, though, is simply let go of the plan!

2016 October						
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
26	27	28	29	30	01	02 <i>Start finding sources for research paper</i>
03	04 <i>Finish research, begin bibliography</i>	05	06 <i>Bible due for research paper</i>	07	08	09
10	11	12	13	14 <i>Finish reading, taking notes for paper</i>	15	16 <i>Create concept diagram for research paper</i>
17 <i>Start rough draft</i>	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 <i>Have paper reviewed at the Writing Ctr</i>	25	26 <i>Start final draft</i>	27	28 <i>Comp Research paper due</i>	29	30
31	01	Notes:				

Start with the due date and work backwards assigning each task with enough time built in.

4. **Chunk it down.** Similar to above, break the task down into small, common-sense chunks that you then portion out to yourself in doses you can handle. Many students fall into the trap of wanting to completely finish every task each time they sit down to it. This probably worked in high school, and likely was even important since assignments were often given one day that were due the next. Those strategies become impossible to use in higher education though, as the tasks get larger, longer, more complex and long-term. Get used to doing things in meaningful chunks.

CHAPTER 5. DEMONSTRATING ACADEMIC LEARNING:

Colleges and universities are called institutions of “higher education” because they educate students at higher levels of knowledge and reasoning. An institution of higher education only knows that it has achieved its mission of educating students when students themselves demonstrate learning. They do this in myriad ways, including by taking exams, contributing in class, writing papers, presenting individual speeches and group projects, completing assignments, and using their knowledge in the laboratory, the field, in internships and through clinical experiences.

It is not enough to *think* you understand something; you must also be able to *demonstrate* that understanding to your professors in forms that they largely specify, such as through exams, papers or projects. Some students consider themselves to be good test-takers, others do not. Some are comfortable with certain types of tests, e.g. multiple choice (objective) and are less comfortable with others, such as essay exams (or the opposite). Some students prefer to be given a paper to write; others dread the thought. Regardless of the form that a course’s assessment of knowledge takes, it will be up to you to rise to meet the challenge, no matter what your personal comfort or skill level is with that type of assessment.

There are two major aspects of test-taking: preparing for exams, and actually taking exams.

I. PREPARING FOR EXAMS

As described in Chapter 3, studying in general and studying for exams are very similar in many respects if you have been careful to pay attention to the story being told by the discipline. An exam is your opportunity to demonstrate to your professor that you really do understand the *story* of U.S. History, or the *story* of Applied Calculus, instead of having merely memorized facts, definitions and terms. The underlying principle is the fact that *all* the information in a discipline is connected, that it is woven together in meaningful ways that, once tapped into, begins to make sense as part of a larger whole; and, most important, starts to *stay* with you such that you can demonstrate your understanding or use that understanding later. So how does a student prepare to demonstrate this knowledge?

Principle #1: Organize, organize (at least 5 days out):

- Make sure you have all the necessary information (all lecture notes, syllabus, copies of tests and quizzes, essays, assignments, handouts, etc.).

- Obtain a study guide from the professor or, better still, create one of your own. The study guide that *you* create will be meaningfully selected and organized according to *your* brain's understanding of the key ideas and course principles.
- Make sure you have completed all assigned reading and other assignments.
- Categorize and group all your information according to topics as presented in the study guide, syllabus, lecture topics or chapter headings. Group all course materials pertaining to each topic together so that you can review all information pertaining to each topic at the same time.
- Review your lecture notes to make sure they are complete, accurate and comprehensible to you.

Principle #2: Understand how it all ties together; learn in meaningful units of information (3-4 days out):

- Create an outline, cognitive mind map or concept diagram of the different topics that will be covered, that shows the relationship between them.
- Create cognitive mind maps of groups of key concepts (e.g., theories of infant temperament; theories on the development of the heliocentric view)
- Create flash cards of individual concepts. Definitions should be in *your own words*. Come up with an example of the concept.
- Study all notes/readings/supplemental materials pertaining to each topic simultaneously.
- Get the “meat” from your text via text notes and set it aside. Work from your notes, not the text.



Principle #3: Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse (1-2 days out):

- Working with your mind maps of the key topics, create mnemonic devices for holding onto the details pertaining to each concept, theory or fact (e.g. five major theorists w/ infant temperament theories; the first letter of their last names spells out “POOPY”). Treat the map as a clock face, noting where on the map a particular concept was (e.g. Battle of Gettysburg at 3 o’clock, etc.). Color-code your maps to help you remember the ideas as represented by their color.
- As you go through the materials tell yourself the story associated with each, and think about how it relates to the whole. Use different words. Compare and contrast. Provide examples. **Do not recite definitions; you are wasting your time!**



Source: Retrieved from <http://www.cooperativeindividualism.org/calvin-on-scientific-law.gif>

Principle #4: Treat your physical and mental self extremely well throughout the entire exam process

If you were to run a 15K marathon how would treat your body in the days leading up to the race? In all likelihood you would treat it with meticulous care to make sure you are in top physical condition for the big race. You would want to get the best performance from your body as possible. You might also do relaxation exercises, meditate, or engage in other calming mental activities that would equally prepare your mind for the taxing event.

Your mind/brain is equally as much a part of your body as your lungs and leg muscles, and needs precisely the same care to perform optimally (retain information, think clearly, etc.). Why therefore would anyone choose to deprive it of sleep, oxygen, and healthy nutrition just before a major test? “The brain is an energy-demanding organ. While it makes up only 2 percent of the body's weight, it consumes more than 20 percent of the body's energy”³ You are undermining your chances of success when you treat your body and mind poorly before an exam. Your memory will be reduced and your thinking is likely to be cloudy and jumbled. On the other hand, tending well to your physical self might just take a C level performance and turn it into an A at the hands of a rested, high-functioning mind.

Before the test day:

- Give yourself opportunities to laugh, socialize and decompress periodically throughout the studying process. **A relaxed mind concentrates better and retains more information for longer periods.** You’ll also have a more restful and restorative sleep.
- Don’t drink or do mind-altering drugs, which seriously impair memory and concentration⁴.

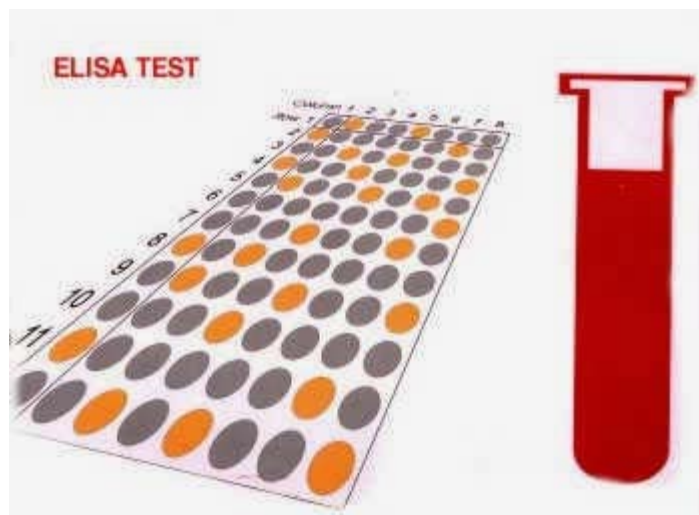
³ Onion, A. (2015). Studies show glucose and oxygen help brain. Retrieved June 3, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/studies-show-glucose-oxygen-brain/story?id=117530>.

⁴ So-called “study drugs” like ADHD medication (Adderall, Ritalin, Concerta, etc.) can be extremely dangerous to people for whom they are not prescribed, and do not have the same effect. In addition, these are controlled substances which when shared or sold is a felony offense. It is not worth the physical or legal risk.

- Get a minimum seven hours sleep for at least two days before the test (sleep deprivation has a 2-3 day effect). If you can, turn your cell phone OFF when you go to bed so your mind is not subconsciously listening for it. Your brain is still learning, sorting, sifting, and remembering while you sleep. You may actually understand more when you wake up than you did when you went to bed the night before. Let your brain do its work!

On test day:

- Eat a good breakfast that includes proteins (brain food) and carbs (energy)
- Make sure you have time to fully wake up before going into the test. A little caffeine can help but don't overdo it. It starts to have a reverse (negative) effect after a fairly modest amount.
- Get some moderate exercise such as a brisk walk to get your endorphins, oxygen and blood going.
- Review your mind maps and flashcards about 30 minutes before the test – **remember the story. Rehearse the mnemonics and call up the “meaning” behind them.**



II. TAKING YOUR TESTS AND EXAMS

Although the words are often used interchangeably, tests most often refer to smaller, shorter assessments that cover a lesser amount of material. Tests tend to happen in between larger exams like midterm and final exams, which occur less often and cover larger amounts of information. Here is a brief lexicon of test and exam terms which you are likely to encounter:

Types of Assessments:

Cumulative: An exam that covers all the material in a course from the start of the semester.

Essay: Students demonstrate knowledge of a topic by constructing an answer to a question or prompt in one to several paragraphs.

Exam: An assessment that covers relative large amounts of information and often occurs two or three times per semester.

Objective: Assessments with clear right and wrong answers such as multiple choice, True/False, Fill-in, Matching. Objective tests often use a scantron form on which students record their answers by filling in bubbles.

Quiz: A short assessment, often about 10-15 minutes, which is designed to assess students' knowledge of current or very recent information.

Short answer: Students demonstrate knowledge by constructing an answer to a question or prompt in one to two sentences.

Test: An assessment that occurs less often than quizzes and usually covers a larger amount of information, e.g. a unit test covering 3-5 chapters or topics.

Words used in question prompts:

Analyze: Conduct an "analysis," i.e., take apart an idea or concept and explain or critique its component parts

Compare/contrast Explain the ways that two or more things are similar or dissimilar. The "Block" method of comparison/contrast explains all the similarities at one time and then explains all the differences. The "Shuttle" method of comparison/contrast examines one idea at a time, describing whether it is a similarity or a difference between the two concepts. It is personal preference which you use.

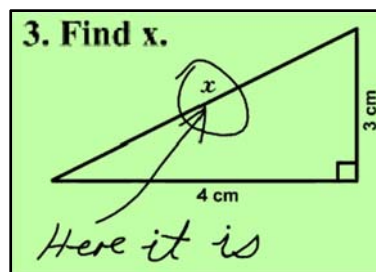
Conclude Come to closure on a concept or idea at the end of a logically reasoned discussion.

Describe Provide details or a description of something. What characterizes it, what are the component parts and how the parts go together.

Discuss Explain, describe, provide examples, describe pros and cons and evaluate.

Evaluate Similar to Discuss (explain, provide examples and list pros and cons), but it *comes to a conclusion about the worth or value of an idea* based on the student's demonstrated understanding of it.

Explain	An analysis and description of the <i>reasons</i> for an idea, principle, process, event, situation, etc.
Illustrate	Often part of another question prompt (e.g. explain), it requires specific and concrete examples in the form of graphs, diagrams, figures and such.
Interpret	Explain and comment on a concept, and form an evaluative judgment.
Justify	Support a judgment or conclusion with facts and logical reasoning.
Outline	Describe the bones of an idea or concept –the major ideas and sub-ideas.
Summarize	Provide the main ideas only.



General Test-taking Tips:

1. Read the directions thoroughly! If there are multiple parts to the directions, underline and number the parts. Afterward go back and make sure you have followed each part in the directions.
2. Ignore students who leave early. Sometimes they leave early because they didn't know the information! Taking longer has nothing to do with doing well or poorly, but leaving early just might.
3. Study in doses. DO NOT CRAM! Your brain is like a sponge that can only hold so much new information at a time. Then it needs time to process, sort and absorb the information it has received. Your brain is still doing this even while you sleep.
4. Get plenty of sleep before an exam. Fatigue *significantly* impairs the brain's ability to think clearly and remember.
5. Stress "freezes" the thinking areas of the brain and inhibits thinking and memory function. Use humor, solid preparation, break periods, good nutrition, hydration and exercise as tools to manage your stress levels. Monitor your breathing during the exam and if you find yourself breathing shallowly or quickly make a conscious effort to deepen and slow your breathing (the brain needs good oxygen supply to function).

Multiple Choice Questions

General Tips:

- Before reading each question cover the answer options with your hand. Don't peek!
- Read the "stem" of the question then predict what the answer might be, or at least generally contain. Get as solid as you can about what you already know, and what you predict the answer to be before looking at the answer options! This will help stabilize you when answer options throw you off (they are designed to do this to weed out answerers who are less secure with the information or are guessing).
- Uncover *one option at a time* and treat it as its own T/F question relative to the stem.
- Eliminate obvious distracters (e.g. humorous options).
- Trust your first instinct unless you are *absolutely certain* you made a mistake.
- Statements with extreme qualifiers (always, never, all, none) are often false.
- Statements with general qualifiers (most, many, often, rarely, usually, etc.) are often true ones.
- Mark questions that you are unsure of as you go and then return to them later. Later questions often trigger memory of information not remembered the first time through.
- Test writers construct every test question to assess a *specific* course concept that the teacher believes the students need to know. When you're on the fence between one answer option and another ask yourself which course concept this question was written to assess, and then identify the option that speaks most concretely and specifically to that concept. It's there.

Sample multiple choice questions. Use the strategy above:

Treating options as separate T/F statements:

The 16th century astronomer Copernicus is credited with promoting the idea that

- a. Ptolemy was correct in his theories about the geocentric model
- b. The earth and the planets actually revolve around the sun (heliocentric model)
- c. Jupiter has multiple suns, as many as four
- d. none of the above

Answer: B

Reading questions carefully for double negatives:

Which of the following is **NOT** true of the reality TV competition The Voice? (*You're looking for the False answer!*)

- a. The contestant are invited to audition by the show's producers
- b. The contestants must "battle" each other by singing a song together
- c. Each contestant must have a music career already established before competing
- d. Four celebrity judges each form a team of singers who compete during the show

Answer: C

True-False Questions

- First answer all questions that you are certain are True or False.
- If unsure, use these guidelines:
 - Statements with extreme modifiers are often False (see above)
 - Statements with general modifiers are often True (see above)
- Remember, if *any part* of a statement is false, the entire statement is rendered false!

Fill-in-the-Blank Questions

- Never leave a question blank. Give it your best guess. Sometimes you can get partial credit if you're close.

Essay Questions

- Read all the questions before beginning to write, and first answer the questions about which you know the most. This helps open the mental floodgates to all the other information you may know.
- Underline multiple parts of a question (questions within the question). Number the parts. Take each part in turn, re-stating that part of the question in your answer.
- Re-state the question in your answer and then list the major ideas you plan to present to compose your answer. Then return to each major idea in turn and elaborate. Provide examples where possible. Finish with a concluding statement.
- Don't ramble if you don't know what you're writing. Professors do not want to wade through wordiness to locate an answer and are not fooled by excess language.
- If you run short of time, add an outline of your answer that you would have expanded upon had you had more time.

TEST ANXIETY

What is test anxiety?

Almost everyone gets nervous before a test. It is normal. In fact, being a little on edge with a slightly increased heart rate and a hyper-alert state can have a positive effect on the brain's alertness, concentration and attention to detail. There is a critical threshold of anxiety however that, once passed, spills over into debilitating fear that impairs memory, concentration and the ability to think and reason clearly. Fear causes a release of adrenaline into the system, which triggers a fight-or-flight response and prevents the brain from thinking clearly.

If this happens to you it is not your imagination that information that you knew yesterday like you knew your own name has all of a sudden vanished completely. Your breathing becomes rapid and shallow, your heart feels like it will pound out of your chest, and you can't concentrate

on anything at all except how freaked out you are – never mind irregular Italian verbs! This is what real test anxiety is.



III. MANAGING TEST ANXIETY

Test anxiety is managed on two levels: long term and short term.

Long term management:

We cannot be in a state of anxiety and a state of relaxation simultaneously. Therefore, whatever can be done to help ourselves get and stay relaxed on a general level is good. Think about what you do normally to help calm yourself when you're out of sorts: after an argument or having gotten upsetting news; when you're frustrated with something or when things just aren't going your way. Do you run? Work out? Sing, play or listen to music? Take a walk by the ocean, in the woods, or through the neighborhood? Meditate? Talk to a friend who always has the ability to make you feel better? Whatever it is you do, keep doing it. Do it frequently and intentionally, *before* you're stressed out - especially during academically hectic times. Don't wait until you've had an argument or gotten distressing news; if you're already doing these things on a regular basis then your ability to handle bad news will be that much easier and won't have the capacity to upset you as much.

Think you don't have enough time to do your favorite things? The irony is that actually you cannot afford the time NOT to do them! Allowing yourself to get overly stressed creates huge obstacles to good learning. Rather than say to yourself "I'm so stressed out and busy I don't have time to work out," say to yourself, "I'm so stressed out and busy I'd *better* make some time to work out today."

A well-exercised body tends to have muscles with less tension in them so if you exercise regularly you want to keep it up, especially during stressful academic times. If you don't currently have an exercise regimen but tend toward being an anxious person you might seriously consider starting one. You'll be amazed at how much better things look after a good physical workout!

During busy times at a university you are really running a marathon of sorts – a marathon of mind and body together. Therefore, do what you’d do before an actual marathon in terms of eating, sleeping, exercising, laughing, playing, working. Treat yourself with care and respect and you’ll discover that all of you will be calmer, more relaxed *and* more productive.

Having set a relaxed, rested and calmer state as your default setting, you will be much less likely to become overly stressed out before an exam; at least not so stressed out that it impairs your memory or your ability to take the test.

Short-term management:

Short-term management of anxiety, what you do in the immediate situation, involves addressing two parts of you: your body and your mind. Anxiety is an issue of both your body (breath, muscle tension, heartrate) as well as your mind, therefore both must be addressed.

1. Managing the physical self: Your breath, muscles and heart rate

Anxiety is a physical stress-response to a psychological experience. On a physical level the goal is to reduce the body’s stress response to more manageable levels through regulating your breathing, relaxing your muscles and slowing your heart rate

Your breath:

Some experts say that the key to reducing all anxiety is found in the breath. **Breath carries oxygen, and oxygen is vital to all mental and bodily functions.** You’ll notice when you’re nervous that your breathing tends to be shallower and faster. Therefore, before and during a test you want to make a conscious and deliberate effort to *slow and deepen* your breathing. You can do this very quietly in the middle of a classroom, in the middle of an exam, and no one will know. One good method is to breathe in through the nose for a slow count of five, hold it for two or three seconds, then breathe out again to another slow count of five, this time through your mouth. Exhale completely until your lungs are empty and then hold it, empty, for a count of two or three, before breathing in again. Do this three or four times. During the test or whatever anxiety-provoking event you’re in check in with your breathing periodically. If it has gotten shallow and fast again simply do another two or three long, deep breaths again. Some people even write the word ‘breathe’ somewhere they’ll see it easily (top of the page, in the margin, on your hand, etc.) as a reminder!

Some students create a mantra that they recite on both the in-breath and the out-breath that reminds them of the energy they want to bring in (calm, relaxation, confidence), as well as send out (fear, insecurity, doubt, panic). It might sound something like this: “Breathing in peace... breathing out stress...Breathing in calm...breathing out anxiety...” Others just sit quietly, noticing the feel of their breath as it gently goes in and out, in and out, passing the lips and filling

and emptying the lungs. The purpose of the mantra, or noticing the feel of the breath, is to give the conscious mind something on which to focus, allowing it to quiet itself.

Your muscles:

When we're nervous our muscles contract and tense up, especially muscles around your neck and shoulders which support your skull and brain. Therefore, periodically throughout the test, shrug your shoulders and release them, two or three times, adding a little rotation. Then, dropping your chin toward your chest, rotate your head in a gentle half-circle from one shoulder to the other and back again, two-three times. This will help loosen the muscles again. Periodically contract and loosen your hands and feet, your calf muscles, and your abdomen, as well. This will help all of you be calmer and more relaxed.

Before leaving to go off to your exam find a quiet place to lie down and, starting at the top of your head, tightly contract (count of 3) and release (count of 5) each of your muscle groups all the way down your body, from your head to your toes: eyes, facial muscles, shoulders, arms, hands, chest, back, abdomen, pelvis, thighs, calves, and feet, even your fingers and toes. This, when combined with a slow, deep breath, will leave you feeling much calmer, present and relaxed for the test.

Your heart rate:

The pulse quickens when we're nervous. It can even race when in full blown test-anxiety mode. It is this fast heart rate and the quick and shallow breathing that causes the lightheadedness, buzzing in the ears and cold sweat reported by some people who experience severe anxiety. When you consciously deepen and slow your breathing and relax your muscles you'll find that your heart rate will also slow down along with it. Splashing cold water on your face is another way to bring your heart rate down a little, so before you go into the test make a quick trip to the bathroom and drink some water, splashing a little on your face.

Be sure to arrive plenty of time before the class so you are not rushing (increases both breathing and heart rate) and sit quietly for a few minutes outside the classroom or nearby. Close your eyes and breathe slowly and deeply for a few moments. Then when your breathing has slowed and your heart rate has returned to normal, get up and calmly go in and take your seat.



2. Managing the psychological self:

We can manage test anxiety through mental strategies as well, through such strategies as over-learning, mnemonic devices, mental rehearsal, humor, and visualization:

Overlearning:

What advertisement jingles do you know by heart? Which of your mom's repeated admonitions can you repeat right along with her? In which favorite movies can you recite the lines of a favorite character through an entire scene? You didn't set out to memorize these things. You simply heard them, recited them, over and over again until they came as naturally as breathing. This is overlearning.

Overlearning is a protection against the tendency for anxiety to dislodge information we've learned that is still fairly new to our memory banks. Once we *understand* the concepts, *then* we have to commit to memory the names of the concepts, and the six (or eight or ten) factors associated with the concepts etc. **Time and rehearsal are the keys to this.** Most students use rehearsal when they use flash cards, however, they rarely rehearse them the right way. **The correct way means learning and rehearsing information is in *meaningful chunks*, or *groups*.** Each time you watched your favorite movie you learned a new line, then another and another. It happened over time. Time and repetition are necessary to overlearn anything (another reason not to procrastinate). Once over-learned, however, you'll be reciting your lists ten years from now from memory, along your favorite actor's lines.



The Great Lakes: “H O M E S”

Got them now?

Mnemonic devices:

Mnemonic devices are tools that take isolated bits and pieces of information and tie them together in superficially meaningful ways for the purpose of being able to remember them. Some common ones you may be familiar with: My Very Eager Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas (nine planets); Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge (lines of the musical staff); ROY G. BIV (sequence of colors in the spectrum). Did you get the Great Lakes above? (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior!). These are mnemonic devices because the “glue” for holding onto the information has little to do with the things themselves, yet are effective tools for holding the information in memory.

Using pre-packaged mnemonic phrases can be helpful but the best ones, and the ones you’ll remember the easiest and the longest, are always the ones you create yourself. Your mnemonic phrases should stand out against the background (these are things we always remember best). You do this by making them larger than life, ridiculous, and as funny as you can make them. The very best mnemonics are ones you create together with a friend or small group; when you get each other laughing hysterically you will be virtually guaranteed to remember the concept at test-time, and probably for years afterward. You still have to more deeply understand what the terms mean but the mnemonic phrases will guarantee you that you’ll remember their names.

Remember this illustration from Chapter 3? In Chapter 3 we were more concerned with the idea below the bar, or the idea behind the term. This indeed does need to come first. But, in order for the learning to be complete you also need the word above the bar. This is where mnemonic devices can be a huge help.

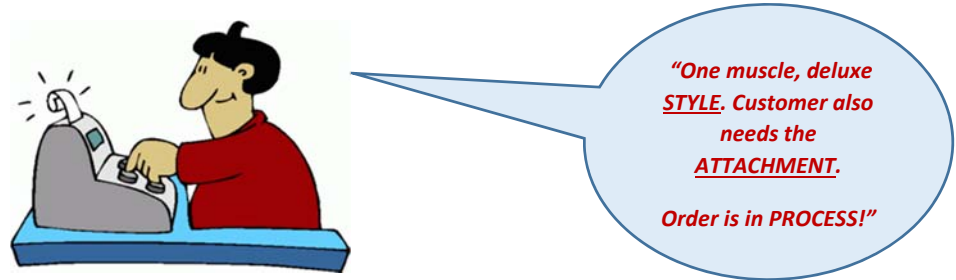
Term: “Styloid Process”

“IDEA” (e.g. the place where muscles attach to the bone)

Mnemonic devices are a great help in reducing test anxiety. You’ll have to remember less random and isolated information that your brain has to strain to retrieve (and which stress interrupts, like a poor cell phone connection). Once you retrieve a mnemonic word, image and/or

phrase, though, out with it flows all the relevant information right along with it. Many students turn their test over before they even start the exam and write down all their mnemonic words and phrases. Then, knowing they have all the course terms, lists and concepts safely captured they immediately relax, having just taken “I can’t remember!” right out of their equation.

Example of a “Styloid process” mnemonic:



Visualization:

Using visualization is another effective way to reinforce learning as well as calm oneself. There is nothing difficult or sophisticated about it and you likely already use it many times a day. Visualize your bedroom. Do you immediately get a mental picture? Your dog? Mental picture. Your last vacation? Mental picture. Where you last had your car keys? Mental picture (you hope!). Meiosis vs. mitosis. Mental picture. No? Ah, there’s the issue. Why not? You use your visual system for virtually everything else (even individuals who are blind have a “visual system” for retrieving information based on location, sound, density of air, etc.). The test asks a question and you can almost see the page in your notebook where the information is, almost read it. Almost...!



Visualization merely adds the visual system (or its equivalent) to the world of words and ideas, of language and thought. It makes the abstract, concrete; and the vague, tangible and accessible. Visualization reinforces learning and bolsters it by giving us an additional doorway into the information.

There are many ways to use visualization to reduce test anxiety. The first is a general visualization strategy that helps calm your whole person, bringing both breathing and heart rate

down to manageable levels, and helping the muscles let go of tension. It is a great exercise that can be used any time for any reason; even just to start your day...



Visualization Exercise

This can either be read aloud by someone, or read through ahead of time and then recreated. It helps if there is some gentle and soft instrumental or meditation music playing in the background.

Sit comfortably, or lie down if you're in a place where this is possible, hands loosely open, knees, and feet relaxed, back relatively straight, such that tension is not likely to gather in any one spot. Now, breathe in and out: a long slow breath in on a count of six, hold for five, then a long slow breath out on a count of six. Stay in the empty spot at the bottom of the breath for a few seconds, then repeat. To give your busy brain a place to go, you can assign it the job of noticing how the breath feels going in and out, in and out, across your lips and in your abdomen. When your brain starts doing its busy thing again ("Did I pay the cell phone bill?"), just pull your mind gently back to the breath again, without judgment. Now stay there for a few of minutes in that breathing space. Just breathe...

[silence for three or four minutes]

Now that your breath is slow and deep, picture a place in your mind, maybe a place in nature, that is beautiful and peaceful, where you love to be – or *would* love to be were ever lucky enough to go there. You stand quietly in that beautiful place. You can hear the sounds around you: the surf rushing the shore; the breeze rustling the leaves, or the ravens cawing overhead across the desert; and you see every magnificent detail: the rich colors, the varied textures, the light against the rock or off the water. Is it day? Maybe deep and beautiful night? How does the ground feel under your feet? Can you smell the earth? The salt? The pine or the meadow flowers? You have not a care in the world. You are in love with where you are and with what you are feeling, seeing and hearing. Walk ahead, explore this place, go deeper into the landscape eager to see what's over the next rise. You are completely safe, completely protected. Nothing can harm you here in this magical place of peace and beauty.

You come around a bend and see a small group of people, or just maybe one or two, and you are delighted beyond measure. They are the ones that you love most dearly in this world, and who love you back - absolutely, unreservedly. Who support you totally and without judgment; they want only your happiness in this world. They are there for you, and you for them, always and forever.

Say good-bye to them for now, and continue walking. You are alone again but you feel completely calm and safe, loving this stroll through the beautiful landscape. You lose track of time as you go; there is only peace, beauty, inner calm. Then still more beauty, and more calm.

[silence for three-five minutes]

Eventually you know that it is now time to go home, to return to your life. You feel ready, prepared. The strength and inner peace that you experienced in the place will go with you back into your life; you're not saying good-bye to it. And when you feel the need, you can come back to this place – or maybe a new place – any time you like. It is inside you.

As you begin your return you become aware of the sounds of the room you are in; the feel of the chair under you, your feet inside of your shoes. You wiggle your fingers and toes and listen for the sounds of the room around you as well as the noises from outside: voices walking by, a faucet dripping. And when you are ready you open your eyes, being careful to keep your vision close at first, and then extending to the room beyond. Now return fully to the room and to yourself.

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Visualization specifically for exams:

Another type of visualization involves a specific task, goal or skill that one wants to develop or improve such as taking a test, and uses guided visualization to do it. It is based on the idea that a person cannot be simultaneously relaxed *and* anxious. In it, an individual visualizes him/herself performing an anxiety-provoking task while in an induced state of relaxation, and focusing on maintaining their relaxation throughout the visualized task. Later, having practiced the task via visualization, when presented with the actual task s/he will be better able to reproduce and maintain a state of calm throughout the event. There is strong evidence that it works with athletes, students and many others (Arnold, 2001; Boggs, Shields & Janiszewski, 2011; Jeroth, Crawford, Barnes & Harden, 2015; Rivkin & Taylor, 1999).

This process is similar to the previous visualization exercise in that one starts out by first achieving a relaxed state through conscious breath and muscle relaxation. During the phase of guided imagery, however, the content is now specific to a particular task, i.e. taking a test. Below is a sample script that you can use to reduce your test anxiety. In it, you have already achieved a relaxed state and now you are ready for the mental journey:

Test-taking Visualization Exercise

Note: You have already done the progressive relaxation portion of the exercise. Now you're ready for the mental "journey."

You are standing in the hallway near your classroom where you will be taking your test. You feel good, and relaxed. You slept well, ate well, got a little exercise walking across campus, and you are ready. You feel calm, and confident that you learned and mastered the material for this test. You studied deeply and well, you didn't just memorize definitions, you studied meaningfully and in context. Your rhymes, phrases and other mnemonic associations are firmly planted in your mind ready to be put to use. You're ready.

You sit down in your seat and take a couple of moments to breathe quietly and slowly. The professor distributes the test and you look at the first page and immediately feel happy, confident and relaxed. You jot down some of your mnemonic phrases on the back of the test just in case, but you're sure you won't need them.

You begin taking the test, answering each question carefully but confidently. You don't rush. Other students get up to leave but you hardly notice. Everyone has their own pace and this one is yours. It works well for you. With each page you turn you continue to feel relaxed, calm, and assured. That good feeling persists as you proceed through the pages until you get to the end of the test. As you rise to turn in your test you just know you did well; there was little on the test that you had any doubts about. Your good studying paid off.

You leave the testing room as confident as you entered. You nailed it.

IV. DEMONSTRATING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH PAPERS AND ASSIGNMENTS

It is easy to get so focused on tests sometimes that it can be easy to underestimate how important to your overall performance the day-to-day tasks like assignments, short papers and other course-related activities can be. Do not allow yourself to fall into that trap! Your syllabus almost always tells you how much of your final grade is based on each element of the course. Professors each weight these differently and it is the *student's* job to take note of these percentages. One class may assign 50% to tests and exams and the other 50% to papers and assignments, and another class may assign only 30% to tests and exams and 70% to papers and assignments. It will your job to educate yourself what your professors' expectations are, and to meet those expectations. "My professor never told me I needed to..." is never an excuse that will fly in college. Your syllabus *is* his/her way of "telling" you what is expected, how, and when.



The other challenge that presents itself is time; or the lack of using it well. You may have the urge to merely tick off the box so that you can say an assignment task is done, but pay little attention to its quality. It is very important, in any assignment you approach, that you pay close attention to these things:

1. Do I fully understand the assignment's purpose from the professor's perspective?
2. Did I note all the criteria regarding what my professor is expecting in this assignment?
3. Did I meet those criteria clearly and explicitly?

It does little good to write a brilliant paper if it does not address what the professor is looking for. As well-written as it was, you might even fail the assignment as a result. Don't let this happen!

On a positive note, if you are one who doesn't see yourself as a good test-taker then the course's other assignments can sometimes be your ticket to protecting your grade in a class. This is true, of course, only as long as the percentages relative to the different assignments on the syllabus allow it.

By resisting the urge to see miscellaneous assignments as merely boxes to be checked off and focus instead on doing the very best job you can, you will be contributing to your understanding of the "story" of the course (the reason for the assignments in the first place), further enabling you to do well on the exams. It is all connected.

Paying good and careful attention to your papers, assignments and projects presupposes one very important skill: time management. Forget the amazing few who pull off writing prize-winning papers an hour before they're due. You're not them. I'm not them. Very few people are them. It

is largely a myth. Most of us pull off writing a paper or completing an assignment at the last minute at one time or another, but this falls into the category of ticking off boxes again and has very little genuine learning value. Believe it or not, it actually feels worse in the long run to go through school this way, always doing a last-minute rush job with no time for paying attention to quality. It wears down one's self-esteem and confidence, and leads to a build-up of anxiety, guilt and stress. Is this how you want to go through college?

To make sure you are on track with long-term assignments use "planning backward" strategy discussed earlier in this manual (starting with the due date and working backward, assigning interim due dates for each major task). If things come up that disrupt your plan, as they frequently will, simply adjust the dates and/or move things around. Flexibility demands sufficient time to support it. Make sure you give it enough.



CHAPTER 6. MONITORING YOUR ACADEMIC PROGRESS & PROGRESSION TOWARD DEGREE

One of the largest responsibilities that college students must take on when they enter college is keeping track of how they're doing. They enter the world of things to be monitored and terminology to be understood that they've only had to pay scarce attention to before now: grades, GPA, requirements for the general core and requirements for their major, degree audits, etc. etc. It can feel overwhelming and it is tempting to brush it off. "If there's something important I need to know I'm sure someone will let me know sooner or later, right?" Unfortunately, not necessarily. It *is* possible to not graduate on time because of a first-year requirement that went overlooked. It has happened. It won't be you if you learn this basic skill.

Every university does a good job keeping track of students' progress. It also makes available many useful tools (often online) for students to use, as well as provides students with people to consult such as the student's academic advisor. It is ultimately *your* responsibility to make sure that your requirements have been met, however, and that you are in good academic standing as you progress through your college career. Take this responsibility seriously in your first year and by your third semester in college you will be a veteran at negotiating the waters of monitoring your academic progress.

Four key resources are available to you at Salve Regina University to help you monitor your academic progress. They are: the university Registrar's Office, your academic advisor, the Undergraduate Catalog and your online Academic Evaluation.

Consider downloading a copy your college's undergraduate catalogue to your desktop (or at the least bookmark it) for easy referral. Most of what you need to know about academic policies, majors, courses and university requirements will be found there.

Below is a brief dictionary of some of the most vital academic terms and concepts.

ACADEMIC DICTIONARY

Academic Advisor:

Your advisor is the person to whom who've been assigned to within your major, who is your go-to person for all things academic. Your advisor helps you choose classes, keep track of your grades, sign off on forms, understand what's required for your major, give you counsel and advice on tricky academic matters, help you figure out what career path you want to take, and much, much more. Make a point to connect with your academic advisor early in your academic career and visit them on a regular basis (two-three times per semester is good, sometimes a little less, sometimes more). The better they know you – your goals, aspirations, strengths, and personality – the better they can support you in your academic and life goals. Students who meet their advisor only once per semester at course-selection time really miss out on this wonderful human resource. They signed up for this job; they want to know you!

Academic Evaluation	An important online resource that informs students where they are in their progression to their degree within their major: what requirements have been satisfied and which requirements/courses still need to be taken. Available on MySalve.																				
Academic Probation:	Academic probation is what occurs when a student’s cumulative GPA falls below a university’s specified level, often a 2.0 GPA. Generally, once the cumulative GPA comes up to 2.0 or higher the student will be off probation completely. Probation has implications for some financial aid and for varsity athletics eligibility so students are advised to contact those offices to find out what their probation status means for them in those areas.																				
The “CORE”	These are a set of courses that all students at the college must take that support the stated educational mission of the college. The courses that each student chooses are often chosen within categories, therefore each student will end up with a slightly different roster of classes.																				
Cumulative GPA:	Your GPA averaged across <u>all</u> semesters. It is often not the same as your Semester GPA, which could be higher or lower depending on your current semester grades.																				
Degree Audit:	Before you can graduate from University the Registrar’s Office will look to see that you have fulfilled all requirements. This is the degree audit.																				
Full-time Status:	A student is considered to be full-time when s/he is registered for 12 or more credits in any given semester. Dropping below 12 credits, while it may sometimes be permitted by the University for extenuating circumstances, may have an impact on financial aid eligibility and eligibility for some athletic programs, both of which have their own guidelines for full time status.																				
GPA:	Grade Point Average. Sometimes referred to as the Semester GPA. The average of all your grades in the <i>current</i> semester, based on the above. A GPA of 3.3 is a B+ average.																				
Grades:	<table><tr><td>A</td><td>4.0</td><td>C+</td><td>2.3</td></tr><tr><td>A-</td><td>3.7</td><td>C</td><td>2.0</td></tr><tr><td>B+</td><td>3.3</td><td>C-</td><td>1.7</td></tr><tr><td>B</td><td>3.0</td><td>D+</td><td>1.3</td></tr><tr><td>B-</td><td>2.7</td><td>D</td><td>1.0</td></tr></table>	A	4.0	C+	2.3	A-	3.7	C	2.0	B+	3.3	C-	1.7	B	3.0	D+	1.3	B-	2.7	D	1.0
A	4.0	C+	2.3																		
A-	3.7	C	2.0																		
B+	3.3	C-	1.7																		
B	3.0	D+	1.3																		
B-	2.7	D	1.0																		
Incomplete:	If a student has completed more than half a course and is passing, and then experiences a serious disruption to their ability to complete their coursework (illness, accident, family crisis, etc.) they may ask their professor(s) for an Incomplete. If granted, this means that the student will then have additional time, as determined by the professor, to complete and submit the remaining work of the course. The professor then submits an “Inc” grade for the course, which will be changed to a letter grade once the student submits the work and it is of acceptable quality. Incompletes are never guaranteed, however, and not all courses lend themselves readily to an Incomplete (high degree of in-class work, type of work, labs, clinicals, internships, etc.). An Incomplete grade has no effect on the student’s GPA, which will be re-calculated once the final grade has been received.																				

Internships:	Internships are opportunities, required by some programs, for students to apply classroom knowledge in real-world, professional settings. Students access internships either through their courses or else independently through their college's career services or internship office.
Leave of Absence	A temporary time-out from the University varying in length from a few weeks to a semester or more. The student remains enrolled at the University during the period of their leave. There are formal processes associated with initiating and returning from leaves of absence and students are advised to contact their own university to learn what those processes are.
Major:	Your primary academic focus while in school. At least half of your graduation credits will typically come from your major. The process for "declaring" your major is done differently at different institutions. Do not assume your major is already "declared" when you start college, as sometimes it is a separate step.
Minor:	Some students elect to have a secondary focus in another area. It is a way to study a second area in a more concentrated fashion. Minors can involve 6-9 additional courses and must be officially "declared" at the university through a formal process.
Mid-term warnings:	Often about midway through your semester or term, your professors will be asked to report on the performance of students in their classes. This can take different forms at different institutions (satisfactory/unsatisfactory, letter grades, only grades below a C, etc.). While these midterm reports are not generally a permanent part of a student's transcript, they are nonetheless an important piece of information since these may be the only "official" notice from the school about students' performance until final grades come out. If you get a warning or a low midterm grade you need to climb past your hesitation and see your professor(s) right away (often it actually makes them look upon you more kindly). You should also seriously consider other avenues of support to help you bring up your grade(s), such as tutoring.
Registrar:	The person, as well as the office ("Registrar's Office") that maintains all information about students' grades, schedules, requirements toward degree, adding and dropping courses, withdrawals, transfer credits, etc. It is an important office with which to be familiar.
Transcript:	Your official record from the University that details all the courses you've taken and the grades you've received, along with other information such as Major, GPA, etc. Transcript requests are always the responsibility of the student.
Withdrawal:	<p>Any student can withdraw from a class, without penalty, until a specified date in the semester. This is an important date that students should know. The course "grade" will appear as a 'W' on the transcript, which will not impact the GPA, which is then calculated on the remaining course grades. Students should be mindful of the impact of Withdrawing from a class on their academic progress,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is the class needed for their major: ○ Is the class a prerequisite for another class that the student plans to take later? ○ Will it drop them below full time status (which may not preclude the withdrawal depending at what point in the semester it occurs. Contact the Registrar's Office for more information).

If you are definitely failing a class, however, or if you switch majors and no longer need a class, requesting a Withdrawal can be a helpful strategy to protect your GPA or to help you along in your major.



HOW TO USE ACADEMIC PROGRESS TOOLS:

Academic Evaluation: Your Academic Evaluation is an important tool for you to learn exactly which requirements for your degree have been met, and which ones still need to be met. Students should check their academic evaluation each semester before deciding which courses to take for the following semester and before consulting with their academic advisor.

The Academic Evaluation is accessed via your MySalve page. It will contain information about courses that satisfy the Core as well as requirements for your major.

Midterm Warnings: Most universities have some system of communicating to students how they are performing in their classes at the mid-point in any semester. At Salve, the Registrar's Office issues grades to students for only those courses that are currently *below a grade of C*. If you do not receive a midterm grade email it is because you currently do not have any courses that are below a C at this time. These grades are reflective of only those graded assignments or tests that have been given to date, however. They do not necessarily mean that all is well if you personally know that you have not been performing up to par.

Universities issue midterm grades so that academic problems can be addressed before they become too serious to repair, or ruin your GPA. They are not a part of a student's permanent academic record. As difficult as it is to hear you are not doing as well in a class as you should be, receiving a midterm warning is not an invitation to pull your head under the covers. Rather, it is an opportunity that the University is giving you to put things to right again. It is timed in such a way as to allow you to take appropriate action. Having received a warning, what you do next means everything:

If you receive a mid-term warning in one or more classes:

You may be tempted to...

Ignore the problem and say, “Later.”

Avoid the professor (you’re embarrassed, and think s/he’s mad at you)

Tell yourself you know what the problem is and you’re just going to fix it on your own.

Blame the professor (your roommate, parents, boss, etc.) and make *them* the problem.

Keep doing the same thing and just try and do it better, and more often.

... However, you need to:

Take action now, while there’s still time to turn it around

See your professor ASAP. Find out exactly where the problem is. Missing work? Poor test grade(s)? Don’t assume you already know.

If you really knew how to fix the problem you would have done it already. Procrastination is a serious issue that destroys students every day. You’re not going to be able to *think* your way out of the problem; you’re going to have to *act* your way out. This means reaching out for support to learn how to do that.

Regardless what anyone else does, it will always be your responsibility what you’re going to do about your situation. So let go of blame, figure out what needs doing, and do it.

You know the saying, “If it’s not broken don’t fix it?” The flip side is, “If it’s broken, fix it!” There is excellent information at [from multiple sources](#) to help you figure out a better way to do college level work. Use it. It’s what successful students do.

One way to avoid academic difficulty is by staying aware of how you are doing in each of your classes at all times. You do this by keeping careful records of every grade you receive from a professor – no matter how large or small the assignment or test. Then, by evaluating the relative weight of each grade in terms of the percentage or point value of the assignment, you will always know how well you are doing in each class. As pointed out earlier, not every grade carries the same level of importance toward your final grade in the class.

Students who end up in serious academic trouble almost always have lost track of how they are doing in a class. While ignoring the facts might preserve one’s self-esteem in the short term, it inevitably compounds the problems. The truth is always easier in the end.

Use the chart on the next page, or create one of your own, to help you keep track of your grades in each class.

Tracking Your Progress & Predicting Your Course Grades

Course name: _____

Instructions: Print (or store electronically) one of these forms for each class. Save a clean one for future use. In each area, list the name/date of every assignment returned (quiz, paper, etc.) and the grade you received on it.

Assignments (short papers, homework, etc.)	Grade	____% of grade (from syllabus)
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
Major Papers:		____% of grade
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
Quizzes:		____% of grade
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
Tests (<u>not</u> the midterm or final):		____% of grade
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
Mid-term exam: _____		____% of grade
Final exam: _____		____% of grade

Calculating your grade in a class when percentage values are provided:

Using the following chart, convert your alphanumeric grade (B, C+, etc.) into quality points:

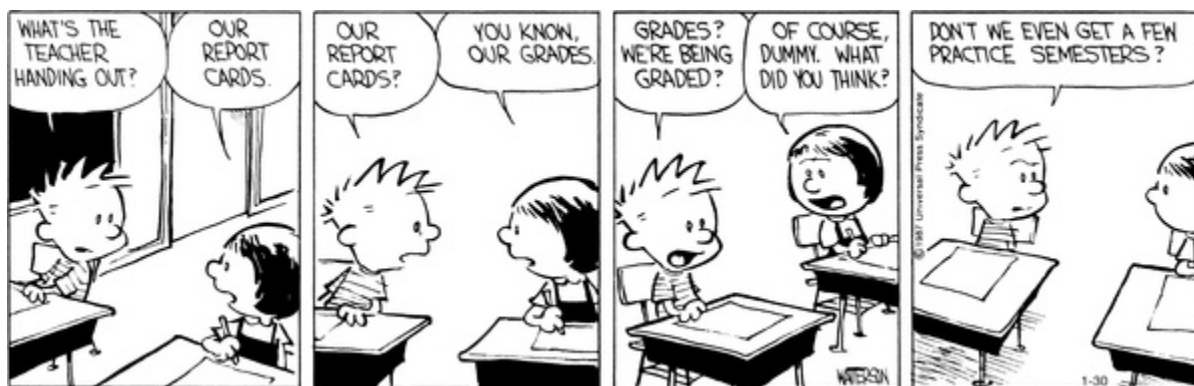
A	4.0	C+	2.3
A-	3.7	C	2.0
B+	3.3	C-	1.7
B	3.0	D+	1.3
B-	2.7	D	1.0

Next, if there are multiple grades in one category (e.g. three quizzes), add their quality point values together then divide by the number of scores in that category (find the average, in other words).

Now, multiply the quality points by the percentage value of that category to find the total value for that category (e.g. 3.3 quality points for a category worth 20% of your grade would be $3.3 \times .20 = .66$)

Do this for each category then add together the values in each category for a total quality point score and convert back to an alphanumeric grade.

Sample:	Bio homework, (15%)	B-, or $2.7 \times .15 = .41$
	Attendance & participation, (15%)	A, or $4.0 \times .15 = .60$
	Lab reports (2), (20%)	B, or $3.0 \times .20 = .60$
	Mid-term exam, (25%)	A-, or $3.7 \times .25 = .93$
	Final Exam, (25%)	B, or $3.0 \times .25 = .75$
	TOTAL pts. = 3.29 = B+ Grade	




HOW TO PREDICT YOUR GPA

You may have a scholarship that requires that you maintain a certain GPA, or a major (Education, Nursing) that does the same. Or maybe you play Varsity sports, or maybe you just have high expectations for yourself and like to monitor your performance closely. These are all excellent reasons to want to be able to predict what your GPA might be based on the grades you believe you may earn in your courses.

You'll need to refer to the earlier chart that assigns numerical values to the different letter grades.

Create the following chart:

Courses	Predicted Letter grade	Quality points (from chart)	X	Graded Credits for each class (not P/F)	=	Total Quality Pts
_____	_____	_____	X	_____	=	_____
_____	_____	_____	X	_____	=	_____
_____	_____	_____	X	_____	=	_____
_____	_____	_____	X	_____	=	_____
_____	_____	_____	X	_____	=	_____
_____	_____	_____	X	_____	=	_____
_____	_____	_____	X	_____	=	_____
			Total crs.	_____	Total pts.	_____
						÷ # crs. _____
						GPA: _____

Sample:

Course	Potential		Credits	Q.P.'s
	Grade	Pts.		
FYT 100	A	4.0	1	4
UNV 101	B+	3.3	3	9.9
PSY 100	A-	3.7	3	11.1
ECN 102	C+	2.3	3	6.9
DNC 100	A	4.0	3	12
BIO 110	B	3.0	<u>3</u>	<u>12</u>
			16	55.9

$$55.9/16 = 3.49 \text{ GPA (just over a B+)}$$

Play with the numbers. What if you perform really well on the next Economics exam? How will that change the picture? How damaging to your GPA is that low grade you got on the Psychology test? Maybe not as bad as you think. Do a "worst case scenario" and then a "best case scenario" to see the range that you are operating in. Knowing this, you'll be able to relax a little bit more about unforeseen dragons eating your grades and your college future.

CHAPTER 7. YOU HAVE PEOPLE! CAMPUS RESOURCES TO HELP YOU GET YOU WHAT YOU NEED

The developmental task of an 18-21 year old is to make the transition to adulthood. You are separating from the oversight of parents and other caregivers and have an overwhelming desire – a need, really – to declare your independence; to *be* independent. This is right where you should be, developmentally speaking.

One challenge for a young adult, then, is how to get what they need when they don't have all the answers or, worse, if they mess up. You fear that this will signal to your parents and others that you're not ready to be independent, that you still need their oversight and intervention. As a result you may be reluctant to ask for help or admit when you've made a mistake. Being told to get 'help' may mean to you that you've failed somehow in your quest to do it on your own, and that now you now need to come crawling back to someone – often an adult - who can *help* you. The power feels like it is all on their side.

The good news is, **no one** does it entirely on their own. The really good news? One major characteristic of all truly self-sufficient, mature, successful adults is their ability to use the resources around them effectively to get what they need. They have people! Taxes too complicated? They call an accountant. They've gone back to school for a course and don't understand the technology involved? They call you!

Is this “asking for help?” Yes, perhaps, but not the kind of asking for help that you may be thinking of. They're not asking you for help with the technology because they're dumb or incompetent, or they still need their parents around. They're asking for help because they have a job that needs doing and they need to look outside themselves for a resource (you!) to help them do it. In this scenario the power stays with them – with *you*.

This is **resourcefulness**. It is the ability to effectively use the people, agencies and resources around us to achieve our own goals. This *is* independence! Every major world leader, CEO, university president, mother with six kids, working dad - anyone you can think of who is an adult who manages their world halfway well - is resourceful. Every single one of them uses people and resources around them *all the time*.

Learn the difference between asking for help and being a resourceful person. Trust that the university has the same mission for you as you have for yourself: your independence and success as an emerging, college-educated adult. The university wants you to have the tools and skills that you need to set and attain all of your life's goals. We believe completely in your ability to make a successful transition to adulthood, and this will be reflected in every interaction you have with us. No avoidance is necessary!

RESOURCES AT SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

Resource	Academic Issue	Location and phone
Academic Advising Office	Changing majors	Wakehurst 309
	Requirements for a Major	Wakehurst 309
Academic advisor	Changing majors	Online directory
	Incomplete Requests	Online directory
	Internships	Online directory
	Professor problems	Online directory
	Requirements for a Major	Online directory
	Withdrawals	Online directory
	Class Schedule issues	Online directory
Academic Center for Excellence	Disability Accommodations	McKillop 2nd floor, 341-2226
	Extra help in a class	McKillop 2nd floor, 341-2226
	Research Assistance	McKillop 2nd floor, 341-2226
	Second language issues	McKillop 2nd floor, 341-2226
	Study Skills	McKillop 2nd floor, 341-2226
	Test-taking Skills	McKillop 2nd floor, 341-2226
Academic Evaluation	Requirements for a Major	MySalve page online
Career Development Center	Internships	Walgreen 075 (Annex), 341-2201
Community Service Office	Community Service Hours	Wakehurst 201, 341-2440
FYT Instructor	Professor problems	FYT Syllabus; Online directory
McKillop Library	Research Assistance	Information Desk, 341-2289
	Reserve materials	Main desk
Professor	Extra help in a class	Syllabus; Online Directory
	Incomplete Requests	Syllabus; Online Directory
	Internships	Syllabus; Online Directory
	Withdrawals	Syllabus; Online Directory
Registrar's Office	Class Schedule issues	Ochre Court, Room 203, 341-2943
	Incomplete Requests	Ochre Court, Room 203, 341-2943
	Transfer & AP Credits	Ochre Court, Room 203, 341-2943
	Withdrawals	Ochre Court, Room 203, 341-2943
Undergraduate Catalog	Requirements for a Major	http://catalog.salve.edu/index.php?catoid=3
University Bookstore	Textbook issues	Miley Garden level, 341-2195
University Help Desk	Computer Issues	341-7777, Ext. 2 McKillop Library Garden level, 341-2985
User Support Services in McKillop	Canvas Problems	McKillop Library Garden level, 341-2985
	Computer Issues	McKillop Library Garden level, 341-2985
Writing Center	Writing papers	McKillop Library 2nd floor, 341-3230



WHEN, AND UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS, SHOULD YOU REACH OUT TO RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT?

Be proactive, not reactive, whenever possible.

Any experienced hiker knows that by the time you feel thirsty you are already dehydrated. They know they need to be *proactive* (before-the-fact) rather than *reactive* (after-the-fact). The same applies in school. Presumably, like most people, you want your academic life to go smoothly; you don't want to live perpetually bouncing from crisis to crisis, constantly putting out fires. Talk about stress! You were accepted to Salve Regina University because you met the admissions criteria. Salve said, "We like what this student has to offer our community and we believe that this student could thrive here. We're a good match for each other." Because of this, we know you have what it takes to be successful here at the university. That said, college-level work is not the same as what most high schools require and you might be surprised, especially in the beginning, if you don't get the same high grades at first that you may have earned in high school.

If it happens to you, this will be your cue to reach out for support so you can fill the gap between your high school's expectations/your performance, and college level expectations/your performance. In other words, *at the first sign* of a discrepancy between what you expect of yourself and what you see happening in your academics you should reach out. You want to *maintain your high standards and high-level performance*, not be digging out from a hole that's been created.

If for whatever reason you were not proactive, for example you thought you could handle something on your own but it turned out badly; or, you fell into an old pattern of procrastination and now you're in deep in one of your classes; or, you forgot about an important financial aid form and now you're worried your aid will be revoked. Reaching out for support to fix a deteriorating situation is nothing to be embarrassed about. *Not* attempting to fix it is what you should be concerned about avoiding! You'll find that people in offices all over campus are overwhelmingly supportive of your desire to fix a situation that isn't going well and will provide you the assistance you need to set it right again. You will *always* be glad you did.

Finally, there are times when being reactive is the only thing you can do, such as when unforeseen events occur (illness, accident, personal crisis, failed test, etc.). It is important that you do react, to try and take care of business, even if it's an indirect response, such as having a loved one call the Dean of Students office to let them know that you'll be out of classes for a few days until you can contact them yourself. When bad things happen the temptation is often to hide or to let go of everything else. While this is a natural response it is not the correct one, and often ends up making the situation worse. When bad things happen muster your courage and make the right calls or visits to relevant offices to address the problem. Obligations don't stop because our lives hit road blocks, and learning how to keep your boat afloat while you go through whatever life tosses your

way is an important life skill. You'll find though, once again, that almost everyone you encounter at Salve, from your professors to the Deans to your RA, will be supportive of your efforts to try and manage a difficult situation and will gladly give you assistance.

Time management and advance planning.

Time management and planning also play a role here. For example, if you think you may want to study abroad in your junior year you might ask yourself, "When is a good time to talk it over with someone? Will it affect which the courses I take and when I take them? Maybe I should go talk with someone now to make sure I plan this right." This is good thinking.

Each situation has its own characteristics and needs. In general, taking the "planning backwards" approach works well in many situations. When is 'x' (your need, idea, plan, etc.) likely to take place? What is involved in making it a reality? How many people and/or offices are involved? Are there forms and signatures needed? Your answers to these questions will determine how soon you need to get started. If you don't know the answers to these questions then *now* is the time do the reconnaissance necessary so you *do* know what's involved and can plan accordingly. For some students whose parents have done much of this kind of planning for them most of their lives this will be new territory. Now it is your turn to master another skill to master for successful independence. It just requires consistent practice and before long it will become part of you.

Be willing to ask for what you need, multiple times if necessary.

In short, be able and willing to ask the important questions and, if you don't get the answers you need the first time you ask, keep asking! You don't have to have all the answers; no one does. You *do*, however, have to be willing to ask the questions and to keep asking until you get the information you need. *This* is successful academic independence and the mark of a successful University scholar!

*"To reach a port we must set sail
Sail, not tie at anchor
Sail, not drift."*

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

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