

Advice on How to Study in College (Taken from *US News*. Modified, added and adapted by JP)

Here's what many freshmen think college life will be like: Party, party, party. Here's what professors think college life should be like: Study, study, study. As Hamlet would say, "Ay, there's the rub." You may meet Hamlet one day in a college English class—he's the star of a play by some dude named Wilson Shakespond. Now let's say you're reading Hamlet and don't know what "there's the rub" means—you were up late watching drunken puppies on YouTube, and you fell asleep when the professor explained it. And you didn't ask during office hours because you didn't want the teacher to think you were, like, dumb or anything.

Now, let's review what we've learned. You can rock your brains out at college parties. But there's a catch, aka "the rub": You also have to study. Twenty-six or so hours a week, according to professors. Or else you'll flunk out.

"I used to study half an hour for a test in high school," confesses one student. "Omigosh, you have to study at least two hours for a test in college!" Prepping for tests is just part of your load. College students must take notes on lectures, read maybe 100 pages a week, and tackle two major tests or two 15-page papers. And that's just for one class. So how do you study properly? We could have asked study experts for their advice. But really, who knows better than real-life collegians?

Here is a simple concept to hold dear to your heart. You are in college voluntarily. You (or with some help) are paying for college. You should expect to work hard at college, as it is a chance to prepare for the rest of your life. Forget the idea that a nice professor will give an easy grade. You are paying for the chance to become a critical thinker, be trained for personal and professional life. Demand that you get what you are going into debt for... A good or nice professor will help you better yourself, a good professor will push you to be a better and smarter person, a good professor will make you do things you never thought you could do. YOUR JOB is to do the same for yourself. Have fun while at college (we all did) but never lose sight of why your going into debt and why you are enrolled in college.

Fear the vampire. We're not talking about the blood sucking. We're talking about students who sleep by day and emerge from their dorm rooms at sunset. Here's how collegians cross over from day person to night person: They stay up late because everyone stays up late and there are no annoying parents to say, "Go to bed already; it's midnight." The next thing you know, it's 4 a.m. The students sleep a few hours, then stagger off to class. Where they promptly fall asleep. Later that day, they're still tired, so they take a nap, then stay up late again. Soon the semester is over. Of course, at times, your workload/procrastination habits will make an early bedtime impossible. Unfortunately, the later it gets, the less cooperative your brain is.

Be a time manager. Ah, the carefree days of a college student. Go to a class. Eat. Hang out. Eat. Take a nap. Watch nine episodes of South Park on your laptop. Eat. Hang out some more. Make a detailed hour-by-hour schedule of what you will do each day including the weekends. Plan for 2 hours of study EACH day. Then follow-up your time schedule with what you actually did. Use this to adjust the following week. Take time for some fun and exercise. **WORK** – an ancillary to managing your time is how much time you spend at a job. College is expensive and paying for college isn't easy. The closer most students get to working 20 hours per week the worse the grades become. Only a rare few (less than half a percent) of students can pull off more than 20 hours a week and still manage to earn good grades.

Take a moment to Google "time management and college". You will find there are lots and lots of good websites, many from colleges, and each helping you prepare for college. Read through a few and find the technique that works for you.

Keep up with the books. It may seem fine to do required readings after class or the night before the midterm. Here's a radical thought: Do the reading before class. That way, you'll know what the teacher's talking about! GET THE TEXTBOOKS. Later, you will find out which Professors use the book and which ignore the book using their notes or lecture materials to create test questions. Most expect you to get and read the book. Most Professors expect you to read the book on your own and use that information to supplement and add to your learning outcome. Good lectures or classroom activities will not directly parallel the textbook. Professors leave that for you to do on your own.

Syllabus. Believe it or not, this is a contract of what will happen during the semester. How grades are given, late points, missing classes, test/exam policies and some sort of scheduling are typically included. Most universities feel this is an informal contract of the Faculty with the student. This will be a big help to you in each class, so read it and keep it!

Duly noted. *GO TO CLASS, ACTIVELY LISTEN TO THE PROFESSOR and TAKE NOTES.* Some students furiously scribble down everything the teacher says—especially on PowerPoint. PowerPoint presentations are often online. You can even print out slides before class, then annotate them with the teacher's comments. Write down the key points and translate important material into your own words. As soon as possible after the class, reorganize your notes; use the textbook, any handouts or powerpoint files and your notes to create a meaningful set of class notes. Spend ten minutes or so every week to review these notes PRIOR to studying for an exam.

Things to make certain you write down. Notes on the board. Items that are repeated, material that is emphasized by tone of voice or gesture and the amount of time the instructor spends on a point.

Study Time. The thing about studying in college is, you don't just need to know facts. You need to put those facts into some kind of context. Bummer! *Simply memorizing is not enough.* In fact it will likely lead you to a path of pain and despair. Learn the key points from both the lecture and textbook. Do more than the assigned questions and ask yourself, what was the point of the question. Don't look for more of the same exact questions on the exam but similar. By the way – don't complain or count the hours you studied. How well you studied counts much more than how many hours you studied.

Don't Cram. Putting off real study until the day or night before the test may sound tempting and easy to do when you're watching the second season of "Big Bang Theory" BUT it will come back to bite you in a place you need to use for other things. While you may get by with it now and then it does not help real learning. Plus in many classes, you will be expected to recall earlier tested information for the next test. Studying in intense short bursts before a test will not help you learn the material. One Professor said it best; cramming the night before a test is like flossing all night before a dental exam.

Avoid laptop temptation. You bring a laptop to class to take notes. Or is it really because you want to check E-mail and troll around Facebook? Paper and pencil present far fewer temptations. Professors HATE when students are on FB or texting.

Motivate yourself. No one knows better than you what will keep your nose to the grindstone. Think about why you're at college. What are your long-term goals? Students who do not know why they're in college, lose track of why they went often struggle when the large assignments demand more and more from them. If you don't know your major or career plans, find a way to figure it out. Leaving that for chance will defeat your personal motivation.

Do not fear your teacher (or TA). A certain percentage of students stops by the professor's or teaching assistant's office during office hours. Others do not, lest the teacher think they're stupid. They are stupid—for not seeking help. Teachers are happy to meet with students. In fact, Professors will often look at the time you spend on yourself and with the professor as an investment and will return the favor to those who invest in themselves. Those who do not show up at all or wait until the end of the semester are far less likely to get good help or a benefit of doubt.

ALSO – the most efficient way to get the most from your visits with the Professor or TA is to come prepared. Don't simply put the book on the desk and state "I don't get it". That approach is too vague and will likely end up with both you and your Professor/TA becoming frustrated.

Final Grades. There is no one universal or common way professors grade or keep up with your current grade. Most will expect you to calculate your grade for yourself. Some utilize an online grade book others do not. In many cases how the grades are kept are up to the instructor. Use the syllabus and collect all returned assignments. Then do the math! Find out for yourself how many points you've earned toward the grade you are hoping to get. If you are unclear or confused, then see the professor. Don't email him or her with the question "what is my grade" or "what do I need to get to pass your class". You may not like the answer.

Study Techniques *Simple memorization and doing the study/homework questions is not enough. Of course doing the homework and study questions are important but that alone will not provide you with enough to prepare for a college exam. Here are my tips to help you study.*

Vocabulary – There are many words (technical and advanced words) that you will run into while listening to a professor and reading notes or textbooks. Write down these confusing or unknown words and look them up. In science courses this is critical! Think of learning a foreign language. Simply blowing past words you didn't understand would never help you to learn the content of what you are reading. The same goes when learning new material in college.

Think of the big question – When reading material, working on problems, or writing essays, look beyond the exact question. Think about what is the concept the question or problem is trying to get at. This will help you understand what is going on in class or what the instructor thinks is important.

Support your answer – If you are doing a simple math or science problem. Show all your work, do it neatly and in an organized manner. You will be much more likely to get partial points if your answer is wrong. If answering a short or longer essay, support your hypothesis or ideas with real evidence. Think back to the way you were taught to write an essay in high school. If you can't remember, how to write an essay is what you should Google.

Google, Yahoo, Bing... – If your first move after reading a homework assignment is to google for an answer, you've already lost. Yes, you might be lucky and run into the answer. Yeah, you don't have to do anything... But that is exactly the point. You lose. No learning will happen with a search engine and the copy-paste function on your laptop. Read the textbook, review and write your notes. Then when answering questions, stop and think about 1) what is the concept of the question, 2) what is the actual questions and 3) what information am I given to answer the question. Use this to critically think about the homework problem. If you are stuck on a concept or how to solve some step, then google away. Better yet, go to see your Professor or TA.

HOW TO READ AND STUDY TEXTBOOK INFORMATION SQR4 Method

Read the assignment before class. Active involvement in reading the text is important for comprehending the material.

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| S=Survey | Briefly survey the chapter, noting the divisions, headings, tables and figures. Read the chapter summary. This provides an overview of the chapter content and a framework for organizing the material. |
| Q=Question | Turn each section heading into a question that you want answered. Also, try to guess questions that might appear on the exam. |
| 1. R=Read | Read the chapter, section by section, trying to answer your questions. |
| 2. R=Recite | Answer the questions and state the main points verbally. You may also write down the answers and key points for later reference. |
| 3. R=(W)Rite | First, write the question and then write the answer to the question using only key words, lists, etc. |
| 4. R=Review | Briefly look back over the material to assure that you have included all the main points. Reflect on the meaning and application of the major points. |

ALSO –

Use 3" x 5" index cards. Write the questions on one side and the answers on the other side, and use them as flash cards. If you carry them with you, you can get through several cards while waiting for the shuttlebus, riding the elevator, walking to class, etc.

Work all assigned problems, and then work some more, even if the assignment will not be collected. In math and science courses where memorization is crucial, it is helpful to *over* learn the material. Small amounts of practice spread over several days are more efficient than one long memorization session.

Recognize the importance of regular review. Review class notes on a daily basis, and set aside review time for each course on a weekly basis.

Start studying the first day of the semester and keep up. It is easy to spend the first month of classes "adjusting" and "organizing", but often the result is falling very far behind in your work. That sets up the vicious cycle of dropping everything to prepare for an upcoming exam in one class, and following that routine for each class in turn. The best way to deal with such a cycle is to prevent it from happening.

A great website with study skills is from Virginia Tech (<http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdyhlp.html>)

Don't forget to have fun and study. College is a blast and a kick in the butt. Enjoy and good luck.