

Academic Advising Tips for Underclassmen

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Personal Habits and Tips Inside of the Classroom:

1. Be an active listener! Do not stare out the window, chat with your neighbor constantly or . . . worst of all (!) . . . do not look at or use smart phones, personal electronic devices and even laptop computers unless it is part of a lecture. I recommend keeping all personal electronic devices at home or at least securely stowed in your backpack! This may be the number one pet peeve of every professor, and for good reason. It can really disrupt discussion. Don't text while driving or walking (if it involves intersections and streets) and definitely don't text while actively listening to/participating in a lecture. Professors are very good at noticing when you are not paying attention in class—even if they do not say it to you directly at the time. If you are taking a 500-student class at a state university, texting and checking emails, etc. during class may be expected, but not at USD.
2. Take notes. Even if professors have lecture material available in Blackboard, you should be taking notes during every lecture unless otherwise instructed by your professor.
3. If you think you will be distracted sitting next to someone, sit somewhere else! You can always visit with this person before and after class.
4. Sit near the middle section or front of the classroom. This is generally the “sweet spot” for learning—not on the back row and will keep you honest.
5. Speak up during class discussions. This is the time in your life to form and practice good speaking skills. However, if you are on the opposite side of the spectrum, avoid dominating class discussions. Aim for a good balance of listening and speaking.

Personal Habits and Tips Outside of the Classroom:

1. Plan to visit each of your professors during office hours at least once each semester. That way they get to know who you are and vice versa. It is best to do this at the beginning of the semester so you know where their office is later on if you are having difficulty. Be sure to discuss some question or problem that may have come up in class—or perhaps something beyond the scope of the class, but a related topic that you are interested in. Professors always like to talk about their research, in case you are searching for a topic. . . .
2. Keep your professors informed if personal issues come up that may impact your class attendance and/or performance. Examples: you or a family member are sick, injured, dying, etc.
3. Seek out help early on . . . do not wait until something becomes an emergency.
4. If you are having a hard time concentrating while studying, take a break. Go somewhere and have a complete change of scenery for a few minutes or even hours, depending on

your state of mind and the circumstances. “Putting in time” studying without information sinking in is a “waste of time.”

5. Plan to spend three hours outside of class for every one hour of class lecture time. (Example: a three-unit course may well involve nine hours of study time outside of class.)
6. Over-prepare for your first midterm exam. It is always easier to pull back a little than to have to start over from square one and compensate for a poor grade.

Classes and Academic Course Work:

1. Check your DARS before adding or dropping a class to make sure it will serve as a CORE class requirement. If you are taking an elective class that’s fine but know that it is really an elective!
2. Try the Second Year Experience (study abroad) during intercession. It’s a great way to experience the world, broaden your horizons and meet other students.
3. Plan to study abroad the first semester of your junior year. You can also do this the second semester sophomore year or second semester junior year. Be sure to plan ahead in terms of course work.
4. Plan to declare a major at the end (i.e., April) of your freshman year. Notice I did not say “your major” because that sounds way too permanent! It is expected that students will change majors several times and USD’s system is set up to accommodate that very well. To declare a business major it is very, very easy! Just schedule an appointment with the undergraduate business advising office and they will take it from there. Go to: http://www.sandiego.edu/business/programs/undergraduate/SBA_advising_office.php
5. Don’t go chasing after “W” (writing) or “D” (diversity) classes . . . they will find you. All business majors have these as part of the major and you can then find these during your junior or senior years.