



The CENTER for STUDENT SUCCESS

COLLEGE SUCCESS TIPS

Entering into college requires a major shift in habits, lifestyle, and learning from what you have established in high school. Applying the following proactive strategies during your time as a student will greatly improve your prospects for success.

In-Class Strategies

- **Attend every lecture!** Missing classes means missing valuable time and learning opportunities that you will never recover.
- Read each class **syllabus** carefully. Each professor will have unique guidelines for their classes.
- Create a **folder** (physical or on your computer) for each class. Every handout and assignment should be categorized in its appropriate folder.
- **Note-taking:** there is no substitute for your own lecture notes!
 - Determine the best option for taking notes in each class: by **hand** or by **computer** (word processing software, Evernote, filling in an outline from professor). NOTE: Some professors have rules regarding the use of technology in class. Verify that using your computer in class is allowed before pursuing that option.
 - Identify the **big ideas** within the lecture as you are taking notes—look for key questions, supporting evidence, and final conclusions.
 - **Review** your notes after class to help you retain the material.
- **Pay attention and be present** in class.
 - When you are in class physically, be there mentally. Do NOT watch movies, scroll through social media, or work on other assignments while you are in class. Staying **focused** enables you to steward your class time well, shows courtesy to fellow classmates, and honors your professor.
 - Discipline yourself to **listen**. If taking notes distracts you during class, try recording the lecture and taking notes later (check with your professor first).
 - Sit as close to the front as possible to avoid distraction. Learning is not a spectator sport.
 - Raise your hand when you have a question. If you do not understand something, get clarity so that you can follow the rest of the lecture. You are paying good money to learn here!

Additional Tips

- Get to know your **professors**. Meet with them during office hours and take the opportunity to ask questions, clarify a subject further, and discuss topics that have come up in lectures. They are an invaluable resource for you.
- **Save and back-up** your work regularly. Losing work you have invested hours into is frustrating and discouraging. Back-up your work in several places (such as USB drives or external hard drives), or save it in the cloud (**Dropbox** and **Google Drive** are both helpful for cloud back-ups).
- Maximize your in-class, study, and reading time by minimizing distractions. Maintaining a healthy work/life/school/church balance requires full devotion to whatever you are doing at the time. You do not want to be at work worrying about an assignment, skipping small group to finish a paper, or feeling guilty about being with friends when you should be reading. Disciplining yourself to listen in class and focus while doing homework frees you to flourish in other spheres of your life.
- Use your calendar, plan ahead, and decide how you will spend your time. For more information/tips about managing your time and schedule, see our **Time Management** and **Planning your Semester** handouts.

NOTE: This guide draws some strategies from *How to Become a Straight-A Student* by Cal Newport and *The A Game* by Kenneth Sukka.