

A Guide for Successful Students 2nd ed.



# A Guide for Successful Students 2nd ed.

*IRENE STEWART; AARON MAISONVILLE; AND NIKOLAI  
ZRIACHEV*

ST. CLAIR COLLEGE  
WINDSOR, ONTARIO



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This textbook can be referenced. For example, in APA citation style, it should appear as follows:

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# Preface

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## Reference

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## About this book

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Stewart and Aaron Maisonville, and is released under a Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA).

The 1st edition adaptation has seen substantial reordering and reformatting of the original College Success 2015 text, minor wording adjustments, addition of new content, replacement of images, and deletions.

The revisions made to the original textbook are listed below.

- Introduction – adapted from Chapt. 1.1
- Successful students have goals – adapted from Chap. 2.1
- Successful students embrace a diverse community – adapted from Chap. 9.1 & 9.2
- Successful students go to class – adapted from Chap. 7
- Successful students ask for help – adapted from Chap. 7.3
- Successful students get it together – adapted from Chap. 2.2 & 2.3
- Successful students take control of their health – adapted from Chap. 10.1 – 10.4 and 10.7
- Successful students practice mental wellness – adapted from Chap. 10.5 and 10.6
- Successful students manage their finance – adapted from Chap. 11
- Successful students get involved – adapted from Chap. 9.1 & 9.3
- Successful students learn independently – adapted from Chap. 1.3 & 4.5 (Learning); Chap. 5 (Reading); Chap. 4.4 (Notetaking); Chap. 6.5 & 8 (Writing); Chap. 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, & 6.6 (Studying); Chap. 6.3 (Tests); Chap. 6.2 (Group Work).

The new and revised material in the 2nd Edition is copyrighted 2023 by the adapting authors, Irene Stewart, Aaron Maisonville and Nicolai Zriachev, and is released under a Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA).

This adaptation added new and revised materials to the 1st edition. The new materials included expanded materials primarily in the Reading, Notetaking and Writing chapters along with the addition of chapters in the Successful students learn independently section. Original video content and H5P objects were created by Irene Stewart and Nicolai Zriachev. New videos and resources were linked or embedded to enhance the material.

Additional material was adapted as follows:

- Successful students learn independently – Reading: Seven reading principles and reading graphics sections were adapted from Nissila, P. (2016). How to learn like a pro! CC BY. Open Oregon Educational Resources.
- Successful students learn independently – Notetaking: Introduction and develop your notetaking style sections were adapted from Bridging the Gap: A Guide to College-Level Research by Catherine J Gray is licensed under a CC BY License

## Ist Edition Background

A Guide for Successful Students was created to accompany a non-credit series of modules for THRIVES, a project of the Student Services Department of St. Clair College. The intention was to develop a series of modules for students entering first semester that would give them information and tools that would ease their transition to college and through that, support mental wellness. A small team was gathered in February 2018 and THRIVES development began in earnest.

Wanting more than a series of policies and dry facts, the structure based on skillsets, attitudes and behaviours of successful students was taken from the Orientation Family and Friends workshop developed by Bob Birnie and Irene Stewart. So that the modules would cover a wide range of topics that would be useful to students throughout their college years, the OER College Success 2015 published by the University of Minnesota was selected for adaptation.

While the modules will be presented to St. Clair students within our LMS and will contain additional information specific to our college, this Guide is offered to the broader community of learners and educators, wherever you may be, under a Creative Commons license in hopes that you will benefit from our efforts.

The guide was adapted from College Success, University of Minnesota, 2015, licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. This work holds the same license unless otherwise noted. Image credits are listed with each image or photo.

This Pressbooks adaptation was made possible with the support of eCampus Ontario. eCampus Ontario supports Ontario post-secondary educators adopting, adapting and creating Open Education Resources by providing access to Pressbooks with H5P plug in and by hosting and maintaining an OER Open Library.

## 2nd Edition

The THRIVES course rolled out to all 1st semester students at the Windsor and Chatham campuses in the Spring of 2019. Each semester, the THRIVES content was reviewed and new material or adjustments were made. In addition to the videos featuring Irene Stewart, additional videos were added that offered different perspectives and voices. During Spring semester of 2023, Irene Stewart and student LT Rover, Nikolai Zriachev updated the textbook with content and videos used in THRIVES course. In particular, additions have been

made to the Successful Students Learn Independently module. Aaron Maisonville reviewed the changes and gave feedback.



# How to use this guide for self-study



*Photo by Wes Hicks on Unsplash*

Dear student,

We are so glad you found (or were recommended) this Guide. We hope you will find ideas and advice that will help you adjust to the demands of college life and will help you be both successful and independent in your learning.

If you are using this guide for personal study outside of a course, you can take two pathways through this material:

1. You can certainly start reading from the beginning and continue right through the end. Of course, we think everything in this Guide is useful and thrilling.
2. OR you can start by scanning the Contents list with a critical eye. Consider your current state of skills, attitudes and behaviours and use the Content list as a check list. Do you already do the things that successful students do? If so, you can take that as a confirmation that you are on the right track. If not, or if not enough, slow down and read that section or subsection. Once you are aware of what is within this Guide, you can come back and read or re-read a section when you need a new idea or a reminder.

# Pathways Through the Guide



*Image by blueringmedia from depositphotos*

The chapters in this guide are presented in a certain order with what we thought were the most important topics first. But you can choose your own pathway through the chapters based on what you are interested in or have questions about right now! We do recommend that you complete the “Introduction”, “Successful Students Have Goals, and Take Responsibility” chapters first.

- **Successful Students Have Goals** will help you decide how your academic journey at your college fits in with your life goals and help you decide on short and midterm goals that will guide your actions semester by semester. But even with goals, you are going to run into challenges, competing demands, and frustrations because there will not be enough time to do everything you want to do. Understanding how your time at the college contributes to your greater life plan can help you weather the challenges.
- **Successful Student Take Responsibility** is the most important module from the point of view of your professors and college administration. Why? Because there are rules and policies that guide our community that you don't know about. This module

highlights some of the important policies such as the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities as well as the principle of Academic Honesty that teaching and learning at your college are most likely based on. While we will use terminology typical for our college, similar policies will have been adopted by your institution. You should review these policies early in our college career. Understanding your role in our community and the principles that guide our community will help you academically and personally be more successful during your time with us.

**After these two modules, you may choose where to go next! Check out the list of pathways below for some suggestions for the next two modules to review!**



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=20#h5p-36>

Regardless of the path you take, we recommend that you don't try to do it all at once. Choose one or two sections to focus on at a time. For example, if you are a new student scan through the sections of *Successful Students Have Goals* and *Take Responsibility*. Knowing how college fits into your overall plans can help you frame your college experience in a more positive way and understanding your responsibilities for your education will ease the culture shock that some students experience in a new learning environment. After you have attended a few classes, you can come back and look at *Successful Students Get It Together* and *Learn Independently* to add some time management and study skills to your student tool belt. Later, do a check of your health: body, mind and wallet! And don't forget the social aspects of college!

We believe this Guide will be useful throughout your college career and we hope you will agree!

If you have suggestions for improvements or inclusions, email [istewart@stclaircollege.ca](mailto:istewart@stclaircollege.ca) with "A Guide for Successful Students" in the subject line. We would love to hear from you!

All the best,

Irene, Aaron, and Nik

# Dedication

For Coulson, representing all students yet to come.

# Accessibility Statement

St. Clair College believes in and promotes the rights of all persons with disabilities as enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005), and its related Accessibility Standards Regulations. The College is committed to fostering a rich working and learning environment that affirms the rights of all persons, including those with disabilities, to have access to equal opportunity in employment, education, accommodation or business dealings with the College. (Preamble to Accessibility Policy 2.2)

## Conformance Status:

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) define requirements for designers and developers to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. It defines three levels of conformance: Level A, Level AA, and Level AAA. The web version of A Guide for Successful Students 2nd Edition is conformant with WCAG 2.1 level AA.

## Feedback:

We welcome your feedback on the accessibility of A Guide for Successful Students 2nd ed. Please let us know if you encounter accessibility barriers:

- Phone: 519-972-2727 Ext. 5497
- E-mail: [istewart@stclaircollege.ca](mailto:istewart@stclaircollege.ca)
- Postal address: 2000 Talbot Rd. W. Windsor, ON N9A 6S4

We try to respond to feedback within 5 business days.

## Steps That St. Clair College Takes to Ensure Digital Accessibility:

The web version of the Guide has been designed with accessibility in mind and incorporates the following features:

- It has been optimized for people who use screen-reader technology
- All content can be navigated using a keyboard
- Links, headings, and tables are formatted to work with screen readers
- Images have alt tags
- Information is not conveyed by colour alone
- The option to increase font size (see tab on top right of screen)
- All videos have captions and transcripts are included.

## Other File Formats Available:

In addition to the web version, this book is available in a number of file formats, including PDF, EPUB (for eReaders), HTMLBook, XHTML and OpenDocument. Here is a link to where you can download this book in another file format. Look for the “Download this book” drop-down menu to select the file type you want.

This resource links to a number of external websites. If you are accessing this book in a print format, words that are linked will be underlined in the text, and you can find the full web address in the back matter of the book.

## List of Known Accessibility Issues:

While we strive to ensure that this resource is as accessible and usable as possible, we might not always get it right. Any issues we identify will be listed below:

1. Linked YouTube videos not created by St. Clair College may have automatically generated captions. Workaround: Transcripts that are provided have been checked by a human.
2. Hypertext links inside the text won't be accessible if you decide to use the printed version of this book. Workaround: At the end of the book you can find the unformatted links from each chapter.

## Guidelines That St. Clair College Follows When Creating Accessible Digital Materials:

### Organizing Content:

- Content is organized under headings and subheadings.
- Headings and subheadings are used sequentially (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2).

### Images:

- Images that convey information include alternative text (alt text) descriptions of the image's content or function.
- Graphs, charts, and maps also include contextual or supporting details in the text surrounding the image.
- Images do not rely on color to convey information.
- Images that are purely decorative do not have alt-tag descriptions. (Descriptive text is unnecessary if the image doesn't convey contextual content information).

### Links:

- The link is meaningful in context and does not use generic text such as "click here" or "read more."
- Links do not open in new windows or tabs.
- If a link must open in a new window or tab, a textual reference is included in the link information (e.g., [NewTab]).

### Tables:

- Tables include row and column headers.

- Row and column headers have the correct scope assigned.
- Tables include a caption.
- Tables avoid merged or split cells.
- Tables have adequate cell padding.

## Multimedia (A transcript that includes):

- Speaker's name
- All speech content
- Relevant descriptions of speech
- Descriptions of relevant non-speech audio
- Headings and subheadings for long transcripts
- Captions of all speech content and relevant non-speech content are included in the multimedia resource; this includes the audio synchronized with a video presentation.
- Audio descriptions of contextual visuals (e.g., graphs, charts) are included in the multimedia resource for college created videos.

## Formulas:

- Formulas are created using WP QuickLaTeX.
- Formulas are images with alternative text descriptions if WP QuickLaTeX is not an option.

## Font Size:

- Font size is 12 point or higher for body text.
- Font size is 9 point for footnotes or endnotes.
- Font size can be zoomed to 200%.

## References:

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# Features

A Guide for Successful Students 2nd Edition is available to be read online or can be downloaded in a variety of formats to be used offline including Digital PDF and ePUB . We recommend that you access this text online or through offline format that can be used with a mobile device or computer so that you can access the special features.

## Special Features:

**Self-check exercises:** we have included exercises created with H5P to give you opportunities to interact with the text material. For example, many of the chapters have a drag and drop exercise that reviews some of the important terminology you will encounter.

**Videos:** A variety of videos have been included to expand on the text provided. All videos selected have a captioning option and a transcript is included.

**Print PDF:** A Print PDF format is also available for download, however, the exercise and videos are not available in the print version. When one of these items appears in the online text, a notice will be listed in the Print version with a link to the exercise or video. In addition, links to other resources that are provided in the online text do not appear in the printed text, instead, we have provided a list to the full URL for all links in the Appendix.

## The Learning Portal

The Learning Portal from Ontario College Libraries is a hub of resources developed and share by all the Ontario College Libraries. The Learning Portal includes areas such as Study Skills and Writing & Communication as well as Learn Math and Maamwi. We have included a link to specific hub or pages related to the chapter content in our Want More section at the end of most chapters.

Unless otherwise specified, all resources on The Learning Portal / Le Portail d'Apprentissage are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

# Introduction

## Welcome to College



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=26#oembed-1>



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=26#h5p-112>

The first semester is almost every student's most important time in College and it can also be the most challenging. Why? Because, for many students, adjusting to college isn't easy. Students wrestle with balancing their time and other commitments to family, friends, and work. Statistics show that students who succeed in their first year are most likely to continue to complete their program. This guide presents some of what we know about the actions and attitudes of successful students.

From the outside looking in, it may seem that successful students are good students simply because they're naturally good at studying. But if you take a closer look, you'll see that, although college students differ in many ways, all successful students share certain common traits, including a positive attitude, effective learning and thinking skills, good time management, and strategies for personal well-being.

Like everything else in life that leads to meaningful results, success in college isn't automatic. But when you apply yourself to your studies and adopt behaviors of successful students, you'll find you can succeed. But first, what do we mean by success? The skills and experiences you gain as part of your academic program are intended to prepare you for the practical reality of working in the industry. From one perspective, success is achieving the credentials which tells employers that you have that foundation. The goal of your college education should be to build a body of knowledge that you'll carry into your career. But this is not the only definition of success, each person has their own definition. For some students, success means graduating in the projected time frame and with all A's on their grade report. For other students, success may mean gaining that industry knowledge and experience over a longer period of time, through part-time studies, or taking courses that give students the knowledge they need now and as part of a longer career path. Regardless of your personal definition of success, successful students understand why they are in college and what college can do for them.



*Photo by Helloquence on Unsplash*

Some students have difficulty in their first year, often due to financial barriers, or possibly a personal or family matter. But most commonly, students' difficulties are because they're having problems passing their courses, stemming from not having developed the skills needed to succeed in college and lacking in enthusiasm. The information in the Guide can help you stay motivated when things get tough, and you can learn the skills and behaviors for succeeding in college. Almost everything in this guide—from time management to social skills, from study skills to staying healthy— will contribute to your overall success and, yes, to achieving better grades.



*Image by Annie Spratt from Unsplash*

## Congratulations on your decision to attend college!

When asked, most students say they're in college primarily for the job or career they expect to follow after college. And they are correct that college pays off enormously in terms of future earnings, job security and stability, and job satisfaction. Every statistic shows that people with a college education will make much more in their lifetime (much, much more than the cost of college itself) and be much happier with the work they do. But job and career issues are only a part of the big picture.

A college education results in many other personal benefits, and these also should be part of your motivation for doing well and continuing with your college plans.

Here are a few additional, less tangible benefits of a college education:

- You will have a fuller life and a better understanding of the world around you.
- You will gain decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- You will meet many interesting and diverse people and have a richer social life.
- You will gain self-confidence.
- You will gain learning skills that can continue for a lifetime.
- You will make wiser decisions about lifestyle issues and live healthier.

- You will make wiser economic decisions the rest of your life.
- You will be better equipped to deal with other people, organizations, government agencies, and all the hassles of daily life.
- You will feel more a part of your community, the larger culture, and history.

A college education is correlated with greater success in all those areas, even though most students are usually more concerned with making it through the next class or test than the rest of their lives. But sometimes it helps to recall what a truly great step forward you are taking!

## Are You Prepared For College?

Take a few moments to consider if you are prepared for college by reviewing the statements below. Do you agree with all of the statements?



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=26#h5p-37>

The statements provided are related to different areas of this guide so don't worry if you feel fully prepared. This guide is organized into sections based on common skill sets, attitudes and behaviours of successful students. Here is what we consider common traits:

Successful students:

- have goals
- take responsibility
- embrace a diverse community
- go to class
- ask for help
- get it together
- take control of their health
- practice mental wellness
- understand their finances
- get involved
- learn independently

You can use these as a checklist when considering your own readiness for taking on the challenge of college. Feel free to read the entire guide or dip into the sections that interest you now and come back when you feel you may need a new idea or a new approach to your studies and college life.



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## Your Past Educational Experience

It is important to understand how College is different from the last school you attended and how well your own past educational experiences have prepared you for what you will find in college.

College is a unique experience for all students – whether you just graduated from high school or are returning to education after years of working or studying in Canada for the first time. You are transitioning from one form of education to another.



Photo by Mikael Kristenson on Unsplash

Generally speaking, however, the college experience is usually different in these ways:

- Time management is more important in college because of varying class and work schedules and other time commitments.
- College professors seldom seek you out to offer extra help if you're falling behind. You are on your own and expected to do the work, meet deadlines, and so on, without someone looking over your shoulder.
- There may be no attendance policy for classes. You are expected to be mature enough to come to class without fear of penalties.
- Many classes are large, making it easy to feel lost in a crowd.
- Many professors, especially in large classes, teach by lecture—which can be difficult for those whose high school teachers interacted a great deal with students.
- College courses require more study time and require you to work on your own.
- Your social and personal life in college may be less supervised. Younger students may experience a sudden increase in freedom to do what they want.

- You will meet more people from more diverse backgrounds in college.
- All of these differences, along with a change in living situation for many students, can lead to emotional changes—both positive and negative.

What does all this add up to? For some students, the sudden independence and freedom can lead in negative directions: sleeping late, skipping classes, missing deadlines, failing to study adequately for tests, and so on. Other students who are highly motivated and work hard in their classes may also have difficulty transitioning to the higher academic standards of college. Suddenly, you're responsible for everything. That can be thrilling but also a challenge to get used to. The Guide will help you make this transition successfully.




*Image by Wikimedia Images from Pixabay*

## Building On Your Past Educational Experiences

Retention Coordinator Irene Stewart recently presented a seminar for new students at St. Clair College. We will present excerpts of the seminar throughout this Guide starting with how students need to build on their past experiences when transitioning to a new college experience.





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### Key Takeaways

- The behaviors, attitudes and skills of successful students can be a guide for new students.
- Understanding the value of a college education in terms of career knowledge and skills as well as other personal benefits can help students be more successful.
- Students, in their first year, commonly struggle because they have not yet developed the skills needed to be successful at the college level and may lack motivation to apply themselves to their studies. This guide can help develop these skills and sustain motivation.
- It is important for students to understand how college is different than their last education experience and the adjustments they will need to make to be successful.

# I. Successful students have goals



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Succeeding in college is rather like succeeding in life. It's really much more about **you** than it is about college. So the most important place to start is to consider why you're here, what matters to you, and what you expect to get out of it. Even if you have already thought about these questions, it's good to reaffirm your commitment to your plan as we begin to consider what's really involved in being a college student. Let's take a look at why successful students have goals.

Students who have long term life and career goals see college as one step towards achieving their goals. This can set a purpose and a direction for students. It can increase students' day-to-day and semester-to-semester motivation because they see that each course is part of a greater whole that will help them in the future. This can also help with persistence, with keeping at it when things are tough. There will be challenges during your college career. There may be times you feel like giving up or you just don't feel like going to class, reading your textbook, or writing that paper. Having that purpose, that long term goal can help you decide to move past that challenge and keep going. We call this resiliency.

Goals help you set priorities and remain motivated and committed to your college success. Setting a long term goal usually leads to setting medium and short term goals. These are practical goals related to being a student that can help you make better decisions when considering your choices of how to spend your time. Setting priorities with shorter



Photo by Naassom Azevedo on Unsplash

term goals can help you see what you need to do next. Working through goals can help you feel more in control and can reduce stress.

Attitude is the largest factor determining success in college. Work to stay positive and surround yourself with positive people, and you'll find you are motivated to carry out the activities that will help you succeed in your courses.

## Goal Setting

A goal is a result we intend to reach mostly through our own actions.

Things we do may move us closer to or farther away from that result. Studying moves us closer to success in a difficult course, while sleeping through the final examination may completely prevent reaching that goal. That's fairly obvious in an extreme case, yet still a lot of college students don't reach their goal of graduating. The problem may be a lack of commitment to the goal, but often students have conflicting goals. One way to prevent problems is to think about all your goals and priorities and to learn ways to manage your time, your studies, and your social life to best reach your goals.

### It all begins with setting goals and thinking about priorities.

As you think about your own goals, think about more than just being a student. You're also a person with individual needs and desires, hopes and dreams, plans and schemes. Your long-term goals likely include graduation and a career but may also involve social relationships with others, a romantic relationship, family, hobbies or other activities, where and how you live, and so on. While you are a student, you may not be actively pursuing all your goals with the same fervor, but they remain goals and are still important in your life.



Photo by Estée Janssens on Unsplash

## Goals also vary in terms of time.

- Short-term goals focus on today and the next few days and perhaps weeks.
- Midterm goals involve plans for this school year and the time you plan to remain in college.
- Long-term goals may begin with graduating college and everything you want to happen thereafter.

Often your long-term goals (e.g., the kind of career you want) guide your midterm goals (getting the right education for that career), and your short term goals (such as doing well on an exam) become steps for reaching those larger goals. Thinking about your goals in this way helps you realize how even the little things you do every day can keep you moving toward your most important long-term goals.

## Write out your goals.

You should literally write them down, because the act of finding the best words to describe your goals helps you think more clearly about them.

Follow these guidelines:

- **Goals should be realistic.** It's good to dream and to challenge yourself, but your goals should relate to your personal strengths and abilities.
- **Goals should be specific.** Don't write, "I will become a great musician;" instead, write, "I will finish my music degree and be employed in a symphony orchestra."
- **Goals should have a time frame.** You won't feel very motivated if your goal is vaguely "to finish college someday." If you're realistic and specific in your goals, you should also be able to project a time frame for reaching the goal.
- **You should really want to reach the goal.** We're willing to work hard to reach goals we really care about, but we're likely to give up when we encounter obstacles if we don't feel strongly about a goal. If you're doing something only because your parents or someone else wants you to, then it's not your own personal goal – and you may have some more thinking to do about your life.



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## SMART Goals for your 1st Semester



Image from [wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/)

You may have heard about the idea of “smart” goals. Review the video SMART Goals – Quick Overview for a short explanation of what SMART goals are and how to set them:



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## Here are few goals to complete before end of your first week of classes:

- Ensure that you have set up your college account and email and get your college identification.
- Review the help files for software and online utilities available at your college. This could include the Learning Management System (LMS) that your college uses for online courses.
- In the first week of semester, seek out and review the Course Outline (Syllabus) for each one of your courses. Use your course outline to create a semester schedule and weekly study schedule. For instructions on how to do this, see the Successful Students Get It Together chapter.
- Make a list of all of your courses, the names of your professors and their email address for easy access when you have questions or concerns.
- Review all the services available to you, even if you don't need them now, so that if you run into a challenge, you will know what help is available. For a list of typical services, see the Successful Students Ask For Help chapter.
- Begin setting your own personal short-term and semester goals to help keep you on track and motivated throughout your semester!

Here is how we could write some of these goals as SMART goals.

By the end of the first week of classes, I will:

1. set up my college account, email address, and photo identification. and logged into the LMS system.
2. collect all my course outlines and make a list of my professors and their email addresses.
3. look up the services available on campus on the college website and will have visit the location of their office or department on campus.

## Where do you want to go?



*Image from pxfuel.com*

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your present skills for succeeding in college? Be honest with yourself and select the response that best reflects your current abilities. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. After completing the assessment, take a moment to reflect on your responses and consider areas where you may want to focus on improvement. Remember, college is a journey of growth and learning, and this guide is here to support you in developing the skills you need for success.

1 = Not very strong; 10 = Very strong

- Relating my personal values to education - \_\_\_\_\_
- Finding the best career for my interests and skills - \_\_\_\_\_
- Being prepared for college-level work - \_\_\_\_\_
- Developing a positive attitude for college - \_\_\_\_\_
- Successfully using each step of the learning process - \_\_\_\_\_
- Adapting and broadening my personal learning style - \_\_\_\_\_
- Getting the most out of classes large and small - \_\_\_\_\_
- Following all college policies - \_\_\_\_\_
- Taking advantage of all college resources - \_\_\_\_\_
- Getting the best grades I can get - \_\_\_\_\_
- Successfully transitioning to college and completing the first year - \_\_\_\_\_

- Doing everything I can, every day, to ensure I succeed in college – \_\_\_\_\_

In the list above, what are the three most important areas in which you think you can improve? Are there other areas or skills that need more attention in order for you to succeed in college? Write down other things you feel you need to work on. These can be the start of your goal setting for this semester.

## The Importance of Attitude

Everything people do and how they do it starts with attitude.

- One student gets up with the alarm clock and cheerfully prepares for the day, planning to study for a couple hours between classes, go jogging later, and see a friend at dinner.
- Another student oversleeps after partying too late last night, decides to skip his first class, somehow gets through later classes fueled by fast food and energy drinks while dreading tomorrow's exam, and immediately accepts a friend's suggestion to go out tonight instead of studying.



Photo by Zachary Nelson on Unsplash

Both students could have identical situations, classes, finances, and academic preparation. There could be just one significant difference— but it's the one that matters.

### Here are some characteristics associated with a positive attitude:

- Enthusiasm for and enjoyment of daily activities
- Acceptance of responsibility for one's actions and feeling good about success
- Generally upbeat mood and positive emotions, cheerfulness with others, and satisfaction with oneself



- Motivation to get the job done
- Flexibility to make changes when needed
- Ability to make productive, effective use of time

## And here are some characteristics associated with a negative attitude:

- Frequent complaining
- Blaming others for anything that goes wrong
- Often experiencing negative emotions: anger, frustration, resentment
- Lack of motivation for work or studies
- Hesitant to change or seek improvement
- Unproductive use of time, procrastination

In the following video, Alison Ledgerwood, a social psychologist, discusses how people tend to focus more on negative events than positive ones, and how to overcome this.



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## Stay Focused and Motivated

Okay, you've got a positive attitude. But you've got a lot of reading for classes to do tonight, a test tomorrow, and a paper due the next day. Maybe you're a little bored with one of your reading assignments. Maybe you'd rather play a computer game. Uh oh—now what?

Attitude can change at almost any moment. One minute you're enthusiastically starting a

class project, and then maybe a friend drops by and suddenly all you want to do is close the books and relax a while, hang out with friends.

One of the characteristics of successful people is accepting that life is full of interruptions and change— and planning for it. Staying focused does not mean you become a boring person who does nothing but go to class and study all the time. You just need to make a plan.

## Plan ahead

Planning ahead is the single best way to stay focused and motivated to reach your goals. Don't wait until the night before an exam. If you know you have a major exam in five days, start by reviewing the material and deciding how many hours of study you need. Then schedule those hours spread out over the next few days — at times when you are most alert and least likely to be distracted. Allow time for other activities, too, to reward yourself for successful studying. Then when the exam comes, you're relaxed, you know the material, you're in a good mood and confident, and you do well. Planning is mostly a matter of managing your time well, there is more about this topic in the *Successful Students Get it Together* chapter.

Here are some other tips for staying focused and motivated:

- If you're not feeling motivated, think about the results of your goals, not just the goals themselves. If just thinking about finishing college doesn't sound all that exciting, then think instead about the great, high paying career that comes afterward and the things you can do with that income.
- Remember your successes, even small successes. As you begin a project or approach studying for a test, think about your past success on a different project or test. Remember how good it feels to succeed. Know you can succeed again.
- Get the important things done first. Stay focused, motivated and concentrate on the things that matter most. You're about to sit down to read a chapter in a book you're not much enjoying, and you suddenly notice some clothing piled up on a chair. "I really should clean up this place," you think. "And I'd better get my laundry done before I run out of things to wear." Don't try to fool yourself into feeling you're accomplishing something by doing laundry rather than studying. Stay focused!
- If you just can't focus in on what you should be doing because the task seems too big

and daunting, break the task into smaller, manageable pieces. Don't start out thinking, "I need to study the next four hours," but think, "I'll spend the next thirty minutes going through my class notes from the last three weeks and figure out what topics I need to spend more time on." It's a lot easier to stay focused when you're sitting down for thirty minutes at a time.



Image by rawpixel from Pixabay

- Imitate successful people. Does a friend always seem better able to stick with studying or work until they get it done? What are they doing that you're not? We all learn from observing others, and we can speed up that process by deliberately using the same strategies we see working with others. Visualize yourself studying in the same way and getting that same high grade on the test or paper.
- Separate yourself from unsuccessful people. This is the flip side of imitating successful people. If a roommate or a friend is always putting off things until the last minute or is distracted with other interests and activities, tell yourself how different you are. When you hear other students complaining about how hard a class is or bragging about not studying or attending class, visualize yourself as not being like them at all.
- Reward yourself when you complete a significant task – but only when you are done. Some people seem able to stay focused only when there's a reward waiting.

Find out more about the Science of Productivity with this video from ASAP Science.



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# Setting Priorities

Thinking about your goals gets you started, but it's also important to think about priorities. We often use the word "priorities" to refer to how important something is to us. We might think, this is a really important goal, and that is less important.

Try this experiment: go back to the goals you wrote and see if you can rank each goal as a

1. Top priority
2. Middle priority
3. Lowest priority

It sounds easy, but do you actually feel comfortable doing that? Maybe you gave a priority 1 to passing your courses and a priority 3 to playing your guitar. So what does that mean—that you never play guitar again, or at least not while in college? Whenever you have an hour free between class and work, you have to study because that's the higher priority? What about all your other goals — do you have to ignore everything that's not a priority 1? And what happens when you have to choose among different goals that are both number 1 priorities?



Photo by Veri Ivanova on Unsplash

In reality, priorities don't work quite that way. It doesn't make a lot of sense to try to rank goals as always more or less important. *The question of priority is really a question of what is more important at a specific time.* It is important to do well in your classes, but it's also important to have a social life and enjoy your time off from studying. You shouldn't have to choose between the two — except at any given time.

Priorities always involve time: what is most important to do right now. As we'll see later, time management is mostly a way to juggle priorities so you can meet all your goals.

When you manage your time well, you don't have to ignore some goals completely in order to meet other goals. In other words, you don't have to give up your life when you register for college—but you may need to work on managing your life more effectively. But time management works only when you're committed to your goals. Attitude and motivation are very important. If you haven't yet developed an attitude for success, all the time management skills in the world won't keep you focused and motivated to succeed.

# Eisenhower Matrix

One way to sort out your priorities is to use an Eisenhower Matrix.



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# Attitude and Priorities Self Check



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## Key Takeaways

Successful students have long-term life and career goals, which provide purpose and direction, increasing motivation, and helping them persevere through challenges.

Goals help students set priorities, stay motivated, and maintain commitment to their college success, reducing stress and increasing a sense of control.

Having long-term goals (college diploma) lead to setting midterm goals (by semester) which can be broken down into short-term goals (completing an assignment).

Writing out your goals helps you think more clearly about what you want to achieve.

Having positive attitude can help you stay motivated and focused on your goals.

Planning ahead is the single best way to stay focused and motivated to reach your goals.

Priorities involve assessing what is most important at a specific time, this is a good way to decide what to do next.



Want more? The Learning Portal has more great information about setting goals in college.

## 2. Successful students take responsibility



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A college campus is almost like a small town—or country—unto itself. The campus has its own security force, its own government, its own stores, its own ID cards, its own parking rules, and so on. Colleges also have their own policies regarding many types of activities and behaviors. Students who do not understand the rules can sometimes find themselves in trouble.

The most important non-academic policy is a Code or Statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities. Such policies are designed to ensure that all students have the same right to a quality education—one not unfairly interrupted by the actions of others. The most important academic policy is academic honesty. The principle of academic honesty is simple: every student must do their own work. Colleges also have policies about alcohol and drug use, sexual harassment, hazing, hate crimes, and other potential



Photo by Mark Duffel on Unsplash

problems. The college registrar has policies about course add and drop dates, payment schedules and refunds, and the like. You will find these policies on your college website. It is vital that you are aware of these policies as you begin your college career and that you are aware of how to solve problems, and make good decisions.

## College, The St. Clair Way

While your college may have unique features to its culture and expectations, the general principles presented here are true for most North American Post Secondary institutions. This video was created for use at Orientation with new students at St. Clair College to explain our college culture. (You may recognize our own Irene Stewart in the video). We recommend that you review this video and work through the self-checks to ensure you are aware of your responsibilities as a student and of the college community that is available to help you be successful.



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## Self-Management

To succeed in college, you need to take control of your life. Gone are the days when you could just “cruise” through school, or life, or let others motivate you or establish schedules to manage your time. This change presents an exciting opportunity. It’s your first step in your new life and the key to your future.





Image by Jo Szczepanska from Unsplash

Here are a few thoughts to get you started in the right direction:

**Accept responsibility for your life.** You are on equal footing with everyone else and have the same opportunities to succeed.

**Decide what you want to do.** Don't let things just happen—make them happen by deciding that they should happen.

**Realize you can change.** You can change your habits to become a better student. You can change your attitudes and become a more positive, motivated student.

**Develop a personal ethical code.** Do what is right for you and for others. The college world demands ethical standards and rewards responsible, ethical behavior. Be proud of who you are and your good decisions.

**Enjoy your life!** Going to college might seem overwhelming at times, but no one is asking you to “give up your life” to succeed in college. Enjoy meeting new people, learning new things, and experiencing the diversity of the college experience. Most college graduates look back on their college years as one of the best periods in their whole lives!

# Problem Solving: When Setbacks Happen

Even when you have clear goals and are motivated and focused to achieve them, problems sometimes happen. Accept that they will happen, since inevitably they do for everyone. The difference between those who succeed by solving the problem and moving on and those who get frustrated and give up is partly attitude and partly experience –and knowing how to cope when a problem occurs.

Lots of different kinds of setbacks may happen while you're in college – just as to everyone in life. Here are a few examples:

- A financial crisis
- An illness or injury
- A crisis involving family members or loved ones
- Stress related to frequently feeling you don't have enough time
- Stress related to relationship problems



Photo by Tim Gouw on Unsplash

Some things happen that we cannot prevent. But many other kinds of problems can be prevented or made less likely to occur.

- You can take steps to stay healthy.
- You can take control of your finances and avoid most financial problems common

among college students.

- You can learn how to build successful social relationships and get along better with your professors, with other students, and in personal relationships.
- You can learn time management techniques to ensure you use your time effectively for studying.
- You can learn to do well in your classes with effective reading, notetaking, test-taking, and writing skills for classes.

Preventing the problems that typically keep college students from succeeding is much of what this Guide is all about.

Not all problems can be avoided. Illness or a financial problem can significantly set one back – especially when you're on a tight schedule and budget. Other problems, such as a social or relationship issue or an academic problem in a certain class, may be more complex and not easily prevented. What then?

First, work to resolve the immediate problem:

1. **Stay motivated and focused.** Don't let frustration, anxiety, or other negative emotions make the problem worse than it already is.
2. **Analyze the problem to consider all possible solutions.** An unexpected financial setback doesn't automatically mean you have to drop out of school – not when alternatives such as student loans, less expensive living arrangements, or other possible solutions may be available. Failing a midterm exam doesn't automatically mean you're going to fail the course – not when you make the effort to determine what went wrong, work with your professor and others on an improved study plan, and use better strategies to prepare for the next test.
3. **Seek help when you need to.** None of us gets through life alone, and it's not a sign of weakness to see your academic advisor or a college counsellor if you have a problem.
4. **When you've developed a plan for resolving the problem, work to follow through.** If it will take a while before the problem is completely solved, track your progress in smaller steps so that you can see you really are succeeding. Every day will move you one step closer to putting it behind you.

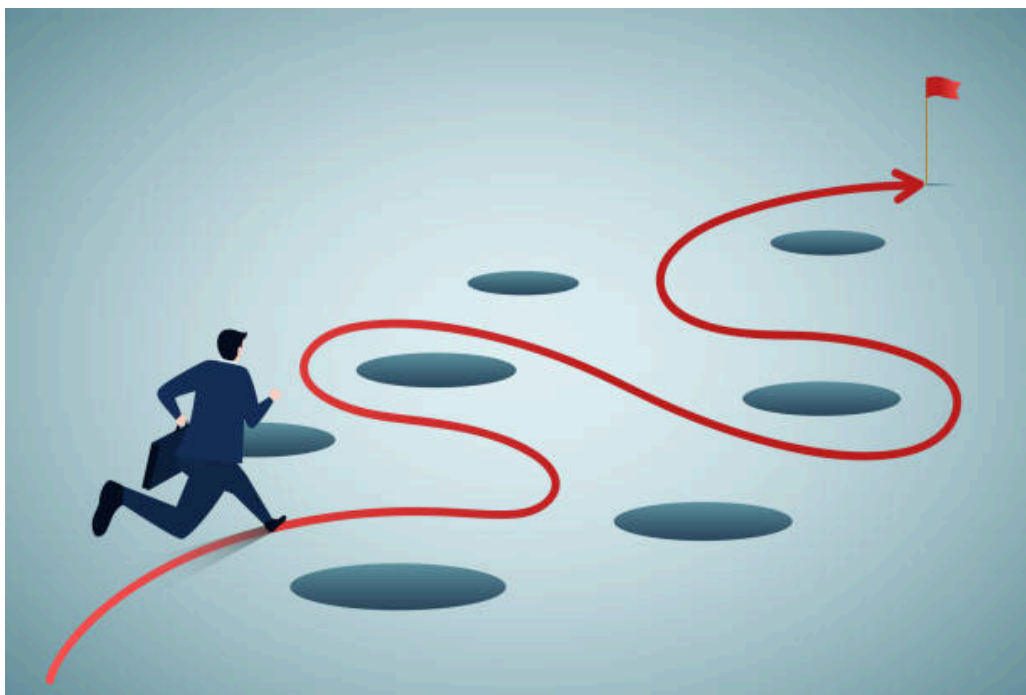


Image by zhuweiyi49 from iStock

After you've solved a problem, be sure to avoid it again in the future:

1. **Be honest with yourself: how did you contribute to the problem?** Sometimes it's obvious: a student who drank heavily at a party the night before a big test failed the exam because he was so hung over he couldn't think straight. Sometimes the source of the problem is not as obvious but may become clearer the more you think about it. Another student did a lot of partying during the term but studied all day before the big test and was well rested and clearheaded at test time but still did poorly; he may not yet have learned good study skills. Another student has frequent colds and other mild illnesses that keep him from doing his best: how much better would he feel if he ate well, got plenty of exercise, and slept enough every night? If you don't honestly explore the factors that led to the problem, it's more likely to happen again.
2. **Take responsibility for your life and your role in what happens to you.** Earlier we talked about people with negative attitudes, who are always blaming others, fate, or "the system" for their problems. It's no coincidence that they keep on having problems. Unless you want to keep having problems, don't keep blaming others.
3. **Taking responsibility doesn't mean being down on yourself.** Failing at something doesn't mean you are a failure. We all fail at something, sometime. Adjust your attitude

so you're ready to get back on track and feel happy that you'll never make that mistake again!

4. **Make a plan.** You might still have a problem on that next big test if you don't make an effective study plan and stick to it. You may need to change your behavior in some way, such as learning time management strategies.



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## Making Decisions

Much of your college and professional life will be spent solving problems; some will be complex, such as deciding on a career, and require time and effort to come up with a solution. Others will be small, such as deciding what to eat for lunch, and will allow you to make a quick decision based entirely on your own experience. But, in either case, when coming up with the solution and deciding what to do, follow the same basic steps.

- **Define the problem.** Use your analytical skills. What is the real issue? Why is it a problem? What are the root causes? What kinds of outcomes or actions do you expect to generate to solve the problem? What are some of the key characteristics that will make a good choice: Timing? Resources? Availability of tools and materials? For more complex

problems, it helps to actually write out the problem and the answers to these questions. Can you clarify your understanding of the problem by using metaphors to illustrate the issue?

- **Narrow the problem.** Many problems are made up of a series of smaller problems, each requiring its own solution. Can you break the problem into different facets? What aspects of the current issue are “noise” that should not be considered in the problem solution? (Use critical thinking to separate facts from opinion in this step.)

- **Generate possible solutions.** List all your options. Use your creative thinking skills in this phase. Did you come up with the second “right” answer, and the third or the fourth? Can any of these answers be combined into a stronger solution? What past or existing solutions can be adapted or combined to solve this problem?

- **Choose the best solution.** Use your critical thinking skills to select the most likely choices. List the pros and cons for each of your selections. How do these lists compare with the requirements you identified when you defined the problem? If you still can’t decide between options, you may want to seek further input trusted friends and family, your professors or college counsellors.



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## Contributing to Decision Making

You will be called on to make many decisions in your life. Some will be personal, like what to major in, or whether or not to get married. Other times, you will be making decisions on

behalf of others at work or for a volunteer organization. Occasionally, you will be asked for your opinion or experience for decisions others are making.

To be effective in all of these circumstances, it is helpful to understand some principles about decision making.

**First, define who is responsible for solving the problem or making the decision.** In an organization, this may be someone above or below you on the organization chart but is usually the person who will be responsible for implementing the solution. Deciding on an academic major should be your decision, because you will have to follow the course of study. Deciding on the boundaries of a sales territory would most likely be the sales manager who supervises the territories, because he or she will be responsible for producing the results with the combined territories.



Photo by Daria Nepriakhina on Unsplash

Once you define who is responsible for making the decision, **everyone else will fall into one of two roles:** giving input, or in rare cases, approving the decision. Understanding the role of input is very important for good decisions. Input is sought or given due to experience or expertise, but it is up to the decision maker to weigh the input and decide whether and how to use it. Input should be fact based, or if offering an opinion, it should be clearly stated as such. Finally, once input is given, the person giving the input must support the other's decision, whether or not the input is actually used.

Consider a team working on a project for a science course. The team assigns you the responsibility of analyzing and presenting a large set of complex data. Others on the team will set up the experiment to demonstrate the hypothesis, prepare the class presentation, and write the paper summarizing the results. As you face the data, you go to the team to seek input about the level of detail on the data you should consider for your analysis. The person doing the experiment setup thinks you should be very detailed, because then it will be easy to compare experiment results with the data. However, the person preparing the class presentation wants only high-level data to be considered because that will make for a clearer presentation. If there is not a clear understanding of the decision-making process, each of you may think the decision is yours to make because it influences the output of your work; there will be conflict and frustration on the team. If the decision maker is clearly defined upfront, however, and the input is thoughtfully given and considered, a good

decision can be made (perhaps a creative compromise?) and the team can get behind the decision and work together to complete the project.

**Finally, there is the approval role in decisions.** This is very common in business decisions but often occurs in college work as well (the professor needs to approve the theme of the team project, for example). Approval decisions are usually based on availability of resources, legality, history, or policy.

**Decision making self-check:**



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## Important College Policies



*Photo by Ivan-balvan from iStock*

One of the most important things that successful students do to take responsibility is to review the policies the govern the college community. It is vital that you seek out and review the policies for your college. These policies impact you as a student and your awareness of



the standards, time lines and regulations can prevent you from making missteps that impact your education.

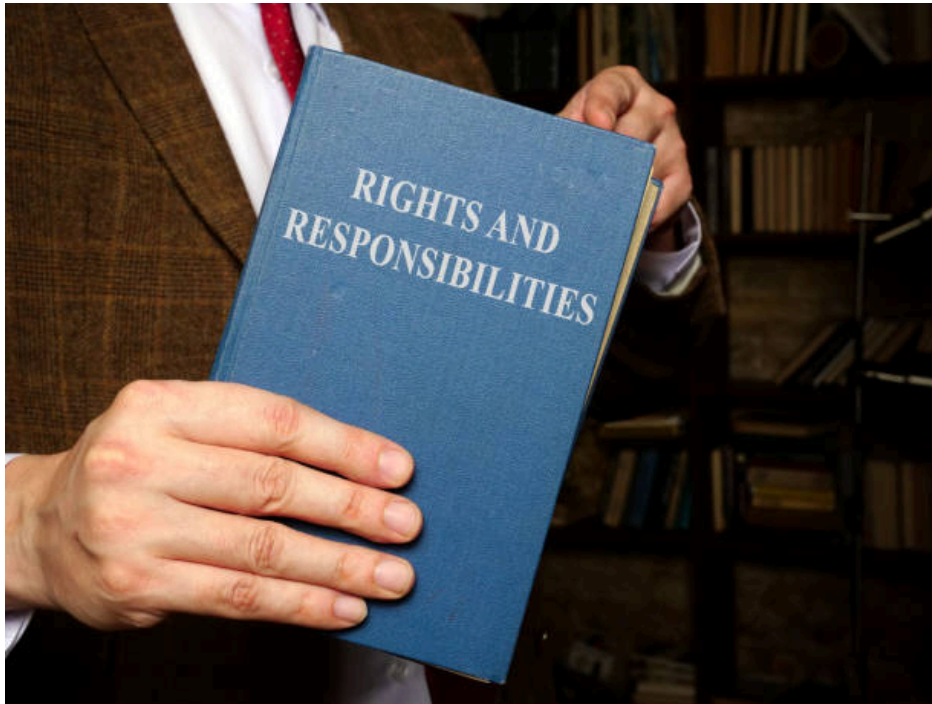
Common policies include:

- **Student Handbook:** This document provides a comprehensive overview of university regulations, policies, procedures, and resources. It's the first document every student should familiarize themselves with.
- **Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities:** Similar to the Code of Conduct, this document outlines the expected behaviors of students and the potential consequences for violating these expectations.
- **Academic Integrity Policy:** This policy outlines the expectations around academic honesty, which include plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty.
- **Residence Agreement/Handbook:** If students are living on campus, it's essential to understand the rules and guidelines of their specific residence hall or on-campus apartment.
- **Alcohol and Cannabis Policy:** Universities in Ontario have policies around the use of alcohol and cannabis on campus. Understanding these rules can help prevent violations.
- **Sexual Violence Policy:** This policy is crucial to understand in the context of Ontario's Bill 132, which requires post-secondary institutions to have specific policies in place to combat sexual violence on campus.
- **Health and Safety Policies:** These cover a wide range of topics, including emergency procedures, health center policies, mental health resources, and information on reporting safety concerns or incidents.
- **Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy:** This policy includes the guidelines for using the university's digital resources, such as Wi-Fi, email, and other online services.
- **Student Financial Policies:** It's important to understand the terms and conditions of any student loans, scholarships, bursaries, or grants. This can also include the university's tuition refund policy.
- **Accessibility Services Policy:** These guidelines help students understand how to access and arrange accommodations for disabilities or chronic illnesses.
- **Human Rights Policy:** This policy outlines the university's commitment to creating an environment free from discrimination and harassment.
- **Privacy Policies:** Universities have policies outlining how they handle and protect student data.
- **Course Outlines/Syllabi:** These will provide expectations, grading criteria, faculty office hours, and other course-specific information. Additionally, it's beneficial for

students to review their campus map and key facilities, and familiarize themselves with any specific departmental or faculty guidelines relevant to their course of study. Students should also be aware that each university or college may have unique policies and documents important for its community, so it's a good idea to review any information provided thoroughly.

Let's take a closer look at some of these policies.

## Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities



*Photo by designer491 from iStock*

Generally, a Code of Rights and Responsibilities lays out what your college expects of you in term of behaviour both in and out of the classroom and what you can expect from the college. It is vital that you locate and review what serves as the Code of Rights and Responsibilities at your college. To give you an idea of what you will find, here is an introduction to the THRIVES materials at St. Clair College on our Student Code:

As a student you are valued and respected, you will be treated as an adult through this exciting journey. You will be provided with many opportunities to grow, excel and flourish; of course, along the way you will make mistakes which is expected. Mistakes are opportunities for personal growth and change; we are defined by what we learn from our mistakes. At St. Clair College, we want to guide you through potential mistakes and mitigate any potential actions that could alter your path to graduation and success, hence we introduce to you the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities (The Code).

The Code, is a guide that supports the “...the College’s intention, not only to respect the rights of students but also to require students to respect the rights of others and to observe College rules and regulations to the orderly operations of the College and the classroom.” (Section 7.11, Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities).

## Student’s Rights and Responsibilities at St. Clair College



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In addition to laying out your rights and responsibilities, the Code will also explain penalties for Academic and Non-Academic infractions along with the process used to deal with infractions.

## Academic Integrity – The Honest Truth

Let’s rejoin Irene Stewart and learn more about Academic Integrity. Academic Integrity is a common term in North American Post Secondary education but not everyone is familiar with meaning of integrity, if it helps, you can use the word “Honesty” in place of integrity!



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At college, we focus on the active process of learning, not just on how to get good grades. The attitude of some students that grades are the only thing that matters in academics has led many students to resort to academic dishonesty to try to get the best possible grades or handle the pressure of an academic program. Although you may be further tempted if you've heard people say, "Everybody does it," or "It's no big deal at my school," you should be mindful of the consequences of cheating:

- You don't learn as much. Cheating may get you the right answer on a particular exam question, but it won't teach you how to apply knowledge in the world after school, nor will it give you a foundation of knowledge for learning more advanced material.
- When you cheat, you cheat yourself out of opportunities.
- You risk failing the course or even expulsion from school. Ignorance of the rules is seldom considered a valid defense.
- Cheating causes stress. Fear of getting caught will cause you stress and anxiety; this will get in the way of performing well with the information you do know.
- You're throwing away your money and time. Getting a college education is a big investment of money and effort. You're simply not getting your full value when you cheat, because you don't learn as much.
- You are trashing your integrity. Cheating once and getting away with it makes it easier to cheat again, and the more you cheat, the more comfortable you will feel with giving up your integrity in other areas of life—with perhaps even more serious consequences.
- Cheating lowers your self-esteem. If you cheat, you are telling yourself that you are simply not smart enough to handle learning. It also robs you of the feeling of satisfaction from genuine success.
- Technology has made it easier to cheat. But be aware that technology has also created ways for professors to easily detect these forms of academic dishonesty. If you feel uneasy about doing something in your college work, trust your instincts. Confirm with the professor that your intended form of research or use of material is acceptable.

Cheating just doesn't pay.

## The Honest Truth about Dishonesty



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## Understanding Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is a general term which describes academic offences detrimental to the College's learning environment. These offences diminish the trust that is essential in the teaching and learning process. The teaching and learning process can be understood as a dialogue between professor and student that builds on existing knowledge and advances scholarship. If a student falsifies his or her side of this process, learning is compromised and the foundation upon which knowledge is built is put at risk.

While students should be concerned about the penalties that may come from academic misconduct, such as failing the course, the more serious consequence is that they will lack the knowledge and skills necessary in their chosen field of study. In order to gain understanding and advance learning, students must engage in the learning process honestly.

Academic misconduct is otherwise known as "cheating". Cheating puts honest students at a disadvantage by failing to maintain a fair learning environment. We must all work together to prevent cheating.

- Academic misconduct can take various forms:
- Cheating on exams
- Unauthorized collaboration on individual assignments

- Adding a name to group assignment submission without contributing an appropriate share to the project
- Allowing someone else to copy your work
- Impersonating a candidate in an exam or test
- Altering or providing false medical or academic information
- Plagiarism such as using direct quotations or sections of paraphrased material without citing appropriate references; cutting and pasting from the Internet without appropriate references; and submitting essays, assignments, labs, projects, take-home exams, computer programs, etc., written, in whole or in part, by someone else
- Two areas where students can make unintentional academic mis-steps

## Plagiarism



*Image by airdone from Depositphotos*

Plagiarism means using the work of someone else, in whole or in part, without giving credit. Plagiarism is one of the most common forms of academic misconduct at college. It is important that students educate themselves about what plagiarism is because plagiarism

is a form of academic misconduct that can result unintentionally. While a student may not intend to “cheat”, failing to properly follow academic guidelines in written work can result in serious penalties.

Be sure that the coursework that you submit is your own. Although requirements for assignments vary from course to course, the work you are graded on should be your own. If there is any doubt about what is allowable, be sure to seek clarification from your professor.

Generally, if an assignment requires that you to develop an idea and express it in your own words you should do just that. Quoting other people’s work in these types of assignments should be done sparingly. While quoting someone else’s writing is allowable, and in some cases required, rules and conventions must be followed for quoting and citing.

- Always avoid the following:
  - Copying someone else’s writing word-for-word, even if it constitutes only some of your written assignment
- Paraphrasing someone else’s writing too closely, even if it constitutes only some of your written assignment
- Presenting someone else’s idea as your own without properly citing it
- Allowing someone else to write your assignment or part of it
- Submitting all or part of an assignment obtained from a commercial paper mill
- Using electronic databases or the Internet and submitting the product as your own work, even if it constitutes only some of your written work
- Writing an assignment together with someone else in the course (unless the professor has expressly allowed collaboration)
- Submitting the same paper in more than one course without the permission of the professors

More information about avoiding Plagiarism and tutorials on APA citation style are available to you in our Successful Students Learn Independently module in the Writing section. We encourage you to review this material before your first written assignment.

## Unauthorized Collaboration



*Image by pch.vector from Freepik*

Unauthorized collaboration means working with others on assignments that will be submitted for a grade without the specific permission of the professor. Students **MAY NOT** collaborate without professor authorization. Unauthorized collaboration misrepresents joint work as the work of the individual. It leads to an unfair advantage over students who follow the rules and do their own work. Additionally, those who do not complete their work independently may not be aware of gaps in their own knowledge and skills and they do not learn all they can or should from their assignments.

Unauthorized collaboration includes:

- Working out answers to homework assignments with others
- Working on take-home work with others
- “Checking” homework answers with others
- Having someone else help write or re-write a paper

The rules regarding collaboration vary from course to course and assignment to assignment. Professors may permit collaboration on some assignments and not others in the same course. Professors have different teaching methods and goals. Some teaching methods focus



on important lessons learned from working individually. These assignments are designed to develop a student's own individual skills, knowledge and confidence. It also provides a more accurate evaluation of the individual student's strengths and weaknesses.

Other teaching methods are designed to develop students' abilities to solve problems together through collaboration. This provides teamwork experience: learning is achieved by sharing strategies and exchanging information. The rules of whether collaboration is authorized on a given assignment will depend on the learning goals and teaching method used. Collaboration is not permitted unless the professor has specifically authorized it. If you are unclear about the requirements of an assignment, seek clarification from your professor.

If an professor assigns a group project or allows collaboration on an assignment, students may not exceed the limits set by the professor. Even if your professor authorizes collaborative work, copying someone else's work or allowing them to copy yours is considered academic misconduct.

These rules do not mean that students may not study together or in groups to help each other in better understanding course material. The rules apply to assignments that will be submitted for grading. Forming study groups, for example, to prepare for an in-class test that has not been pre-issued does not constitute unauthorized collaboration.

## Academic Integrity Self-Check



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### Key Takeaways

- Every college has policies that students should review and follow. It is vital that you seek out and review the policies in place at your college as early as possible.
- The principle of academic honesty is that every student must do their own work.
- Self management requires you to take control of your life, accept responsibility, make good decisions and make changes as needed.

- Making good decisions and taking control are ways to prevent problems.
- When problems occur, work through the problem solving steps and consider how to avoid similar problems in the future.
- When making decisions, clearly define the problem before considering various solutions and choose the best solution available.



Want More? The Learning Portal's resources on Academic Integrity more resources on how to avoid mis-steps

### 3. Successful students embrace a diverse community



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Successful students use their college experience to meet new people and gain understanding of others' viewpoints. Sometimes, we can have preformed ideas about people who are different than we are and may feel more comfortable with people who are “like” us. However, by starting with being open to getting to know people as individuals, we can break down many barriers and misconceptions. This can help you become a better global citizen as well as better understand the values of multiculturalism that we hold dear in Canadian society. Multiculturalism involves an attitude of respect for the feelings, ideas, behaviors, and experiences of others who differ from oneself in any way.

Learning about different people can help us learn more about ourselves as often our own culture is invisible to us. We may have ideas about what is customary behavior and we may have negative reactions when someone does something different. To prevent or resolve conflicts that may occur in any social interaction, you should maintain an attitude of respect for others, be open minded and willing to compromise, and know how to work together calmly to resolve conflicts.



*Photo by Mario Purisic on Unsplash*

As you begin to explore how you are different than others in a respectful way, you begin to understand why you think and behave in certain ways based on your upbringing and past experiences and appreciate that this does not have to be the only way to approach life. Experiencing new ways of thinking, ideas, concepts and values leads to deeper and more complex thinking and creativity. Diversity on campus is beneficial for all students, not just those from ethnic or minority groups. The wider perspectives of students from different backgrounds and the greater variety of teaching methods help everyone gain more fully in educational experiences. Socially, students develop a more mature worldview and are better prepared for interacting with a diverse world in the future. Students who embrace opportunities to experience diversity have greater satisfaction with their college careers and take a personal responsibility both for broadening their own social world and for speaking out against prejudice and discrimination wherever encountered.

# Let's talk Land Acknowledgements

## St. Clair College Traditional Land Acknowledgment

St. Clair College would like to recognize and acknowledge that it sits on the Three Fires Confederacy's traditional territory of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi nations. We would also like to acknowledge the many other tribes and indigenous nations that call this beautiful land home. We give thanks to the land and surrounding Water for sustaining us.

This acknowledgment is part of how we, at St. Clair College, recognize that we are guests on these lands and that Indigenous peoples were here long before St. Clair College, Chatham, Windsor, Ontario or even Canada existed.

Take a look at the image below. It probably does not look like the map of Canada you may have seen before. That is because it does not show provinces, but rather it shows territories of Indigenous peoples.

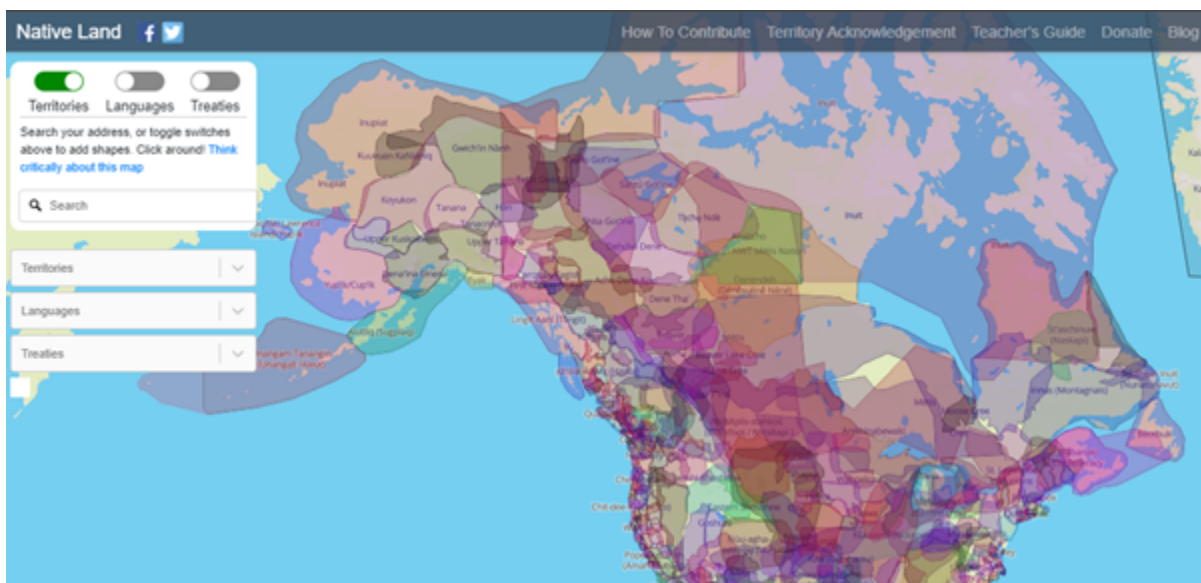


Image from Native-Land.ca captured August 26, 2020

This image was taken from Native-Land.ca, a not-for-profit organization that is attempting to map the traditional territories, languages and treaties of Indigenous peoples as a way for non-Indigenous people to explore the land they live on.

Victor Temprano (2017), initial creator of Native-Land.ca, wrote “I wanted to make something to reach out to non-Indigenous people (like myself), something that would engage them in with Indigenous history in a friendly and interesting way. Indigenous people already know their territory – it’s the ‘settlers’ who needed to have a look at the information I was collecting. I wanted people to have Indigenous names and lands in mind as they went about their days.” Feel free to explore Native-Land.ca in more depth.



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## What Diversity Really Means

Ours is a very diverse society and increasingly so. But diversity means much more than a variety of racial and ethnic differences. As we’ll use the term here, diversity refers to the great variety of human characteristics, ways that we are different even as we are all human and share more similarities than differences. These differences are an essential part of what enriches humanity.

We’ll look first at some of the ways that people differ and explore the benefits of diversity for our society generally and for the college experience. While we should all celebrate

diversity, at the same time we need to acknowledge past issues that grew from misunderstandings of such differences and work together to bring change where needed.



Photo by Matteo Paganelli on Unsplash

Differences among people may involve where a person was born and raised, the person's family and cultural group, factual differences in personal identity, and chosen differences in significant beliefs. Some diversity is primarily cultural, other diversity may be biological, and some diversity is defined in personal terms. Diversity generally involves things that may significantly affect some people's perceptions of others, not just any way people happen to be different.



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When discussing diversity, it is often difficult to avoid seeming to generalize about different types of people and such generalizations can seem similar to dangerous stereotypes. The following descriptions are meant only to suggest that individuals are different from other individuals in many possible ways and that we can all learn things from people whose ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values, backgrounds, experiences, and behaviors are different from our

own. This is a primary reason college admissions departments frequently seek diversity in the student body.

## Types of Diversity

When discussing diversity, it is often difficult to avoid seeming to generalize about different types of people and such generalizations can seem similar to dangerous stereotypes. The following descriptions are meant only to suggest that individuals are different from other individuals in many possible ways and that we can all learn things from people whose ideas, beliefs, attitudes, values, backgrounds, experiences, and behaviours are different from our own. This is a primary reason college admissions departments frequently seek diversity in the student body.

Click on each type of Diversity to see an explanation:



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Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay



## What can students do?

While diversity exists in most places, not everyone automatically understands differences among people and celebrates the value of those differences. Students who never think about diversity and who make no conscious effort to experience and understand others gain less than others who do. There are many ways you can experience the benefits of diversity on our college campus, however, beginning with your own attitudes and by taking steps to increase your experiences with diverse individuals.

**Acknowledge your own uniqueness, for you are diverse, too.** Diversity doesn't involve just other people. Consider that you may be just as different to other people as they are to you. Don't think of the other person as being the one who is different, that you are somehow the "norm." Your religion may seem just as odd to them as theirs does to you, and your clothing may seem just as strange looking to them as theirs is to you—until you accept there is no one "normal" or right way to be. Look at yourself in a mirror and consider why you look as you do. Why do you use the slang you do with your friends? Why did you just have that type of food for breakfast? How is it that you prefer certain types of music? Read certain books? Talk about certain things? Much of this has to do with your cultural background—so it makes sense that someone from another cultural or ethnic background is different in some ways. But both of you are also individuals with your own tastes, preferences, ideas, and attitudes—making you unique. It's only when you realize your own uniqueness that you can begin to understand and respect the uniqueness of others, too.

**Consider your own (possibly unconscious) stereotypes.** A stereotype is a fixed, simplistic view of what people in a certain group are like. It is often the basis for prejudice and discrimination: behaving differently toward someone because you stereotype them in some way. Stereotypes are generally learned and emerge in the dominant culture's attitudes toward those from outside that dominant group. A stereotype may be explicitly racist and destructive, and it may also be a simplistic generalization applied to any group of people, even if intended to be flattering rather than negative. As you have read this module so far, did you find yourself thinking about any group of people, based on any kind of difference, and perhaps thinking in terms of stereotypes? If you walked into a party and saw many different kinds of people standing about, would you naturally avoid some and move toward others? Remember, we learn stereotypes from our cultural background—so it's not a terrible thing to admit you have inherited some stereotypes. Thinking about them is a first step in breaking out of these irrational thought patterns.

# Diversity Thought Activity

## Challenge your thinking: Part I



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## Challenge your thinking: Part 2



*Photo by Paola Aguilar from Unsplash*

Now think for a minute about how you responded in these scenarios.

- Did your mental image in the first scenario involve a negative stereotype? What images in the media or society might have contributed to that response?
- The second and third scenarios involve simple situations in which you couldn't help but note some difference between you and another person. What might you feel in such situations in real life?
- Again, there is no "right" answer, and an awareness of differences is normal and natural

even if it may cause some discomfort at first. On the other hand, if you have had significant experiences with diverse others, you might have read these scenarios and simply wondered, “So what? What’s the big deal?” It’s worthwhile thinking about what that means.

**Don’t try to ignore differences among people.** Some people try so hard to avoid stereotyping that they go to the other extreme and try to avoid seeing any differences at all among people. But as we have seen throughout this module, people are different in many ways, and we should accept that if we are to experience the benefits of diversity.

**Don’t apply any group generalizations to individuals.** As an extension of not stereotyping any group, also don’t think of any individual person in terms of group characteristics. People are individuals first, members of a group second, and any given generalization simply may not apply to an individual. Be open minded and treat everyone with respect as an individual with their own ideas, attitudes, and preferences.

**Develop cultural sensitivity for communication.** Realize that your words may not mean quite the same thing in different cultural contexts or to individuals from different backgrounds. This is particularly true of slang words, which you should generally avoid until you are sure the other person will know what you mean. Never try to use slang or expressions you think are common in the cultural group of the person you are speaking with. Similarly, since body language often varies among different cultures, avoid strong gestures and expressions until the responses of the other person signify he or she will not misinterpret the messages sent by your body language.

**Take advantage of campus opportunities to increase your cultural awareness.** There are multiculturalism special events, cultural fairs and celebrations, concerts, and other programs held frequently on campus.



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## The Benefits of Diversity

The goal of many college admissions departments is to attract diverse students from a

broad range of backgrounds involving different cultural, socioeconomic, age, and other factors—everything in the preceding list. But why is diversity so important?

There are many reasons:

\* Experiencing diversity at college prepares students for the diversity they will encounter the rest of their lives. Learning to understand and accept people different from ourselves is very important in our world.

\* Students learn better in a diverse educational setting. Encountering new concepts, values, and behaviors leads to thinking in deeper, more complex, and more creative ways, rather than furthering past ideas and attitudes.

\* Experiencing diversity on campus is beneficial for all students. Students have more fulfilling social relationships and report more satisfaction and involvement with their college experience.

\* Diversity experiences help break the patterns of segregation and prejudice that have characterized North American history. Discrimination against others, whether by race, gender, age, sexual orientation, or anything else, is rooted in ignorance and sometimes fear of people who are different. Getting to know people who are different is the first step in accepting those differences, furthering the goal of a society free of all forms of prejudice and the unfair treatment of people.

\* Students of a traditional college age (early 20's) are in an ideal stage of development for forming healthy attitudes about diversity. The college years are a time of growth and maturation intellectually, socially, and emotionally, and a sustained experience of diversity is an opportunity to heighten this process.

\* Experiencing diversity makes us all better citizens in our democracy. When people can better understand and consider the ideas and perspectives of others, they are better equipped to participate meaningfully in our society.

\* Diversity enhances self-awareness. We gain insights into our own thought processes, life experiences, and values as we learn from people whose backgrounds and experiences are different from our own.



*Photo by Priscilla Du Preez on Unsplash*

## A word about multiculturalism

More than anything, multiculturalism is an attitude. Multiculturalism involves accepting and respecting the ideas, feelings, behaviors, and experiences of people different from oneself—all the forms of diversity described earlier. Canada is not actually a “melting pot” in the sense that people from diverse backgrounds somehow all become the same. Canada has always included a great diversity of ideas, attitudes, and behaviors. People of diverse religious backgrounds are not expected to “melt” together into one religion. Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the equal rights of all people regardless of skin color, gender, age, and other differences—including, equality under the law for those with diverse sexual orientation.

A number of years ago, a Danish television station created a commercial titled “All that we share” to demonstrate the diversity of the Danish people. It has a powerful but simple message: we have more in common than we realize.



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## The Importance of Community

St. Clair College is a vibrant and diverse community of students, staff, faculty and administrators. As a community, St. Clair has a culture all its own. In this video, Irene Stewart continues her workshop called College, the St. Clair Way. Let’s listen in for a

perspective on what values are important at St. Clair College both in and out of the classroom.



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## Getting Along With Others

### Interdependence

Humans are social creatures—it's simply in our nature. We continually interact with other students and professors, and we can learn a great deal from these interactions that heighten the learning process. This frequent interaction with others forms a state of interdependence. College students depend on their professors, but just as importantly, they depend on other students in many ways.

As important as our interactions with others are, we do not automatically possess the skills that help us form good relationships and make the most of our experiences.

Consider how these two college students are different:

John often arrives just as class is beginning and leaves immediately afterward. He makes little effort to talk with other students in the classroom, and after class he goes off to study alone or to his part-time job, where he spends most of his time at a computer screen. He is diligent in his studies and generally does well. After two months, he has not gotten to know his roommate very well, and he generally eats alone with a book in hand. He stops by to see his professors in their offices only if he missed a class due to illness, and on weekends and holidays he often hangs out at his parents' house or sees old friends.



*Photo by Jake Ingle on Unsplash*



*Photo by Alexis Brown on Unsplash*

Kim likes to get to class early and sits near others so they can talk about the reading for class or compare notes about assignments. She enjoys running into other students she knows from her classes and usually stops to chat. Although she is an older working student who lives alone off campus, she often dines in a campus café and asks students she meets in her classes to join her. After two months, with the approach of midterms, she formed a study group with a couple other

students. If she feels she doesn't understand an important lecture topic very well, she gets to her professor's office a few minutes ahead of office hours to avoid missing out by having to wait in line. A few weeks into the term, she spent a weekend with a student from another country and learned much about a culture about which she had previously known little.

These students are very different. Which do you think is more fully enjoying the college experience? Which do you think is more likely to do well academically? Most of us fall somewhere between these two extremes, but we can learn to be more like Kim and more actively engage with others.



## Recognize the Value of Social Interaction

Building good relationships is important for happiness and a successful college experience. College offers the opportunity to meet many people you would likely not meet otherwise in life.

Make the most of this opportunity to gain a number of benefits:

- A growing understanding of diverse other people, how they think, and what they feel that will serve you well throughout your life and in your future career
- A heightened sense of your own identity, especially as you interact with others with different personalities and from different backgrounds
- Emotional comfort from friendship with someone who understands you and with whom you can talk about your problems, joys, hopes, and fears
- An opportunity to grow with wider intellectual and emotional horizons, college often offers an opportunity to be stimulated and excited by new relationships and interactions with people who will challenge your thinking and help you become your best. Still, it can be difficult to get started with new relationships in college.

## Making New Friends



*Image by oneinchpunch from Depositphotos*

Some people just make friends naturally, but many first-year college students are more shy or quiet and may need to actively seek new friends. Here are some starting points:

1. Keep all doors open for meeting new people. Try to sit with different people at meals so you can get to know them better. Study in a common area or lounge where you'll be among others.
2. Be open in your interests. Don't limit yourself to people who share only certain interests. Meeting people by studying together is an excellent way to get to know people with different interests.
3. Don't try to get involved in everything going on around you. Committing to too many activities or joining too many social groups will spread your time too thin, and you may not spend enough time with anyone to get to know them.
4. Let others see who you really are. Let people get to know the things you're interested in, your real passions. People who really know you are more likely to become good friends.
5. Make an effort to get to know others, too. Show some interest. Don't talk just about

your interests—ask them about theirs. Show others that you’re interested, that you think they’re worth spending time with, and that you really do want to get to know them.

6. Once a friendship has started, be a good friend. Respect your friends for what they are and don’t criticize them or talk about them behind their back. Give emotional support when your friends need it and accept their support as well when you need it.

## Are You Shy?

If you’re shy, try meeting and talking to people in situations where you can interact one-to-one, such as talking with another student after class. Start with what you have in common—“How’d you do on the test?”—and let the conversation grow from there. Avoid the emotional trap of thinking everyone but you is making new friends and start some conversations with others who look interesting to you. You’ll soon find other “shy” or quiet people eager to interact with you as well and get to know you. Shy people may be more likely to feel lonely at times, especially while still feeling new at college. Loneliness is usually a temporary emotional state, however.



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## Managing Conflict

Conflicts among people who are interacting are natural. People have many differences in opinions, ideas, emotions, and behaviors, and these differences sometimes cause conflicts. So how can such conflicts be resolved?

Two things are necessary for conflict resolution that does not leave one or more of the people involved feeling negative about the outcome: attitude and communication.

A conflict cannot be resolved satisfactorily unless all people involved have the right attitude:

- Respect the opinions and behaviors of others. Accept that people are not all alike and learn to celebrate your differences. Most situations do not involve a single right or wrong answer.
- Be open minded. Just because at first you are sure that that you are right, do not close the door to other possibilities. Look at the other's point of view. Be open to change—even when that means accepting constructive criticism.
- Calm down. You can't work together to resolve a conflict while you're still feeling strong emotions. Agree with the other to wait until you're both able to discuss it without strong emotions.
- Recognize the value of compromise. Even if you disagree after calmly talking over an issue, accept that as a human reality and understand that a compromise may be necessary in order to get along with others.



Image by geralt on Pixabay.

With the right attitude, you can then work together to resolve the issue. This process depends on good communication:

- Listen. Don't simply argue for your position, but listen carefully to what the other says. Pay attention to their body language as you try to understand their point of view and ask questions to ensure that you do. Paraphrase what you think you hear to give the other a chance to correct any misunderstanding.
- Use "I statements" rather than "you statements." Explain your point of view about the situation in a way that does not put the other person on the defensive and evoke emotions that make resolution more difficult. Don't blame the other for the problem, that would just get emotions flowing again.

In most cases, when the people involved have a good attitude and are open to compromise, conflicts can be resolved successfully.

Yet sometimes there seems to be no resolution. Sometimes the other person may simply

be difficult and refuse to even try to work out a solution. Regrettably, not everyone on or off campus is mature enough to be open to other perspectives.

With some interpersonal conflicts, you may simply have to decide not to see that person anymore or find other ways to avoid the conflict in the future. But remember, most conflicts can be solved among adults, and it's seldom a good solution to run away from a problem that will continue to surface and keep you from being happy with your life.

## Steps to follow

In any friendship or relationship, conflict will eventually happen. This is just natural because people are different. If a conflict is ignored, or the partners just argue without resolving it, it may simmer and continue to cause tension, eventually weakening the relationship. It's better to take steps to resolve it. Conflict resolution is a process of understanding what's really going on and then finding a solution. The same general steps of conflict resolution can work to solve a relationship conflict or a conflict between any people or groups because of a disagreement about anything. Following are the general principles of conflict resolution:

- Allow things to cool off. It's difficult to resolve a conflict while either party is still emotional. Wait a few minutes or agree to talk about it later.
- Using "I statements" rather than "you statements," each party explains what bothers him or her about the cause of the conflict. "You statements" put the other person on the defensive and evoke emotions that make resolution more difficult.
- Listen carefully to what the other person says. Then restate the message in your own words to give the other a chance to clarify their thoughts and feelings. Each party should listen to the other and restate the other's message to ensure the real issue is out on the table for discussion.
- Accept responsibility for your role in the conflict, instead of blaming the other.
- Brainstorm together to find a solution that satisfies both of you. Some compromise is usually needed, but that is usually not difficult to reach when you're calm and are working together on a solution.
- Apologize, thank, and forgive. After reaching a resolution, emotional closure is needed to restore your relationship and end on a positive, affirming note. When appropriate, apologize for your past anger or arguing. Thank the other for being willing to compromise to resolve the conflict. In your mind, forgive the person for past misunderstandings and actions so that you do not carry any grudge into the future.

Let's rejoin Irene Stewart's presentation to hear about the value of conflict resolution in our community.



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## Dealing With Harassment

Although college campuses are for the most part safe, secure, and friendly places where social and intellectual interaction is generally mature and responsible, harassment can occur in any setting. Harassment is a general term referring to behavior that is intended to disturb or threaten another person in some way, often psychologically. Typically the person or people doing the harassment target their victim because of a difference in race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sex, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

Acts of harassment may be verbal, physical, psychological, or any other behavior intended to disturb another person.

Bullying behavior, name-calling, belittling, gesturing obscenely, stalking, mobbing—any action intended to torment or deliberately make another person uncomfortable or feel humiliated is harassment. Harassment may also be intended to manipulate a targeted person to act in some specific way. Sexual harassment is a special term referring to persistent, unwanted sexual behaviors or advances.



Image by John Hain from Pixabay

Harassment of any type, at any time, of any person, is wrong and unacceptable. You will know it if you are harassed, and you should know also that it is your basic right to be free of harassment and that all colleges lay out strict policies against all forms of harassment.

Here's what you should do if you are being harassed:

1. Tell the person to stop the behavior or if you feel at any risk of harm, get out of the situation immediately.
2. Document the incident, particularly with ongoing harassment. Keep notes of the details. Tell someone you trust about the situation.
3. Report the harassment to the appropriate college authority. If you are unsure which to go to, go to the Campus Hearing Officer.

## Take a Stand against Prejudice and Hate

Unfortunately prejudice and hate still exist in Canada, even on college campuses. In addition to racial prejudice, some people are also prejudiced against women, people with disabilities, older adults, gays and lesbians – virtually all groups that can be characterized as “different.” But it is not enough for only college administrators to fight prejudice and hate – this is a responsibility for all good citizens who take seriously the shared Canadian value of equality for all people.

So what can you as a college student do?

**Decide that it does matter.** Prejudice threatens us all, not just the particular group being discriminated against in a specific incident. Don't stand on the sidelines or think it's up to the people who may be victimized by prejudice or hate to do something about it. We can all do something.

**Talk with others.** Communication has great value on campuses. Let others know how you feel about any acts of prejudice or hatred that you witness. The more everyone openly condemns such behavior, the less likely it is to reappear in the future. This applies even if you hear another student telling a racist joke or putting down the opposite sex—speak up and tell the person you find such statements offensive. You don't want that



*Image by Clker-Free-Vector-Images from Pixabay*

person to think you agree with them. Speaking up can be difficult to do, but it can be done tactfully.

**Be a good citizen.** People can and do learn what is acceptable in a diverse environment. Report incidents you observe. If you happen to see someone spray-painting a hateful slogan, for example, be a good citizen and report it to the campus security or the police.

**Support student groups working for change.** Canada has a great tradition of college students banding together to help solve social problems. Show your support for groups and activities that celebrate diversity and condemn prejudice. Even if you are a shy, quiet person, your attendance at a parade or gathering lends support. Once you become aware of such student activities on campus, you'll find many ways you can help take a stand.

**Celebrate diversity.** In many ways, you can learn more about diversity through campus programs and activities. The more all students participate, the closer the campus will come to being free of prejudice and hate.

**Be a role model** in how you act and what you say in relation to diversity, and you may have more effect on others than you realize.

#### Key Takeaways

- Successful students use their college experience to meet new people and gain an understanding of others' viewpoints.
- Learning about different people helps you learn more about yourself and appreciate your own culture.
- Embracing diversity on campus is beneficial for all students, leading to more fulfilling social relationships and better educational experiences.
- Understanding the value of social interaction and building good relationships regardless of background can lead to greater self-awareness and a richer social life.
- Harassment is unacceptable and should be reported immediately to the appropriate college authority.
- Take a stand against prejudice and hate by speaking up, supporting student groups, celebrating diversity, and being a role model.





Want more? The Learning Portal's Maamwi Hub has excellent resources to help explore Indigenous history, culture and worldviews.

## 4. Successful students go to class



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There is just no better way to be successful than to go to class. Plan to be at every single class. It is in class that you will receive the direction and guidance you need to be successful. By attending every class, you will not miss important material, you will also think more clearly about course topics and be better prepared for tests. You will also benefit in many ways from class interaction, including becoming more actively engaging in learning, developing a network with other students, and forming a relationship with the professor.



*Photo by The Climate Reality Project on Unsplash*

You will not be able to rely only on notes from your professors' lectures. You will be responsible for material beyond what is presented in class as most lectures and activities are intended to highlight important material but not cover it in depth. You should prepare for class by keeping up with required readings and completing self-study between classes on the materials covered. There is an expectation that you will also bring your questions to class

and participate in discussions and activities to confirm and deepen your understanding. Being in class and participating in class will help you build your knowledge base, ensure you are studying the right materials and will reduce stress and reduce confusion.

It is important to understand your personal learning strengths and use it well in classes, while also making the effort to learn in new ways and work with other students for a more effective overall learning experience. If your learning preferences do not match the professor's teaching style, adapt your learning strategies and study with other students to stay actively engaged. It is up to you to make the most of your class time.

## The Importance Of Going To Class

Make it your goal to attend every class—don't even think about not going.

Going to class is the first step in engaging in your education by interacting with the professor and other students. Here are some reasons why it's important to attend every class:

- Miss a class and you'll miss something, even if you never know it. Even if a friend gives you notes for the class, they cannot contain everything said or shown by the professor, written on the board for emphasis, questioned or commented on by other students. What you miss might affect your grade or your enthusiasm for the course.
- While some students may say that you don't have to go to every class to do well on a test; that is very often a myth. Do you want to take that risk?
- Your final grade often reflects how you think about course concepts, and you will think more often and more clearly when engaged in class discussions and hearing the comments of other students. You can't get this by borrowing class notes from a friend.
- Research shows there is a correlation between absences from class and lower grades. It may be that missing classes causes lower grades or that students with lower grades miss more classes. Either way, missing classes and lower grades can be intertwined in a downward spiral of achievement.



Photo by Antenna on Unsplash

- Your professor will note your absences—even in a large class. In addition to making a poor impression, you reduce your opportunities for future interactions. You might not ask a question the next class because of the potential embarrassment of the professor saying that was covered in the last class, which you apparently missed. Nothing is more insulting to a professor than when you skip a class and then show up to ask, “Did I miss anything important?”
- You might be tempted to skip a class because the professor is “boring,” but it’s more likely that you found the class boring because you weren’t very attentive or didn’t appreciate how the professor was teaching.
- You paid a lot of money for your tuition. Get your money’s worth!



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## Professor’s Teaching Style versus Your Learning Strengths

Most professors tend to develop their own teaching style and you will encounter different teaching styles in different courses. When the professor’s teaching style matches your learning strengths, you are usually more attentive in class and may seem to learn better. But what happens if your professor has a style very different from your own?

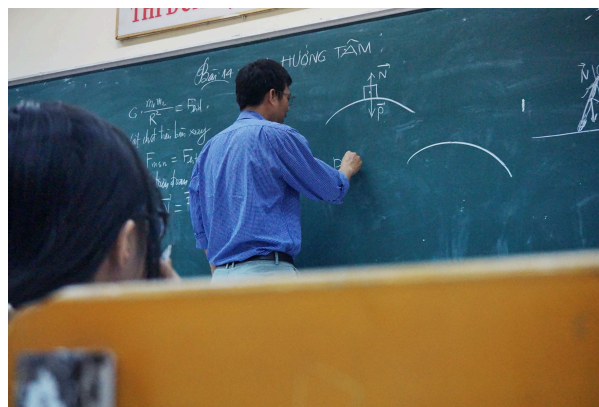


Photo by Tra Nguyen on Unsplash

Let's say, for example, that your professor primarily lectures, speaks rapidly, and seldom uses visuals. This professor also talks mostly on the level of large abstract ideas and almost never gives examples. Let's say that you, in contrast, are more a visual learner, that you learn more effectively with visual aids and visualizing concrete examples of ideas. Therefore, perhaps you are having some difficulty paying attention in class and following the lectures.



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### **What can you do?**

- Capitalize on your learning strengths. For example, you could use a visual style of note taking, such as concept maps, while listening to the lecture. If the professor does not give examples for abstract ideas in the lecture, see if you can supply examples in your own thoughts as you listen.
- Form a study group with other students. A variety of students will likely involve a variety of learning strengths, and when going over course material with other students, such as when studying for a test, you can gain what they have learned through their styles while you contribute what you have learned through yours.
- Use ancillary study materials. Many textbooks point students to online resource centers or you can search the internet for additional learning materials. Such ancillary materials usually offer an opportunity to review course material in ways that may better fit your learning strengths.
- Communicate with your professor to bridge the gap between their teaching style and your learning strengths. If the professor is speaking in abstractions and general ideas you don't understand, ask the professor for an example.

Finally, take heart that a mismatch between a student's learning strengths and a professor's teaching style is not correlated with lower grades.

# Classroom Etiquette



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## The Value of Interaction in Class

As noted earlier, there are many good reasons to attend every class. But it's not enough just to be there, you need to interact with the professor and other students to enjoy a full educational experience.

Participating in class discussions is a good way to start meeting other students with whom you share an interest. You may form a study group, borrow class notes if you miss a class, or team up with other students on a group project. You may meet students with whom you form a lasting relationship, developing your network of contacts for other benefits in the future, such as learning about internships or jobs.

Asking the professor questions, answering the professor's questions in class, and responding to other students' comments is a good way to make an impression on your professor. The professor will remember you as an engaged student—and this matters if you later need extra help or even a potential mentor.

Paying close attention and thinking critically about what a professor is saying can dramatically improve your enjoyment of the class. You'll notice things you'd miss if you're feeling bored and may discover your professor is much more interesting than you first thought.

Students actively engaged in their class learn more and thus get better grades. When you speak out in class and answer the professor's questions, you are more likely to remember the discussion.

## Class Participation



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### Participating in Class – Preparing

Smaller classes generally favor discussion, but often professors in large lecture classes also make some room for participation. A concern or fear about speaking in public is one of the most common fears. If you feel afraid to speak out in class, take comfort from the fact that many others do as well and that anyone can learn how to speak in class without much difficulty. Class participation is actually an impromptu, informal type of public speaking, and the same principles will get you through both: preparing and communicating.

- Set yourself up for success by coming to class fully prepared. Complete reading assignments. Review your notes on the reading and previous class to get yourself in the right mind-set. If there is something you don't understand well, start formulating your question now.
- Sit where you can have a good view of the professor, board or screen, and other visual aids. In a lecture hall, this will help you hear better, pay better attention, and make a good impression on the professor. Don't sit with friends—socializing isn't what you're there for.
- Remember that your body language communicates as much as anything you say. Sit up and look alert, with a pleasant expression on your face, and make good eye contact with the professor. Show some enthusiasm.
- Pay attention to the professor's body language, which can communicate much more than just their words. How the professor moves and gestures, and the looks on their face, will add meaning to the words and will also cue you when it's a good time to ask a question or stay silent.
- Pay attention to the professor's thinking style. Does this professor emphasize theory

more than facts, wide perspectives over specific ideas, abstractions more than concrete experience? Take a cue from your professor's approach and try to think in similar terms when participating in class.

- Take good notes, but don't write obsessively and never page through your textbook (or browse on a laptop). Don't eat or play with your cell phone. Except when writing brief notes, keep your eyes on the professor.

## Participating in Class – Communicating

How you communicate in class can be as important as the content you want to convey:

- Pay attention to your communication style. Use standard English when you ask or answer a question, not slang. Avoid sarcasm and joking around. Be assertive when you participate in class, showing confidence in your ideas while being respectful of the ideas of others, but avoid an aggressive style that attacks the ideas of others or is strongly emotional.

- Follow class protocol for making comments and asking questions. In a small class, the professor may encourage students to ask questions at any time, while in some large lecture classes the professor may ask for questions at the end of the lecture. In this case, jot your questions in your notes so that you don't forget them later.

- Don't say or ask anything just to try to impress your professor. Most professors have been teaching long enough to immediately recognize insincere flattery—and the impression this makes is just the opposite of what you want.

- It's fine to disagree with your professor when you ask or answer a question. Many professors invite challenges. Before speaking up, however, be sure you can explain why you disagree and give supporting evidence or reasons. Be respectful.



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## Questions in Class



*Image by geralt on Pixabay.*

### **When your professor asks a question to the class:**

- Raise your hand and make eye contact, but don't call out or wave your hand all around trying to catch their attention.
- Before speaking, take a moment to gather your thoughts and take a deep breath. Don't just blurt it out—speak calmly and clearly.

### **When your professor asks you a question directly:**

- Be honest and admit it if you don't know the answer or are not sure. Don't try to fake it or make excuses. With a question that involves a reasoned opinion more than a fact, it's fine to explain why you haven't decided yet, such as when weighing two opposing ideas or actions; your comment may stimulate further discussion.
- Organize your thoughts to give a sufficient answer. Professors seldom want a yes or no answer. Give your answer and provide reasons or evidence in support.

### **When you want to ask the professor a question:**

- Don't ever feel a question is "stupid." If you have been paying attention in class and have done the reading and you still don't understand something, you have every right to ask.
- Ask at the appropriate time. Don't interrupt the professor or jump ahead and ask a question about something the professor may be starting to explain. Wait for a natural pause and a good moment to ask. On the other hand, unless the professor asks students to hold all questions until the end of class, don't let too much time go by, or you may forget the question or its relevance to the topic.
- Don't ask just because you weren't paying attention. If you drift off during the first half of class and then realize in the second half that you don't really understand what the professor is talking about now, don't ask a question about something that was already covered.
- Don't ask a question that is really a complaint. You may be thinking, "Why would so-and-so believe that? That's just crazy!" Take a moment to think about what you might gain from asking the question. It's better to say, "I'm having some difficulty understanding what so-and-so is saying here. What evidence did he use to argue for that position?"
- Avoid dominating a discussion. It may be appropriate in some cases to make a follow-up comment after the professor answers your question, but don't try to turn the class into a one-on-one conversation between you and the professor.



Photo from Freepik



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### Key Takeaways

- Attend and participate in every class.
- Your professor's teaching style may not fit your learning strengths, it is up to you to adapt.
- Participating in class is a good way to meet other students, impress your professor, improve your enjoyment and increase your engagement; this leads to more learning and better grades.
- Speaking up in class can be a concern for some students. By being prepared for class, paying attention to class protocols and asking and responding to questions, you can become more comfortable participating in class.



Want More? The Learning Portal's Learning Online provides you with tips and advice on attending your online classes. Also, in the Successful Students Learning Independently section of this text, we have a chapter on Online learning.

## 5. Successful students ask for help



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Always remember that your college staff and faculty want you to succeed. That means that if you are having any difficulties or have any questions, there are college resources available to help you get assistance or find answers. This is true of both academic and personal issues that could potentially disrupt your college experience. Never hesitate to go looking for help or information—but realize that usually you have to take the first step. Asking for help requires two things, self-awareness skills and self-advocacy. Self-awareness is an understanding of your particular strengths and weakness and an awareness of when you need help. Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up for yourself and to ask for help when you need it. So self-awareness is recognizing that you need help and self-advocacy is asking for it.

Successful students recognize that they do not need to do this all alone. There are two important groups on campus available to you as a student, your professors and Student Services. Talking with your professors is your best first step for most issues. Your professor may recommend you contact Student Services or Campus Services for additional support. Successful students find out about the different services that are available at the college early in the semester, even before they need services so that when something does happen, they can access support because they already know what is available. Having an idea of what is available really helps when something goes wrong because you don't then have to figure out what might be possible when you are already in crisis or panic mode.



Photo by Nik MacMillan on Unsplash

Student Services are in place because colleges know that students benefit from having support at different points in their college career. It is expected and accepted that students will use services as needed. In some cultures, asking for help or accepting help can be seen as a sign of weakness; in college culture, if you have questions or have difficulties that impact your learning, NOT seeking help is seen as a weakness. Take the example of tutoring. Tutoring is a service used by students who are doing quite well in their studies as a way to confirm their learning and understanding. It is also used as a support to students who are having difficulty in understand some aspect of their course materials. Using tutoring is not a sign of weakness but is seen as a smart move on your part.

## Ask For Help

Successful students understand that independent learning does not mean that you are alone in your studies. There are sources of support including Student Services and your Professors. Retention Coordinator Irene Stewart discusses the importance of recognizing when you are having a challenge and asking for help when you need it.



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## Ask For Help Self-Check



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## Student Services and Campus Services

All colleges provide a variety of supports to students during their college careers. Student Services and Campus Services are available on campus to provide academic and out of class services geared to supporting students' success and retention. The names may be different at your college but the purpose of services will be similar. Read on to learn more about typical services available at Ontario Colleges:

## Student Services



Photo by Hush Naidoo on Unsplash

These are the types of services can be accessed through the Student Services Department on your campus:



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## Campus Services

These are the types of services that can be access on campus:



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## Talking With Your Professors

College students are sometimes surprised to discover that professors like students and enjoy getting to know them. The human dimension of college really matters, and as a student you are an important part of your professor's world. Most professors are happy to see you during their office hours or to talk a few minutes after class.

Active participation in learning is a key to student success. Talking with your professors often leads to benefits beyond simply doing well in that class.



- Talking with professors helps you feel more comfortable in college and more connected to the campus. Students who talk to their professors are less likely to become disillusioned and drop out.
- Talking with professors is a valuable way to learn about an academic field or a career.
- You may need a reference or letter of recommendation for a job or internship application. Getting to know some of your professors puts you in an ideal position to ask for a letter of recommendation or a reference in the future when you need one.
- Because professors are often well connected within their field, they may know of a job, internship, or research possibility you otherwise may not learn about. A professor who knows you is a valuable part of your network. Networking is very important for future job searches and other opportunities. In fact, most jobs are found through networking, not through classified ads or online job postings.
- Think about what it truly means to be **educated**: how one thinks, understands society and the world, and responds to problems and new situations. Much of this learning occurs outside the classroom. Talking with your highly educated professors can be among your most meaningful experiences in college.



Photo by The Ear Depot on Unsplash

## Guidelines for Communicating with Professors

Getting along with professors and communicating well begins with attitude. As experts in their field, they deserve your respect. Remember that a college education is a collaborative process that works best when students and professors communicate freely in an exchange of ideas, information, and perspectives. So while you should respect your professors, you shouldn't fear them. As you get to know them better, you'll learn their personalities and find appropriate ways to communicate.

Here are some guidelines for getting along with and communicating with your professors:

- **Prepare before going to the professor's office.** Go over your notes on readings and

lectures and write down your specific questions. You'll feel more comfortable, and the professor will appreciate your being organized.

- **Don't forget to introduce yourself.** Especially near the beginning of the term, don't assume your professor has learned everyone's names yet and don't make him or her have to ask you.
- **Respect the professor's time.** In addition to teaching, college professors sit on committees, do research and other professional work, and have personal lives. Don't show up two minutes before the end of an office hour and expect the professor to stay late to talk with you.
- **Realize that the professor will recognize you from class** – even in a large lecture hall. If you spent a lecture class joking around with friends in the back row, don't think you can show up during office hours to find out what you missed while you weren't paying attention.
- **Don't try to fool a professor.** Insincere praise or making excuses for not doing an assignment won't make it in college. To earn your professor's respect, come to class prepared, do the work, participate genuinely in class, and show respect—and the professor will be happy to see you when you come to office hours or need some extra help.
- **Try to see things from the professor's point of view.** Imagine that you spent a couple of hours preparing PowerPoint slides and a class lecture on something you find very stimulating and exciting. Standing in front of a full room, you are gratified to see faces smiling and heads nodding as people understand what you're saying – they really get it! And then a student after class asks, "Is this going to be on the test?" How would you feel?
- **Be professional when talking to a professor.** You can be cordial and friendly, but keep it professional and on an adult level. Come to office hours prepared with your questions – not just to chat or joke around. Be prepared to accept criticism in a professional way, without taking it personally or complaining.
- **Use your best communication skills.** Learn the difference between assertive communication and passive or aggressive communication.

## Tips for Success: Talking with Professors

- When you have a question, ask it sooner rather than later.
- Be prepared and plan your questions and comments in advance.

- Be respectful but personable and communicate professionally.
- Be open minded and ready to learn. Avoid whining and complaining.
- There is no such thing as a “stupid question.”



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## Resolving a Problem with Your Professor

The most common issue students experience with a professor involves receiving a grade lower than they think they deserve – especially new students not yet used to the higher standards of college. It’s depressing to get a low grade, but it’s not the end of the world. Don’t be too hard on yourself – or on the professor.



Photo by NeONBRAND on Unsplash

Take a good look at what happened on the test or paper and make sure you know what to do better next time. Review the chapters on studying habits, time management, and taking tests. If you genuinely believe you deserved a higher grade, you can talk with your professor.

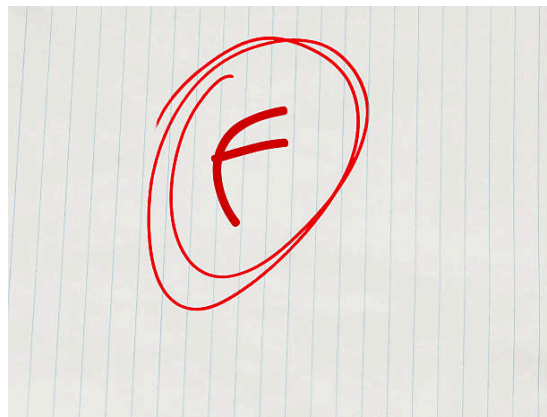
How you communicate in that conversation, however, is very important. Professors are used to hearing students complain about grades and patiently explaining their standards for

grading. Most professors seldom change grades. Yet it can still be worthwhile to talk with the professor because of what you will learn from the experience.

Follow these guidelines to talk about a grade or resolve any other problem or disagreement with a professor:

- First go over the requirements for the paper or test and the professor's comments. Be sure you actually have a reason for discussing the grade — not just that you didn't do well. Be prepared with specific points you want to go over.
- Make an appointment with your professor during office hours or another time. Don't try to talk about this before or after class or with e-mail or the telephone.
- Begin by politely explaining that you thought you did better on the assignment or test (not simply that you think you deserve a better grade) and that you'd like to go over it to better understand the result.
- Allow the professor to explain their comments on the assignment or grading of the test. Don't complain or whine; instead, show your appreciation for the explanation. Raise any specific questions or make comments at this time. For example, you might say, "I really thought I was being clear here when I wrote...."
- Use good listening skills. Whatever you do, don't argue!
- Ask the professor for advice on what you might do on the next assignment or when preparing for the next test. You may be offered some individual help or receive good study advice, and your professor will respect your willingness to make the effort as long as it's clear that you're more interested in learning than simply getting the grade.

## Controlling Anger over Grades



*Image by apilarinos from iStock*

If you're going to talk with a professor about your grade or any other problem, control any anger you may be feeling. The GPS Life Plan project of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System offers some insights into this process:

- Being upset about a grade is good because it shows you care and that you have passion about your education. But anger prevents clear thinking, so rein it in first.
- Since anger involves bodily reactions, physical actions can help you control anger: try some deep breathing first.
- Try putting yourself in your professor's shoes and seeing the situation from their point of view. Try to understand how grading is not a personal issue of "liking" you – that they are really doing something for your educational benefit.
- It's not your life that's being graded. Things outside your control can result in not doing well on a test or assignment, but the professor can grade only on what you actually did on that test or assignment – not what you could have done or are capable of doing. Understanding this can help you accept what happened and not take a grade personally.

## E-mail Best Practices

E-mail has a growing role in education and has become an important and valuable means of communicating with professors. Especially when it is difficult to see a professor in person during office hours, e-mail can be an effective form of communication and interaction with professors. E-mail is also an increasingly effective way to collaborate with other students on group projects or while studying with other students.



*Image by Storyset from Freepik*

## Getting Started with E-mail

- If you don't have your own computer, find out where on-campus computers are available for student use, such as at the library or student computer lab.
- Use your college e-mail for all communications with college staff and faculty.
- Give your e-mail address to professors who request it and to other students with whom you study or maintain contact. E-mail is a good way to contact another student if you miss a class.
- Once you begin using e-mail, remember to check it regularly for messages.

## Be sure to use good e-mail etiquette when writing to professors.

Using e-mail respects other people's time, allowing them to answer at a time of their choosing, rather than being interrupted by a telephone call. But e-mail is a written form of communication that is different from telephone voice messages and text messages. Students who text with friends have often adopted shortcuts, such as not spelling out full words, ignoring capitalization and punctuation, and not bothering with grammar or full sentence constructions. This is inappropriate in an e-mail message to a professor, who expects a more professional quality of writing. Most professors expect your communications to be in full sentences with correctly spelled words and reasonable grammar.



Image by Jared Soto from Pixabay

Follow these guidelines:

- Use the subject line to label your message effectively at a glance. “May I make an appointment?” says something; “In your office?” doesn’t.
- Address e-mail messages as you do a letter. Include your full name if it’s not easily recognizable in your e-mail account.
- Get to your point quickly and concisely. Don’t make the reader scroll down a long e-mail to see what it is you want to say.
- Because e-mail is a written communication, it does not express emotion the way a voice message does. Don’t attempt to be funny, ironic, or sarcastic. Write as you would in a paper for class. In a large lecture class or an online course, your e-mail voice may be the primary way your professor knows you, and emotionally charged messages can be confusing or give a poor impression.
- Don’t use capital letters to emphasize. All caps look like SHOUTING.
- Avoid abbreviations, nonstandard spelling, slang, and emoticons like smiley faces. These do not convey a professional tone.
- Don’t make demands or state expectations such as “I’ll expect to hear from you soon” or “If I haven’t heard by 4 p.m., I’ll assume you’ll accept my paper late.”

- When you reply to a message, leave the original message within yours. Your reader may need to recall what he or she said in the original message.
- Be polite. End the message with a “Thank you” or something similar.
- Proofread your message before sending it.
- With any important message to a work supervisor or professor, it’s a good idea to wait and review the message later before sending it. You may have expressed an emotion or thought that you will think better about later. Many problems have resulted when people sent messages too quickly without thinking.

## How to email your professor video



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### Key Takeaways

- The college and its staff want to see you succeed, but you have to ask for the help you need to succeed.
- Using Student or Campus services is not a sign of weakness, but seen as a trait of successful students.
- Participating in your learning by respectfully talking with professors. The benefits of active communication with professors often leads to benefits beyond class grades.



Want more? The Learning Portal has advice on how to be more resilient.



## 6. Successful students get it together



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It begins with simple things like making sure you have all your books and materials with you when you get to class and leads to more complex things like creating a study schedule. It is about getting a handle on what you need to do as a student and what demands will be on your time in terms of preparing for classes, reading, studying and working on homework and assignments. Planning ahead, and then following your plan, is the essence of time management. Thinking about what needs to be done and having a plan for doing the work can really help you reduce your stress. Learning strategies to stay on track, avoiding distractions of people and technology, and to preventing procrastination will pay off not only in college but also in your career thereafter. Plan your use of time based on your “time personality” after assessing how you typically use your free time. Then use an academic weekly and daily planner to schedule blocks of time most efficiently. Start well ahead of deadlines to prevent last-minute stresses and problems completing your work.

Going to college will be challenging and to do well in your studies will take more time than you might first think. You will probably spend about fifteen hours a week in classes and you can expect to spend two hours of prepping, reading, studying and homework for each hour in classes. This means you are looking at forty-five hours of your week devoted to your studies. This is about the number of hours you might expect to spend at a full time job. It is important that you are willing to put in the time but it can be difficult to manage the competing demands of different courses, outside work and personal/social needs. That is why it is vital to get it together now by organizing you space and your time.

# Organizing Your Space

It's time to get organized. You need to organize both your space and your time.

Space is important for many reasons—some obvious, some less so. People's moods, attitudes, and levels of work productivity change in different spaces. Learning to use space to your own advantage helps get you off to a good start in your studies. Here are a few of the ways space matter:



*Image by Pexels from Pixabay*

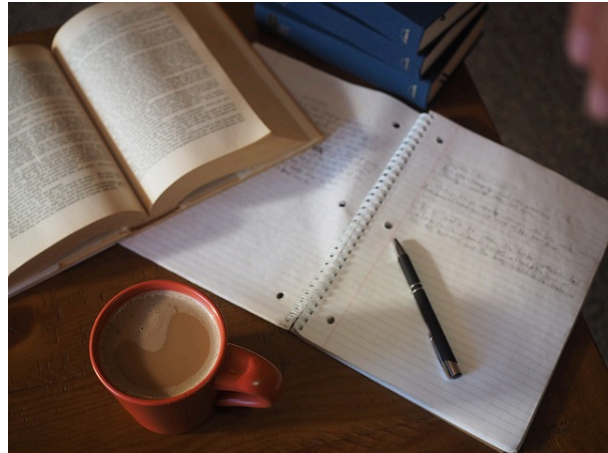
- Everyone needs their own space. This may seem simple, but everyone needs some physical area, regardless of size, that is really their own—even if it's only a small part of a shared space. Within your own space, you generally feel more secure and in control.
- Physical space reinforces habits. For example, using your bed primarily for sleeping makes it easier to fall asleep there than elsewhere and also makes it not a good place to try to stay awake and alert for studying.
- Different places create different moods. While this may seem obvious, students don't always use places to their best advantage. One place may be bright and full of energy, with happy students passing through and enjoying themselves—a place that puts you in a good mood. But that may actually make it more difficult to concentrate on your studying. Yet the opposite—a totally quiet, austere place devoid of color, sound, and pleasant decorations—can be just as unproductive if it makes you associate studying with something unpleasant. Everyone needs to discover what space works best for them—and then let that space reinforce good study habits.

## Use Space to Your Advantage and to Avoid Distractions

Begin by analyzing your needs, preferences, and past problems with places for studying. Where do you usually study? What are the best things about that place for studying? What distractions are most likely to occur there?

The goal is to find, or create, the best place for studying, and then to use it regularly so that studying there becomes a good habit.

- Choose a place you can associate with studying. Make sure it's not a place already associated with other activities (eating, watching television, sleeping, etc.). Over time, the more often you study in this space, the stronger will be its association with studying, so that eventually you'll be completely focused as soon as you reach that place and begin.



*Image by Erik Lindstrom from Pixabay*

- Your study area should be available whenever you need it. If you want to use your home, apartment, or dorm room but you never know if another person may be there and possibly distract you, then it's probably better to look for another place, such as a study lounge or an area in the library. Look for locations open at the hours when you may be studying. You may also need two study spaces—one in or near where you live, another on campus. Maybe you study best at home but have an hour free between two classes, and the library is too far away to use for only an hour? Look for a convenient empty classroom.
- Your study space should meet your study needs. An open desk or table surface usually works best for writing, and you'll tire quickly if you try to write notes sitting in an easy chair (which might also make you sleepy). You need good light for reading, to avoid tiring from eyestrain. If you use a laptop for writing notes or reading and researching, you need a power outlet so you don't have to stop when your battery runs out.
- Your study space should meet your psychological needs. Some students may need total silence with absolutely no visual distractions; they may find a perfect study carrel hidden away in the library. Other students may be unable to concentrate for long without looking up from reading and momentarily letting their eyes move over a pleasant scene. Some students may find it easier to stay motivated when surrounded by other students also studying; they may find an open space in the library or a study lounge with many tables spread out over an area. Experiment to find the setting that works best for you—and remember that the more often you use this same space, the more comfortable and effective your studying will become.
- You may need the support of others to maintain your study space. Students living at home, whether with a spouse and children or with their parents, often need the

support of family members to maintain an effective study space. The kitchen table probably isn't best if others pass by frequently. Be creative, if necessary, and set up a card table in a quiet corner of your bedroom or elsewhere to avoid interruptions. Put a "do not disturb" sign on your door.

- Keep your space organized and free of distractions. You want to prevent sudden impulses to neaten up the area (when you should be studying), do laundry, wash dishes, and so on. Unplug a nearby telephone, turn off your cell phone, and use your computer only as needed for studying. If your e-mail or message program pops up a notice every time an e-mail or message arrives, turn off your Wi-Fi or detach the network cable to prevent those intrusions.
- Plan for breaks. Everyone needs to take a break occasionally when studying. Think about the space you're in and how to use it when you need a break. If in your home, stop and do a few exercises to get your blood flowing. If in the library, take a walk up a couple flights of stairs and around the stacks before returning to your study area.
- Prepare for human interruptions. Even if you hide in the library to study, there's a chance a friend may happen by. At home with family members or in a dorm room or common space, the odds increase greatly. Have a plan ready in case someone pops in and asks you to join them in some fun activity. Know when you plan to finish your studying so that you can make a plan for later—or for tomorrow at a set time.

## Studying While Living with Others



*Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay*

Sometimes going to the library or elsewhere is not practical for studying, and you have to find a way to cope in a shared space. Part of the solution is time management. Agree with others on certain times that will be reserved for studying; agree to keep the place quiet, not to have guests visiting, and to prevent other distractions. These arrangements can be made with a roommate, spouse, and older children.

If there are younger children in your household and you have child-care responsibility, it's usually more complicated. You may have to schedule your studying during

their nap time or find quiet activities for them to enjoy while you study. Try to spend some time with your kids before you study, so they don't feel like you're ignoring them. The key is to plan ahead. You don't want to find yourself, the night before an exam, in a place that offers no space for studying.

Finally, accept that sometimes you'll just have to say no. If your roommate or a friend often tries to engage you in conversation or suggests doing something else when you need to study, just say no. Learn to be firm but polite as you explain that you just really have to get your work done first. Students who live at home may also have to learn how to say no to parents or family members—just be sure to explain the importance of the studying you need to do! Remember, you can't be everything to everyone all the time.



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## Time Management



*Image by Tumisu from Pixabay*

- Using effective long- and short-term study strategies
- Scheduling study activities in realistic segments
- Using a system to plan ahead and set priorities
- Staying motivated to follow your plan and avoid procrastination

Time management for successful college studying involves these factors:

- Determining how much time you need to spend studying
- Knowing how much time you actually have for studying and increasing that time if needed
- Being aware of the times of day you are at your best and most focused

For every hour in the classroom, college students should spend, on average, about two hours

on that class, counting reading, studying, writing papers, and so on. If you're a full-time student with fifteen hours a week in class, then you need another thirty hours for the rest of your academic work. That forty-five hours is about the same as a typical full-time job. If you work part time, time management skills are even more essential. These skills are still more important for part-time college students who work full time and commute or have a family. To succeed in college, virtually everyone has to develop effective strategies for dealing with time.

Do you have two hours of study time for every hour in class? Many students begin college not knowing this much time is needed, so don't be surprised if you underestimated this number of hours. Remember this is just an average amount of study time – you may need more or less for your own courses. To be safe, and to help ensure your success, add another five to ten hours a week for studying. To reserve this study time, you may need to adjust how much time you spend in other activities.



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## Where Should Your Time Go?

Plan for the ideal use of a week's worth of time. Fill in your hours in this order:

1. Hours attending class
2. Study hours (2 times the number of class hours plus 5 or more hours extra)
3. Work, internships, and fixed volunteer time
4. Fixed life activities (sleeping, eating, hygiene, chores, transportation, etc.)
5. Discretionary activities

Now subtotal your hours so far and subtract that number from 168. How many hours are left?

This will help you find the remaining hours for “discretionary activities” (things you don’t have to do for school, work, or a healthy life).

This activity shows most college students that they do actually have plenty of time for their studies without losing sleep or giving up their social life. But you may have less time for discretionary activities than in the past. Something, somewhere has to give. That’s part of time management – and why it’s important to keep your goals and priorities in mind. The other part is to learn how to use the hours you do have as effectively as possible, especially the study hours. For example, if you’re a typical college student who plans to study for three hours in an evening but then procrastinates, gets caught up in a conversation, loses time to checking e-mail and text messages, and listens to loud music while reading a textbook, then maybe you actually spent four hours “studying” but got only two hours of actual work done. So you end up behind and feeling like you’re still studying way too much. The goal of time management is to actually get three hours of studying done in three hours and have time for your life as well.



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## Where Does Your Time Go?

See if you can account for a week’s worth of time. Try this Time Activity.

For each of the activity categories listed, make your best estimate of how many hours you spend in a week. (For categories that are about the same every day, just estimate for one day and multiply by seven for that line.)

- Sleeping
- Eating (including preparing food)
- Personal hygiene (i.e., bathing, etc.)
- Working (employment)

- Volunteer service or internship
- Chores, cleaning, errands, shopping, etc.
- Attending class
- Studying, reading, and researching (outside of class)
- Transportation to work or school
- Getting to classes (walking, biking, etc.)
- Organized group activities (clubs, church services, etc.)
- Time with friends (include television, video games, etc.)
- Attending events (movies, parties, etc.)
- Time alone (include television, video games, surfing the Web, etc.)
- Exercise or sports activities
- Reading for fun or other interests done alone
- Talking on phone, e-mail, social media, etc.
- Other—specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Now use your calculator to total your estimated hours.

Is your number larger or smaller than 168, the total number of hours in a week? If your estimate is higher, go back through your list and adjust numbers to be more realistic. But if your estimated hours total fewer than 168, don't just go back and add more time in certain categories. Instead, ponder this question: *Where does the time go?* We'll come back to this question.

Think about your time analysis in Time Activity.

- People who estimate too high often feel they don't have enough time. They may have time anxiety and often feel frustrated.
- People at the other extreme, who often can't account for how they use all their time, may have a more relaxed attitude. They may not actually have any more free time, but they may be wasting more time than they want to admit with less important things. Yet they still may complain about how much time they spend studying, as if there's a shortage of time.

People also differ in how they respond to schedule changes. Some go with the flow and accept changes easily, while others function well only when following a planned schedule and may become upset if that schedule changes. If you do not react well to an unexpected disruption in your schedule, plan extra time for catching up if something throws you off. This is all part of understanding your time personality.

Another aspect of your time personality involves time of day. If you need to concentrate, such as when writing a class paper, are you more alert and focused in the morning,



afternoon, or evening? Do you concentrate best when you look forward to a relaxing activity later on, or do you study better when you've finished all other activities? Do you function well if you get up early—or stay up late—to accomplish a task? How does that affect the rest of your day or the next day? Understanding this will help you better plan your study periods.

While you may not be able to change your “time personality,” you can learn to manage your time more successfully. The key is to be realistic. How accurate is the number of hours you wrote down in Time Activity? The best way to know how you spend your time is to record what you do all day in a time log, every day for a week, and then add that up. Make simple chart of the hours in a day and carry it with you. Every so often, fill in what you have been doing. Do this for a week before adding up the times; then enter the total hours in the categories in Time Activity.

You might be surprised that you spend a lot more time than you thought just hanging out with friends—or surfing the Web or playing around with Facebook or any of the many other things people do. You might find that you study well early in the morning even though you thought you are a night person, or vice versa. You might learn how long you can continue at a specific task before needing a break. This is information you can use to better plan your time.

## **Time Management – Planning**

This module was written with students attending classes on campus in mind. This material was adapted from Learning to Learn Online (2018) by Page and Vincent, Kwantien Polytechnic University Centre under a Creative Commons By Share-alike license.

### Develop a Semester Schedule

Online courses often provide you with a great deal of flexibility in organizing your time. This can be a tremendous asset, particularly if you are balancing study with work, family, or other commitments. However, this also requires you to accurately determine how much work you must complete over the semester, and to develop a plan that allows you to complete this work effectively. Many students find it helpful to develop a semester schedule that provides an “overview at a glance” of what will be required. You will find the information you need for this in your course outlines.

The following video will help you to better understand how to read your course outline and

how to plan for the semester ahead. Please note, in this video, the term course presentation is used instead of course outline.



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A semester schedule gives you a visual picture of the assignments, projects, tests, exams, presentations, and practicum requirements that will happen during the semester. If you are taking a number of classes, this is a tool to be able to see what is coming up next. By having the “big picture” in view, you will be able to proactively manage busy periods in your semester. If you have flexible due dates, you will be able to schedule your assignments for the optimal time in the semester. For example, you may notice that you have a larger than typical number of major assignments due in week 6. This allows you to schedule work on some of these projects earlier in the semester.

## Develop a Weekly Schedule

Your next step is to create a weekly schedule. This will include your class times for face to face or blended classes, work commitments, family responsibilities, as well as any other regular events in your week. A weekly schedule is a good tool to evaluate whether your time use allows you to meet your overall goals. Do you have enough time for study? Is there time to maintain a healthy lifestyle? Analyze the example student schedule below. What do you notice about how this student has planned their week?

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00 am	Wake Up +	Wake Up +	Wake Up +	Wake Up +	Wake Up +	Wake Up +	Wake Up +
8:30 am	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9:00 am	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
9:30 am	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Travel to work	NRSG 3510 Study	Free Study	Free Study
10:00 am	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Break	Break
10:30 am	Break	Break	Break	Work	Break	Free Study	Free Study
11:00 am	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Free Study	Free Study
11:30 am	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Break	Break
12:00 pm	Break	Break	Break	Work	Break	Free Study	Free Study
12:30 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Free Study	Free Study
1:00 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Rest + Lunch	Rest + Lunch
1:30 pm	Break	Break	Break	Work	Break	Rest + Lunch	Rest + Lunch
2:00 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Free Study	Free Study
2:30 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Free Study	Free Study
3:00 pm	Break	Break	Break	Work	Break	Break	Break
3:30 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Free Study	Free Study
4:00 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Free Study	Free Study
4:30 pm	Break	Break	Break	Work	Break	Free time	Free time
5:00 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Free time	Free time
5:30 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Work	NRSG 3510 Study	Free time	Free time
6:00 pm	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Travel home	Break	Free time	Free time
6:30 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Rest + Dinner	NRSG 3510 Study	Free time	Free time
7:00 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Rest + Dinner	NRSG 3510 Study	Free time	Free time
7:30 pm	Break	Break	Break	Free time	Break	Free time	Free time
8:00 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Free time	NRSG 3510 Study	Free time	Free time
8:30 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Free time	NRSG 3510 Study	Free time	Free time
9:00 pm	Break	Break	Break	Free time	Break	Free time	Free time
9:30 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Free time	NRSG 3510 Study	Free time	Free time
10:00 pm	NRSG 3520 Study	NRSG 3500 Study	NRSG 3540 Study	Free time	NRSG 3510 Study	Free time	Free time
10:30 pm	Read / free time	Read / free time	Read / free time	Read / free time	Read / free time	Read / free time	Read / free time
11:00 pm	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep	Sleep
<b>KEY</b>	Self Care	Study	Free Time	Commute/travel	Work		

Image by Rawia Inaim

The following principles will guide you as you create your weekly schedule:

- Record your regular weekly commitments on a schedule template. This includes any face to face or blended class times.
- Designate regular study blocks for each of your classes.
- Remember that college courses typically require at least 5 – 7 hours of weekly study.
- Remember that it is more effective to study for multiple, shorter blocks of time during the week than to plan for one extended study block. Shorter study periods will allow for greater focus.
- Record meal times, family times, laundry times, etc.
- Record all regularly scheduled personal activities such as meetings, employment and athletics.
- Record any special activities you need to do or want to do on a regular basis.
- Schedule to start your study period with the courses you like least or that you're not doing well in.

- Try to study the same subjects at the same time each study day. Although this seems to be a mechanical way of scheduling, you will find that such a routine can help you develop a pattern for efficient and effective learning.
- Schedule a weekly review (WR) for each course. Do it at the end of the week if possible. This weekly review gives you an opportunity to go over the past week's notes along with the reading assignments to see what you have been learning in the past week during class and study time for each course. You can also look ahead to plan the next week and determine how much reading you need to do, what projects are due, and if any tests are scheduled.
- Keep open some time for daily physical activity. Remember, research indicates that regular exercise will not only give you a general sense of well-being, but can reduce tension and help you accomplish a tough class, study, and work schedule.
- Label some empty blocks of time as OPEN for academic or personal needs.
- Schedule some time during Friday, Saturday, and Sunday for you to play, relax, or do whatever you want to do. This is your reward for sticking to your schedule. In addition, you'll enjoy your free time more. Because it is scheduled you do not need to feel guilty.

## Manage Daily Tasks

Now that you can see the big picture of your semester and weekly priorities, the next step is to create a daily to-do list to prioritize your tasks. The video below introduces you to some principles for creating daily task lists. When you are finished, move to the next section to choose strategies for managing your tasks.



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## Schedule Study Blocks

Plan ahead by identifying blocks of time that you will use for study throughout the week and weekend.



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## Time Management Strategies

Following are some strategies you can begin using immediately to make the most of your time:

- **Use a calendar planner, weekly schedule and daily to-do list.** At the beginning of each semester, log important due dates for assignments and tests on a four month calendar. This will give you an overview of the semester and identify particularly busy weeks. Next prepare your ideal weekly schedule with class times and study periods for each day and on the weekends. Add work and other fixed activities after classes and study periods. Consult your calendar and weekly schedule to help determine the tasks you need to complete each day to create a to-do list and consider what study periods you have available that day. For each study period, plan out your activities based on due dates for assignments, preparation needed for next classes and general study to prepare for tests and exams.



Photo by STIL on Unsplash

- **Prepare to be successful.** When planning ahead for studying, think yourself into the right mood. Focus on the positive. “When I get these chapters read tonight, I’ll be ahead in studying for the next test, and I’ll also have plenty of time tomorrow to do X.” Visualize yourself studying well!
- **Use your best—and most appropriate—time of day.** Different tasks require different mental skills. Some kinds of studying you may be able to start first thing in the morning as you wake, while others need your most alert moments at another time.
- **Break up large projects into small pieces.** Whether it’s writing a paper for class, studying for a final exam, or reading a long assignment or full book, students often feel daunted at the beginning of a large project. It’s easier to get going if you break it up into stages that you schedule at separate times—and then begin with the first section that requires only an hour or two.
- **Do the most important studying first.** When two or more things require your attention, do the more crucial one first. If something happens and you can’t complete everything, you’ll suffer less if the most crucial work is done.
- **If you have trouble getting started, do an easier task first.** Like large tasks, complex or difficult ones can be daunting. If you can’t get going, switch to an easier task you can accomplish quickly. That will give you momentum, and often you feel more confident tackling the difficult task after being successful in the first one.
- **If you’re feeling overwhelmed and stressed** because you have too much to do, revisit your time planner. Sometimes it’s hard to get started if you keep thinking about other things you need to get done.
- **Review your schedule** for the next few days and make sure everything important is scheduled, then relax and concentrate on the task at hand.
- **If you’re really floundering, talk to someone.** Maybe you just don’t understand what you should be doing. Talk with your professor or another student in the class to get back on track.
- **Take a break.** We all need breaks to help us concentrate without becoming fatigued and burned out. As a general rule, a short break every hour or so is effective in helping recharge your study energy. Get up and move around to get your blood flowing, clear your thoughts, and work off stress.
- **Use unscheduled times to work ahead.** You’ve scheduled that hundred pages of reading for later today, but you have the textbook with you as you’re waiting for the bus. Start reading now, or flip through the chapter to get a sense of what you’ll be reading later. Either way, you’ll save time later. You may be amazed how much studying you can get done during down times throughout the day. Keep your momentum. Prevent distractions, such as multitasking, that will only slow you down. Check for

messages, for example, only at scheduled break times.

- **Reward yourself.** It's not easy to sit still for hours of studying. When you successfully complete the task, you should feel good and deserve a small reward. A healthy snack, a quick video game session, or social activity can help you feel even better about your successful use of time.
- **Just say no.** Always tell others nearby when you're studying, to reduce the chances of being interrupted. Still, interruptions happen, and if you are in a situation where you are frequently interrupted by a family member, spouse, roommate, or friend, it helps to have your "no" prepared in advance: "No, I really have to be ready for this test" or "That's a great idea, but let's do it tomorrow—I just can't today." You shouldn't feel bad about saying no—especially if you told that person in advance that you needed to study.
- **Have a life.** Never schedule your day or week so full of work and study that you have no time at all for yourself, your family and friends, and your larger life.



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## The Distractions of Technology

Multitasking is the term commonly used for being engaged in two or more different activities at the same time, usually referring to activities using devices such as cell phones, smartphones, computers, and so on. Many people claim to be able to do as many as four or five things simultaneously, such as writing an e-mail while responding to an instant message (IM) and reading a tweet, all while watching a video on their computer monitor or talking on the phone. Many people who have grown up with computers consider this kind of multitasking a normal way to get things done, including studying. In reality, the mind can focus only on one thing at any given moment.



*Photo by Josh Felise on Unsplash*

Even things that don't require much thinking are severely impacted by multitasking, such as driving while talking on a cell phone or texting. An astonishing number of people end up in the emergency room from just trying to walk down the sidewalk while texting, so common is it now to walk into a pole or parked car while multitasking!

The other problem with multitasking is the effect it can have on the attention span—and even on how the brain works. Scientists have shown that in people who constantly shift their attention from one thing to another in short bursts, the brain forms patterns that make it more difficult to keep sustained attention on any one thing. So when you really do need to concentrate for a while on one thing, such as when studying for a big test, it becomes more difficult to do even if you're not multitasking at that time.

Here are some suggestions if distractions are an issue:

- Stay away from multitasking whenever you have something important to do, like studying.
- If it's already a habit for you, don't let it become worse.
- Manipulate your study space to prevent the temptations altogether. Turn your computer off or shut down e-mail and messaging programs if you need the computer for studying.
- Turn your cell phone off. If you just tell yourself not to answer it but still glance at it each time to see who sent or left a message, you're still losing your studying momentum and have to start over again.

For those who are really addicted to technology (you know who you are!), go to the library and don't take your laptop or cell phone. Elsewhere in this chapter on scheduling your study periods, we recommend scheduling breaks as well, usually for a few minutes every hour. If you're really hooked on checking for messages, plan to do that at scheduled times.



What about listening to music while studying? Some don't consider that multitasking, and many students say they can listen to music without it affecting their studying. Studies are inconclusive about the positive or negative effects of music on people's ability to concentrate, probably because so many different factors are involved. Some people can study better with low-volume instrumental music that relaxes them and does not intrude on their thinking, while others can concentrate only in silence. The key thing is to be honest with yourself: if you're actively listening to music while you're studying, then you're likely not studying as well as you could be. It will take you longer and lead to less successful results.

#### Key Takeaways

- Getting it together includes organizing your space and your time, creating and following a study schedule, and planning for interruptions and distractions.
- Select one or more spaces that you will use for regular study; consider location, availability, furniture, lighting, atmosphere and possible distractions.
- Time management takes planning; create a semester schedule of your important due dates, create a weekly schedule that identifies your class times and study periods as priorities, and finally, use a to-do list to plan out what you will do in each study period.
- When you study in a shared space, you may need to make arrangements with roommates or family to ensure your study time is distraction free.
- Multitasking, particularly with technology, can reduce the effectiveness of your study efforts.



Want more? The Learning Portal has videos, templates, and more to help you with your Time Management.

# 7. Successful students get involved



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New college students may not immediately realize that they've entered a whole new world at college, including a world of other people possibly very different from those they have known before. This is a very important dimension of college—almost as important as the learning that goes on inside the classroom. How you deal with the social aspects and diversity of college world has a large impact on your academic success. Enter this new world with an open mind and you'll gain many benefits.

You have many opportunities to get involved in campus life through social activities, clubs, sports and more. There are student led organizations that you should become familiar with on campuses. Most, if not all colleges, will have a student government, student athletics association and student clubs.



*Photo by Boxed Water Is Better on Unsplash*

# Campus Groups

The college social experience also includes organized campus groups and activities. Participating in organized activities requires taking some initiative—you can't be passive and expect these opportunities to come knocking on your door—but is well worthwhile for fully enriching college interactions.

The active pursuit of a stimulating life on campus offers many benefits:

- Organized groups and activities speed your transition into your new life. New students can be overwhelmed by their studies and every aspect of a new life, and they may be slow to build a new life. Rather than waiting for it to come along on its own, you can immediately begin broadening your social contacts and experiences by joining groups that share your interests.
- Organized groups and activities help you experience a much greater variety of social life than you might otherwise. New students often tend to interact more with other students their own age and with similar backgrounds—this is just natural. But if you simply go with the flow and don't actively reach out, you are much less likely to meet and interact with others from the broader campus diversity: students who are older and may have a perspective you may otherwise miss, upper-level students who have much to share from their years on campus, and students of diverse heritage or culture with whom you might otherwise be slow to interact.
- Organized groups and activities help you gain new skills, whether technical, physical, intellectual, or social. Such skills may find their way into your résumé when you next seek a job or your application for a scholarship or other future educational opportunity. Employers and others like to see well-rounded students with a range of proficiencies and experiences.
- Organized groups and activities are fun and a great way to stay healthy and relieve stress. Exercise and physical activity are essential for health and well-being, and many organized activities offer a good way to keep moving.



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## Participating in Groups and Activities



*Photo by Toa Heftiba from Unsplash*

College campuses offer a wide range of clubs, organizations, and other activities open to all students. College administrators view this as a significant benefit and work to promote student involvement in such groups. It's a good time now to check out the possibilities:

- Browse the college and student government Web sites, where you're likely to find links to pages for student clubs and organizations.
- Watch for club fairs, open houses, and similar activities on campus. Talk with the representatives from any group in which you may be interested.
- Look for notices on bulletin boards around campus. Student groups really do want new students to join, so they usually try to post information where you can find it.
- Consider other forms of involvement and roles beyond clubs. Gain leadership experience by running for office in student government or applying for a residence hall

support position.

- If your campus doesn't have a group focused on a particular activity you enjoy yourself, think about starting a new club.
- Is there a movement or organization you care about? Consider volunteering.
- Check out students jobs on campus. This is another way to get involved and get paid at the same time.

Whatever your interests, don't be shy about checking out a club or organization. Take chances and explore. Attending a meeting or gathering is not a commitment—you're just going the first time to see what it's like, and you have no obligation to join. Keep an open mind as you meet and observe other students in the group, especially if you don't feel at first like you fit in: remember that part of the benefit of the experience is to meet others who are not necessarily just like everyone you already know.



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## Making new friends

Have you ever wondered why we make friends? Is there a real need for friends in our lives, or can we thrive just fine in solitude? While occasional alone time is essential, most of us find that being alone for an extended period can lead to feelings of loneliness. As social creatures, humans derive a significant portion of their happiness from the relationships they build. Scientific studies have revealed that having good friends not only enriches our lives but also has profound effects on our well-being. In this article, we will explore the importance of friendship, the benefits it brings, and some practical tips for making new friends.



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## **The Power of Good Friends:**

Friendships go beyond casual interactions; they play a crucial role in our overall health and longevity. Researchers have found a strong correlation between having good friends and living longer, healthier lives. People with close social connections tend to experience lower stress levels, reduced blood pressure, and a decreased risk of depression. Sharing our experiences, thoughts, and feelings with friends can provide emotional support and a sense of belonging, which, in turn, contributes to our well-being.

## **Be Social – Step Out of Your Comfort Zone:**

To make new friends, it's essential to be social and step out of our comfort zones. Staying isolated and confined to our familiar spaces won't lead to meaningful connections. Being social doesn't necessarily mean attending loud parties; it can involve joining clubs or organizations that cater to our interests. Engaging in activities we enjoy allows us to meet like-minded individuals who share our passions, providing a natural foundation for friendships to blossom.

## Communication Skills



*Photo by Priscilla Du Preez from Unsplash*

Communication is at the core of almost all social interactions, including those involved in friendships and relationships with your professors. Communication with others has a huge effect on our lives, what we think and feel, and what and how we learn. Communication is, many would say, what makes us human.

Oral communication involves not only speech and listening, of course, but also nonverbal communication: facial expressions, tone of voice, and many other body language signals that affect the messages sent and received. Many experts think that people pay more attention, often unconsciously, to how people say something than to what they are saying. When the nonverbal message is inconsistent with the verbal (spoken) message, just as when the verbal message itself is unclear because of poorly chosen words or vague explanations, then miscommunication may occur.

Miscommunication is at the root of many misunderstandings among people and makes

it difficult to build relationships. Remember that communication is a two-way process. Listening skills are critical for most college students simply because many of us may not have learned how to really listen to another person.

## Here are some guidelines for how to listen effectively:

- **Talk less to listen more.** Most people naturally like to share their thoughts and feelings, and some people almost seem unable to stop talking long enough to ever listen to another person. Try this: next time you're in a conversation with another student, deliberately try not to speak very much but give the other person a chance to speak fully. You may notice a big difference in how much you gain from the conversation.



Photo by Mimi Thian on Unsplash

- **Ask questions.** To keep the conversational ball rolling, show your interest in the other person by asking them about things they are saying. This helps the other person feel that you are interested in them and helps build the relationship.

- **Watch and respond to the other person's body language.** You'll learn much more about their feelings for what they're saying than if you listen only to their words.

- **Show the other person that you're really listening and that you care.** Make eye contact and respond appropriately with nods and brief comments like "That's interesting!" or "I know what you mean" or "Really?" Be friendly, smile when appropriate, and encourage the person to keep speaking.

- **Give the other person feedback.** Show you understand by saying things like "So you're saying that..." or asking a question that demonstrates you've been following what they're saying and want to know more. As you learn to improve your listening skills, think also about what you are saying yourself and how.



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## Here are additional guidelines for effective speaking:

- **Be honest, but don't be critical.** Strongly disagreeing may only put the other person on the defensive—an emotion sure to disrupt the hope for good communication. You can disagree, but be respectful to keep the conversation from becoming emotional. Say “I don't know, I think that maybe it's...” instead of “That's crazy! What's really going on is...”

- **Look for common ground.** Make sure that your side of a conversation relates to what the other person is saying and that it focuses on what you have in common. There's almost no better way to stop a conversation dead in its tracks than to ignore everything the other person has just said and launch into an unrelated story or idea of your own.

- **Avoid sarcasm and irony unless you know the person well.** Sarcasm is easily misunderstood and may be interpreted as an attack on the other person's ideas or statements.

- **Don't try to talk like the other person,** especially if the person is from a different ethnic or cultural background or speaks with an accent or heavy slang. The other person will feel that you are imitating them and maybe even making fun of them. Be yourself and speak naturally.

- **While not imitating the other person, relate to their personality and style of thinking.** We do not speak to our parents or professors the exact same way we speak to our closest friends, nor should we speak to someone we've just met the same way. Show your respect for the other person by keeping the conversation on an appropriate level.

- **Remember that assertive communication is better than passive or aggressive communication.** Assertive in this context means you are honest and direct in stating your ideas and thoughts; you are confident and clear and willing to discuss your ideas while still respecting the thoughts and ideas of others. A passive communicator is reluctant to speak up, seems to agree with everything others say, hesitates to say anything that others might disagree with, and therefore seldom communicates much at all. Passive communication simply is not a real exchange in communication. Aggressive communication, at the other extreme, is often highly critical of the thoughts and ideas of others. This communication style may be sarcastic, emotional, and even insulting. Real communication is not occurring because others are not prompted to respond honestly and openly.

- **Choose your conversations wisely.** Recognize that you don't have to engage in all conversations. Make it your goal to form relationships and engage in interactions that help you learn and grow as a person. College life offers plenty of opportunities for making relationships and interacting with others if you keep open to them, so you needn't try to participate in every social situation around you.



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## Balancing Schoolwork and Social Life

If there's one thing true of virtually all college students, it's that you don't have enough time to do everything you want. Once you've developed friendships within the college community and have an active social life, you may feel you don't have enough time for your studies and other activities such as work. For many students, the numerous social opportunities of college become a distraction, and with less attention to one's studies, academic performance can drop. Here are some tips for balancing your social life with your studies:



Photo by Ryan Tauss on Unsplash

**Keep working on your time management skills.** You can't just "go with the flow" and hope that, after spending time with friends, you have enough time (and energy) left over for studying. Make a study schedule that provides enough time for what you need to do. Study first; socialize after.

**Keep working on your study skills.** When you have only a limited amount of time for studying, be sure you're using that time as effectively as possible as you read assignments and prepare for class, organize your notes after class, and prepare for tests.

**If you can't resist temptations, reduce them.** If you are easily distracted by the

opportunity to talk with your roommate, spouse, or family members because you study where you live, then go to the library to study.

**Make studying a social experience.** If studying keeps you so busy that you feel like you don't have much of a social life, form a study group. You will learn more than you would alone by gaining from the thoughts of others, and you can enjoy interacting with others without falling behind.

**Keep your social life from affecting your studying.** Simply scheduling study time doesn't mean you'll use it well. If you stayed up late the night before, you may not today be able to concentrate well as you study for that big test. This is another reason for good time management and scheduling your time well, looking ahead.

**Get help if you need it.** If you're still having difficulty balancing your study time with other activities, talk with your program coordinator or a counsellor. Maybe something else is keeping you from doing your best. Maybe you need some additional study skills or you need to get some extra help from a tutor or campus study center. Remember, we want you to succeed and will try to help those who seek help.



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## When and How to Say No

For all the benefits of an active social and campus life, too much of any good thing can also cause trouble. If you join too many groups, or if you have limited time because of work and family commitments, you may spend less time with your studies—with negative results.



Photo by Isaiah Rustad on Unsplash

Here are some guidelines for finding a good balance between social life and everything else you need to do:

- **Don't join too many organizations or clubs.** Most advisors suggest that two or three regular activities are the maximum that most students can handle.
- **Work on your time management skills.** Plan ahead for study time when you don't have schedule conflicts. If you have a rich social life, study in the library or places where you won't be tempted by additional social interaction with a roommate, family member, or others passing by.
- **Don't be afraid to say no.** You may be active in a club and have plenty of time for routine activities, but someone may ask you to spend extra time organizing an upcoming event just when you have a major paper deadline coming up. Sometimes you have to remember the main reason you're in college and just say you can't do it because you have to get your work done.
- **If you really can't resolve your time conflicts, seek help.** Talk with your program coordinator or a college counsellor. They'll help you get back on track.

Key Takeaways

- You will have many opportunities to get involved in Campus life; it is up to you to inquire and participate in these social activities, clubs and sports.
- Attending a meeting or gathering isn't a commitment. Feel free to explore. It will help transition you into your new college life, gain new skills, stay healthy and relieve stress.
- Once you've settled in at college, you may not have enough time for activities or work. Keep using your time management and study skills to help balance schoolwork and social life.



Want More? The Learning Portal has activities and resources available to develop your social wellness.

## 8. Successful students take control of their health



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This section examines a wide range of topics, from nutrition, exercise, and sleep to substance abuse and risks related to sexual activity. All of these involve personal attitudes and behaviors. Paying attention to your eating, sleeping and exercise habits becomes more vital when attending college because learning is challenging. However, time pressures, schedule changes and new responsibilities can throw students off their previous routines.

### Where Are You Now?



*Photo by Jason Wong on Unsplash*

Consider your present knowledge and attitudes with the following statements. Consider how true these statements are for you:

Yes    Unsure    No

1. I usually eat well and maintain my weight at an appropriate level.
2. I get enough regular exercise to consider myself healthy.
3. I get enough restful sleep and feel alert throughout the day.
4. My attitudes and habits involving smoking, alcohol, and drugs are beneficial to my health.
5. I am coping in a healthy way with the everyday stresses of being a student.
6. I am generally a happy person.
7. I am comfortable with my sexual values and my knowledge of safe sex practices.
8. I understand how all of these different health factors interrelate and affect my academic success as a student.



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=95#h5p-17>

## Health and Wellness

Health and wellness are important for everyone—students included. Not only will you do better in school when your health is good, but you'll be happier as a person. And the habits you develop now will likely persist for years to come. That means that what you're doing now in terms of personal health will have a huge influence on your health throughout life and can help you avoid many serious diseases. Considerable research has demonstrated that the basic elements of good health—nutrition, exercise, not abusing substances, stress reduction—are important for preventing disease. You'll live much longer and happier than someone without good habits.

Here are a few of the health problems whose risks can be lowered by healthful habits:

- Cardiovascular issues such as heart attacks and strokes (the numbers one and three causes of death)
- Some cancers
- Diabetes (currently reaching epidemic proportions)

- Lung diseases related to smoking
- Injuries related to substance abuse

Wellness is more than just avoiding disease. Wellness involves feeling good in every respect, in mind and spirit as well as in body.

Good health habits also offer these benefits for your college career:

- More energy
- Better ability to focus on your studies
- Less stress, feeling more resilient and able to handle day-to-day stress
- Less time lost to colds, flu, infections, and other illnesses
- More restful sleep



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## Eating Well: It's Not So Difficult



*Image by Jasmine Lin from Pixabay*

The key to a good diet is to eat a varied diet with lots of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains and to minimize fats, sugar, and salt. The exact amounts depend on your calorie



requirements and activity levels, but you don't have to count calories or measure and weigh your food to eat well.

The following is from the Health Canada's (2022) Food Guide:

**Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat. It is also about where, when, why and how you eat.**

Be mindful of your eating habits

- Take time to eat
- Notice when you are hungry and when you are full

Cook more often

- Plan what you eat
- Involve others in planning and preparing meals

Enjoy your food

- Culture and food traditions can be a part of healthy eating
- Eat meals with others

**Make it a habit to eat a variety of healthy foods each day.**

Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods. Choose protein foods that come from plants more often.

- Choose foods with healthy fats instead of saturated fat

Limit highly processed foods. If you choose these foods, eat them less often and in small amounts.

- Prepare meals and snacks using ingredients that have little to no added sodium, sugars or saturated fat
- Choose healthier menu options when eating out

Make water your drink of choice

- Replace sugary drinks with water

Use food labels

- Be aware that food marketing can influence your choices

## If You Need to Lose Weight



*Image by Total Shape from Unsplash*

If you need to lose weight, don't try to starve yourself. Gradual steady weight loss is healthier and easier. Try these guidelines:

- Check your body mass index (BMI) to see the normal weight range for your height.
- Set your goals and make a plan you can live with. Start by avoiding snacks and fast foods.
- Try to choose foods that meet the guidelines listed above.
- Stay active and try to exercise frequently.
- Keep a daily food journal and write down what you eat. Simply writing it down helps people.
- Be more aware of your habits, and more motivated to eat better.
- Visit Health Services on campus and ask for more information about weight loss programs.

Remember, no single plan works for everyone.

## Tips for Success: Nutrition



Photo by Anna Pelzer from Unsplash

- Eat a variety of foods every day.
- Take a multivitamin every day.
- Take an apple or banana with you for a snack in case you get hungry between meals.
- Avoid fried foods.
- Avoid high-sugar foods. After the rush comes a crash that can make you drowsy, and you'll have trouble paying attention in class. Watch out for sugary cereals—try other types with less sugar and more fiber.
- If you have a soft drink habit, experiment with flavored seltzer and other zero- or low-calorie drinks.
- Eat when you're hungry, not when you're bored or just because others are eating.
- If you find yourself in a fast food restaurant, try a salad.
- Watch portion sizes and never “supersize it”!

# Exercise

## Does Exercise Really Matter?

Exercise is good for both body and mind. Indeed, physical activity is almost essential for good health and student success.

The physical benefits of regular exercise include the following:

- Improved fitness for the whole body, not just the muscles
- Greater cardiovascular fitness and reduced disease risk
- Increased physical endurance
- Stronger immune system, providing more resistance to disease
- Lower cholesterol levels, reducing the risks of cardiovascular disease
- Lowered risk of developing diabetes
- Weight maintenance or loss



Photo by Trust “Tru” Katsande on Unsplash

Perhaps more important to students are the mental and psychological benefits:

- Stress reduction
- Improved mood, with less anxiety and depression
- Improved ability to focus mentally
- Better sleep
- Feeling better about oneself

For all of these reasons, it’s important for college students to regularly exercise or engage in physical activity. Like good nutrition and getting enough sleep, exercise is a key habit that contributes to overall wellness that promotes college success.

## How Much Exercise and What Kind?

With aerobic exercise, your heart and lungs are working hard enough to improve your cardiovascular fitness. This generally means moving fast enough to increase your heart rate and breathing. For health and stress-reducing benefits, try to exercise at least three days a week for at least twenty to thirty minutes at a time. If you really enjoy exercise and are motivated, you may exercise as often as six days a week, but take at least one day of rest. When you're first starting out, or if you've been inactive for a while, take it gradually, and let your body adjust between sessions. But the old expression "No pain, no gain" is not true, regardless of what some past gym teacher may have said! If you feel pain in any activity, stop or cut back.

The way to build up strength and endurance is through a plan that is consistent and gradual. For exercise to have aerobic benefits, try to keep your heart rate in the target heart rate zone for at least twenty to thirty minutes. The target heart rate is 60 percent to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate, which can be calculated as 220 minus your age. For example, if you are 24 years old, your maximum heart rate is calculated as 196, and your target heart rate is 118 to 166 beats per minute. If you are just starting an exercise program, stay at the lower end of this range and gradually work up over a few weeks.

### Enjoy It!



Photo by Matthew LeJune on Unsplash

Most important, find a type of exercise or activity that you enjoy—or else you won't stick with it. This can be as simple and easy as a brisk walk or slow jog through a park or across campus. Swimming is excellent exercise, but so is dancing. Think about what you like to do and explore activities that provide exercise while you're having fun.

Do whatever you need to make your chosen activity enjoyable. Many people listen to music and some even read when using workout equipment. Try different activities to prevent boredom. You also gain by taking the stairs instead of elevators, walking farther across campus instead of parking as close to your destination as you can get, and so on. Exercise with a friend is more enjoyable, including jogging or biking together.

You may stay more motivated using exercise equipment. An inexpensive pedometer can track your progress walking or jogging, or a bike computer can monitor your speed and time. A heart rate monitor makes it easy to stay in your target zone; many models also calculate calories burned. Some devices

can input your exercise into your computer to track your progress and make a chart of your improvements.

The biggest obstacle to getting enough exercise, many students say, is a lack of time. Actually, we all have the time, if we manage it well. Build exercise into your weekly schedule on selected days. Eventually you'll find that regular exercise actually saves you time because you're sleeping better and concentrating better. Time you used to fritter away is now used for activity that provides many benefits.

## Campus Activities Can Help

Colleges have resources to make exercise easier and more enjoyable for our students. Take a look around and think about what you might enjoy. Campus fitness centers may offer exercise equipment. There may be regularly scheduled aerobic or spin classes. You don't have to be an athlete to enjoy casual sports such as playing tennis or shooting hoops with a friend. If you like more organized team sports, try intramural sports.

## Exercising from Home

While there are many online exercise videos available that you can do from home, we wanted to share a few of our favorites.

## ParticipACTION

Since 1971, ParticipACTION has been a Canadian institution promoting fitness and exercise to Canadian to get us all moving. Their website has tips, resources and ideas on how to get up and get going!

Take a quick break right now and get fit while you sit!



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## Healthier. Happier.

From the Queensland government: Healthier. Happier. These exercises are sorted in different groups including beginner, gentle, moderate and intense. Each exercise includes clear step-by-step instructions and video demonstration.

- Let's Get Started Beginner's workout is a great place to... get started!
- The No Sweat Lunch Break is a straightforward exercise routine that can easily be done at home with no special equipment. The web page explains each exercise that then can be combined into the routine in the video.

## Do Yoga With Me

Do Yoga With Me is a popular Youtube channel with a variety of yoga video for people at all levels of yoga experience. One special feature is the video for children. (By the way, the kid's yoga videos are pretty fun to do as an adult too.)



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# Sleep

Like good nutrition and exercise, adequate sleep is crucial for wellness and success. Sleep is particularly important for students because there seem to be so many time pressures—to attend class, study, maintain a social life, and perhaps work—that most college students have difficulty getting enough. Yet sleep is critical for concentrating well.

## The Importance of a Good Night's Sleep

You may not realize the benefits of sleep, or the problems associated with being sleep deprived, because most likely you've had the same sleep habits for a long time. Or maybe you know you're getting less sleep now, but with all the changes in your life, how can you tell if some of your stress or problems studying are related to not enough sleep?

It is recommended by The National Sleep Foundation that young adults get between 7 and 9 hours of sleep per night. Lack of sleep can contribute to difficulty in learning as it may cause impaired cognitive functioning, impaired alertness and lead to longer term health difficulties. We may take sleep for granted and never really think about what helps us get a good night's rest. Sleep hygiene is one way to help a student towards getting restorative, quality sleep.

On the positive side, a healthy amount of sleep has the following benefits:

- Improves your mood during the day
- Improves your memory and learning abilities
- Gives you more energy
- Strengthens your immune system
- Promotes wellness of body, mind, and spirit



*Photo by Kate Stone Matheson on Unsplash*



In contrast, not getting enough sleep over time can lead to a wide range of health issues and student problems.

Sleep deprivation can have the following consequences:

- Affects mental health and contributes to stress and feelings of anxiety, depression, and general unhappiness
- Causes sleepiness, difficulty paying attention in class, and ineffective studying
- Weakens the immune system, making it more likely to catch colds and other infections
- Increases the risk of accidents (such as while driving)
- Contributes to weight gain

## How much Sleep is enough?



*Image by Mpho Mojapelo from Unsplash*

College students are the most sleep-deprived population group in the country. With so much to do, who has time for sleep?

Most people need seven to nine hours of sleep a night, and the average is around eight. Some say they need much less than that, but often their behavior during the day shows they are actually sleep deprived. Some genuinely need only about six hours a night. New research indicates there may be a “sleep gene” that determines how much sleep a person needs. So how much sleep do you actually need?

There is no simple answer, in part because the quality of sleep is just as important as the number of hours a person sleeps. Sleeping fitfully for nine hours and waking during the night is usually worse than seven or eight hours of good sleep, so you can’t simply count the hours. Do you usually feel rested and alert all day long? Do you rise from bed easily in the morning without struggling with the alarm clock? Do you have no trouble paying attention to your professors and never feel sleepy in a lecture class? Are you not continually driven to drink more coffee or caffeine-heavy “power drinks” to stay attentive? Are you able to get through work without feeling exhausted? If you answered yes to all of these, you likely are in that 10 percent to 15 percent of college students who consistently get enough sleep.

## How to Get More and Better Sleep



*Photo by David Clode from Unsplash*

You have to allow yourself enough time for a good night's sleep. Using time management strategies and schedule at least eight hours for sleeping every night. If you still don't feel alert and energetic during the day, try increasing this to nine hours. Keep a sleep journal, and within a couple weeks you'll know how much sleep you need and will be on the road to making new habits to ensure you get it.

### *Myths about Sleep*

- Having a drink or two helps me get to sleep better. False: Although you may seem to fall asleep more quickly, alcohol makes sleep less restful, and you're more likely to awake in the night.

- Exercise before bedtime is good for sleeping. False: Exercise wakes up your body, and it may be some time before you unwind and relax. Exercise earlier in the day, however, is beneficial for sleep.
- It helps to fall asleep after watching television or surfing the Web in bed. False: Rather than helping you unwind, these activities can engage your mind and make it more difficult to get to sleep.

## Facts about Sleep

- Avoid nicotine, which can keep you awake—yet another reason to stop smoking.
- Avoid caffeine for six to eight hours before bed. Caffeine remains in the body for three to five hours on the average, much longer for some people. Remember that many soft drinks contain caffeine.
- Don't eat in the two to three hours before bed. Avoid alcohol before bedtime.
- Don't nap during the day. Napping is the least productive form of rest and often makes you less alert. It may also prevent you from getting a good night's sleep.
- Exercise earlier in the day (at least several hours before bedtime).
- Try to get to bed and wake about the same time every day—your body likes a routine.
- Make sure the environment is conducive to sleep: dark, quiet, comfortable, and cool.
- Use your bed only for sleeping, not for studying, watching television, or other activities. Going to bed will become associated with going to sleep.
- Establish a presleep winding-down routine, such as taking a hot bath, listening to soothing music, or reading (not a textbook). If you can't fall asleep after ten to fifteen minutes in bed, it's better to get up and do something else rather than lie there fitfully for hours. Do something you find restful (or boring). Read, or listen to a recorded book. Go back to bed when you're sleepy.

If you frequently cannot get to sleep or are often awake for a long time during the night, you may be suffering from insomnia, a medical condition. Resist the temptation to try over-the-counter sleep aids. If you have tried the tips listed here and still cannot sleep, talk with your health-care provider or visit the student health clinic. Many remedies are available for those with a true sleep problem.



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## Substance Use and Abuse

Substances, any kind of drug, have effects on the body and mind. People use these substances for their effects. But many substances have negative effects, including being physically or psychologically addictive. What is important with any substance is to be aware of its effects on your health and on your life as a student, and to make smart choices. Use of any substance to the extent that it has negative effects is generally considered abuse.

### Smoking and Tobacco: Why Start, and Why Is It So Hard to Stop?

Smoking is harmful to one's health. It causes cancer and lung and heart disease. Most adult smokers continue smoking not because they really think it won't harm them but because it's very difficult to stop.



Photo by Thanasis on Unsplash

### Tips for Stopping Smoking

Stopping isn't easy. Many ex-smokers say it was the hardest thing they ever did. You know it's worth the effort. And it's easier if you think it through and make a good plan. There's lots of help available. Before you quit, the US National Cancer Institute suggests you START with these five important steps:



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## *If You Feel You Need Help*

For more information and support to stop smoking, visit the Campus Health Centre.

## **What's the Big Deal about Alcohol?**

Of all the issues that can affect a student's health and success in college, drinking causes more problems than anything else. When you drink too much, your judgment is impaired and you may behave in risky ways. Your health may be affected. Your studies likely are affected. Most college students report drinking at least some alcohol at some time, and even those who do not drink are often affected by others who do. College students experience injury and even death due to alcohol-related unintentional accidents; may be involved in alcohol-related physical assault, sexual assault or date rape, and may develop health issues including alcohol abuse and dependency problems. College students report academic consequences of their drinking, including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall.

So why is drinking so popular if it causes so many problems? You probably already know the answer to that: most college students say they have more fun when drinking. They're not going to stop drinking just because someone lectures them about it.

Like everything else that affects your health and happiness, eating, exercise, use of other substances, drinking is a matter of personal choice. Like most decisions we all face, there are trade-offs. The most that anyone can reasonably ask of you is to be smart in your decisions. That means understanding the effects of alcohol and deciding to take control.



*Photo by Thomas Picauly on Unsplash*

## **How Much Alcohol Is Too Much?**

There's no magic number for how many drinks a person can have and how often. If you're of

legal drinking age, you may not experience any problems if you have one or two drinks from time to time. Moderate drinking is not more than two drinks per day for men or one per day for women. More than that is heavy drinking.

Did you know that one night of heavy drinking can affect how well you think for two or three weeks afterward? This can really affect how well you perform as a student.

### *If You Feel You Need Help*

Visit the campus Health Centre or talk with your college counsellor. They understand how you feel and have a lot of experience with students feeling the same way. They can help.

## **Prescription and Illegal Drugs**

People use drugs for the same reasons people use alcohol. They say they enjoy getting high. They may say a drug helps them relax or unwind, have fun, enjoy the company of others, or escape the pressures of being a student.

While alcohol is a legal drug for those above the drinking age, most other drugs, including the use of many prescription drugs not prescribed for the person taking them, are illegal. They usually involve more serious legal consequences if the user is caught. Some people may feel there's safety in numbers: if a lot of people are using a drug, or drinking, then how can it be too bad? But other drugs carry the same risks as alcohol for health problems, a risk of death or injury, and a serious impact on your ability to do well as a student.

Good decisions also involve being honest with oneself. Why do I use (or am thinking about using) this drug? Am I trying to escape some aspect of my life (stress, a bad job, a boring class)? Could the effects of using this drug be worse than what I'm trying to escape?

### *If You Feel You Need Help*

If you have questions or concerns related to drug use, your doctor or the campus Health Centre can help.



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## Sexual Health



*Photo by freestocks.org on Unsplash*

Sexuality is normal, natural human drive. As an adult, your sexuality is your own business. Like other dimensions of health, however, your sexual health depends on understanding many factors involving sexuality and your own values. Your choices and behavior may have consequences. Learning about sexuality and thinking through your values will help you make responsible decisions.



## Sexual Values and Decisions



*Image by jofreepik from Freepik*

It's often difficult to talk about sexuality and sex. Not only is it a very private matter for most people, but the words themselves are often used loosely, resulting in misunderstandings. Surveys have shown, for example, that about three-fourths of college students say they are “sexually active”—but survey questions rarely specify exactly what that phrase means. To some, sexual activity includes passionate kissing and fondling, while to others the phrase means sexual intercourse. Manual and oral sexual stimulation may or may not be included in an individual's own definition of being sexually active.

We should therefore begin by defining these terms. First, sexuality is not the same as sex. Human sexuality is a general term for how people experience and express themselves as sexual beings. Since all people are sexual beings, everyone has a dimension of human sexuality regardless of their behavior. Someone who practices complete abstinence from sexual behavior still has the human dimension of sexuality.

Sexuality involves gender identity, or how we see ourselves in terms of maleness and femaleness, as prominently one or the other, or a combination of both or as neither, as well as sexual orientation, which refers to the gender qualities of those to whom we are attracted. The phrase sexual activity is usually used to refer to behaviors between two (or

more) people involving the genitals—but the term may also refer to solo practices such as masturbation or to partner activities that are sexually stimulating but may not involve the genitals. For the purposes of this chapter, with its focus on personal health, the term sexual activity refers to any behavior that carries a risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease. This includes vaginal, oral, and anal intercourse. The term sexual intercourse will be used to refer to vaginal intercourse, which also carries the risk of unwanted pregnancy. We'll avoid the most confusing term, sex, which in strict biological terms refers to reproduction but is used loosely to refer to many different behaviors.

There is a stereotype that sexual activity is very prominent among college students. One survey found that most college students think that other students have had an average of three sexual partners in the past year, yet 80 percent of those answering said that they themselves had zero or one sexual partner. In other words, college students as a whole are not engaging in sexual activity nearly as much as they think they are. Another study revealed that about 20 percent of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-old college students had never been sexually active and about half had not been during the preceding month. In sum, some college students are sexually active and some are not. Misperceptions of what others are doing may lead to unrealistic expectations or feelings. What's important, however, is to be aware of your own values and to make responsible decisions that protect your sexual health.

Information and preparation are the focus of this section of the chapter. People who engage in sexual activity in the heat of the moment—often under the influence of alcohol—without having protection and information for making good decisions are at risk for disease, unwanted pregnancy, or abuse. Almost all college students know the importance of protection against sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy. So why then do these problems occur so often? Part of the answer is that we don't always do the right thing even when we know it—especially in the heat of the moment, particularly when drinking or using drugs.

## What's "Safe Sex"?

It has been said that no sexual activity is safe because there is always some risk, even if very small, of protections failing. The phrase "safer sex" better describes actions one can take to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy.



*Photo by Zackary Drucker as part of Broadly's Gender Spectrum Collection.*

## Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

About two dozen different diseases can be transmitted through sexual activity. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) range from infections that can be easily treated with medications to diseases that may have permanent health effects to HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), the cause of AIDS. Despite decades of public education campaigns and easy access to protection, STIs still affect many millions of people every year. Often a person feels no symptoms at first and does not realize he or she has the infection and thus passes it on unknowingly. Or a person may not use protection because of simple denial: "It can't happen to me." Although there are some differences, in most cases sexual transmission involves an exchange of body fluids between two people: semen, vaginal fluids, or blood (or other body fluids containing blood). Because of this similarity, the same precautions to prevent the transmission of HIV will prevent the transmission of other STIs as well.

Although many of these diseases may not cause dramatic symptoms, always see a health-care provider if you have the slightest suspicion of having acquired an STI. Not only should you receive treatment as soon as possible to prevent the risk of serious health problems, but you are also obligated to help not pass it on to others.

The following are guidelines to protect yourself against STIs if you are sexually active:

- Know that only abstinence is 100 percent safe. Protective devices can fail even when used correctly, although the risk is small. Understand the risks of not always using protection.
- Talk with your partner in advance about your sexual histories and health. Agree that regardless of how sure you both are about not having an STI, you will use protection because you cannot be certain even if you have no symptoms.

- Avoid sexual activity with casual acquaintances whose sexual history you do not know and with whom you have not talked about health issues. Sexual activity is safest with a single partner in a long-term relationship.
- Use a latex condom for all sexual activity. A male condom is about 98 percent effective when used correctly, and a female condom about 95 percent effective when used correctly. With both, incorrect use increases the risk. If you are unsure how to use a condom correctly and safely, do some private online reading.
- If you are sexually active with multiple partners, see your health-care provider twice a year for an STI screening even if you are not experiencing symptoms.

## Preventing Unwanted Pregnancy



*Photo by Crew on Unsplash*

Heterosexual couples who engage in vaginal intercourse are also at risk for an unwanted pregnancy. There are lots of myths about how a woman can't get pregnant at a certain time in her menstrual cycle or under other conditions, but in fact, there's a risk of pregnancy after vaginal intercourse at any time. All couples should talk about protection before reaching the stage of having intercourse and take appropriate steps. While a male condom is about 98 percent effective,

that 2 percent failure rate could lead to tens of thousands of unintended pregnancies among college students. When not used correctly, condoms are only 85 percent effective.

In addition, a couple that has been healthy and monogamous in their relationship for a long time may be less faithful in their use of condoms if the threat of STIs seems diminished. Other methods of birth control should also therefore be considered. With the exception of the male vasectomy, at present most other methods are used by the woman. They include intrauterine devices (IUDs), implants, injected or oral contraceptives (the "pill"), hormone patches, vaginal rings, diaphragms, cervical caps, and sponges. Each has certain advantages and disadvantages.

Birth control methods vary widely in effectiveness as well as potential side effects. This is therefore a very personal decision. In addition, two methods can be used together, such as a condom along with a diaphragm or spermicide, which increases the effectiveness. (Note

that a male and female condom should not be used together, however, because of the risk of either or both tearing because of friction between them.) Because this is such an important issue, you should talk it over with your health-care provider, or a professional at your student health center.

In cases of unprotected vaginal intercourse, or if a condom tears, emergency contraception is an option for up to five days after intercourse. Sometimes called the “morning after pill” or “plan B,” emergency contraception is an oral hormone that prevents pregnancy from occurring. It is not an “abortion pill.”

## Sexual Assault and Date Rape

Sexual assault is a serious problem in Canada generally and among college students in particular. In Canada, one-in-five women will be sexually assaulted.

Sexual assault is any form of sexual contact without voluntary consent. Although rape has no specific provision in Canada’s Criminal Code [5], rape is usually more narrowly defined as “unlawful sexual intercourse or any other sexual penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth of another person, with or without force, by a sex organ, other body part, or foreign object, without the consent of the victim. Both are significant problems among college students.



*Photo by Mihai Surdu on Unsplash*

Although men can also be victims of sexual assault and rape, the problem usually involves women. Men must also understand what is involved in sexual assault and help build greater awareness of the problem and how to prevent it.

Sexual assault is so common in our society in part because many people believe in myths about certain kinds of male-female interaction. Common myths include “It’s not really rape if the woman was flirting first” and “It’s not rape unless the woman is seriously injured.” Both statements are not legally correct. Another myth or source of confusion is the idea that “Saying no is just playing hard to get, not really no.” Men who really believe these myths may not think that they are committing assault, especially if their judgment is impaired by alcohol. Other perpetrators of sexual assault and rape, however, know exactly what they’re doing and in fact may plan to overcome their victim by using alcohol or a date rape drug.

Many college administrators and educators have worked very hard to promote better awareness of sexual assault and to help students learn how to protect themselves. Yet colleges cannot prevent things that happen at parties and behind closed doors. Students must understand how to protect themselves.

Perpetrators of sexual assault fall into three categories:

- Strangers
- Acquaintances
- Dating partners

Among college students, assault by a stranger is the least common because campus security departments take many measures to help keep students safe on campus.

Nonetheless, use common sense to avoid situations where you might be alone in a vulnerable place: Walk with a friend if you must pass through a quiet place after dark. Don't open your door to a stranger. Don't take chances.

Most sexual assaults are perpetrated by acquaintances or date partners. Typically, an acquaintance assault begins at a party. Typically, both the man and the woman are drinking—although assault can happen to sober victims as well. The interaction may begin innocently, perhaps with dancing or flirting. The perpetrator may misinterpret the victim's behavior as a willingness to share sexual activity, or a perpetrator intent on sexual activity may simply pick out a likely target. Either way, the situation may gradually or suddenly change and lead to sexual assault.

Prevention of acquaintance rape begins with the awareness of its likelihood and then taking deliberate steps to ensure you stay safe at and after the party:

- Go with a friend and don't let someone separate you from your friend.
- Agree to stick together and help each other if it looks like things are getting out of hand. If your friend has too much to drink, don't leave her or him alone.
- Plan to leave together and stick to the plan. Be especially alert if you become separated from your friend, even if you are only going off alone to look for the bathroom. You may be followed.
- Be cautious if someone is pressuring you to drink heavily.
- Trust your instincts if someone seems to be coming on too aggressively.
- Get back to your friends. Know where you are and have a plan to get home if you have to leave abruptly.

These preventions can work well at a party or in other social situations, but they don't apply to most dating situations when you are alone with another person. About half of sexual

assaults on college students are date rape. An assault may occur after the first date, when you feel you know the person better and perhaps are not concerned about the risk. This may actually make you more vulnerable, however.

Until you really get to know the person well and have a trusting relationship, follow these guidelines to lower the risk of sexual assault:

- Make it clear that you have limits on sexual activity. If there is any question that your date may not understand your limits, talk about your values and limits.
- If your date initiates unwanted sexual activity of any sort, do not resist passively. The other may misinterpret passive behavior as consent.
- Be careful if your date is drinking heavily or using drugs. Avoid drinking yourself, or drink very moderately.
- Stay in public places where there are other people. Do not invite your date to your home before your relationship is well established.
- Trust your instincts if your date seems to be coming on too strong. End the date if necessary.

If you are sexually assaulted, always talk to someone. Contact your college counselling department for support services and other resources or contact Student Health Services. Even if you do not report the assault to law enforcement, it's important to talk through your feelings and seek help if needed to prevent an emotional crisis.

## Date Rape Drugs

In addition to alcohol, sexual predators use certain commonly available drugs to sedate women for sexual assault. They are odorless and tasteless and may be added to a punch bowl or slipped into your drink when you're not looking. These drugs include the sedatives GHB, sometimes called "liquid ecstasy," and Rohypnol, also called "roofies." Both cause sedation in small doses but can have serious medical effects in larger doses. Date rape drugs are typically used at parties.

Use the following tips to protect yourself against date rape drugs:

- Don't put your drink down where someone else may get to it. If your drink is out of your sight for even a moment, don't finish it.
- Never accept an open drink. Don't accept a mixed drink that you did not see mixed from pure ingredients.

- Never drink anything from a punch bowl, even if it's nonalcoholic. You can't know what may have been added into the punch.
- If you experience unexpected physical symptoms that may be the result of something you drank or ate, get to an emergency room and ask to be tested.



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## Sexual Consent

As college is often students' first time away from home, Sexual Assault and Sexual Violence prevention is a high priority on college campuses. It is important for you to understand and gain consent from your partner before engaging in any sexual contact.

### What is Consent?

Consent is defined as the voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. In other words, you must actively and willingly give consent to sexual activity. Any type of sexual activity without consent is sexual assault.

#### **Consent:**

- should never be assumed or implied
- is not silence or the absence of “no”
- can be withdrawn at any time
- cannot be given if you are impaired by alcohol or drugs, or unconscious
- can never be obtained through threats or coercion
- cannot be given if the perpetrator abuses a position of trust, power or authority
- cannot be given by anyone other than the person participating in the sexual activity



The best way to ensure both parties are comfortable with any sexual activity is to talk about it. Ask questions to make sure your partner is comfortable.

Stop when you are asked or told to stop and respect the answer right away. Verbally saying “no” is not the only way for someone to tell you to stop. Look for gestures and body language that indicate someone is not willing to participate.

Consent to one activity, one time, does not mean consent to another or to a set of actions, respect someone’s boundaries if they don’t want to participate.

This short video was developed by Blue Seat Studios and explains consent by connecting sexual consent to offering your partner a cup of tea. It is a lighthearted but effective way to think about consent.



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Tea Consent Copyright ©2015 Emmeline May and Blue Seat Studios can be viewed on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU>

#### Key Takeaways

- Maintaining a health lifestyle that includes eating well, exercise, and proper sleep. A healthy lifestyle reduces stress, improves mood, and increases your capacity to learn.
- Be aware of the effects substances have on your health and student life. Substance use is a personal choice and like most choices, there are trade-offs. These trade-offs can unintentionally affect you and others.
- Every college has policies on Respect and Sexual Assault and provides sexual health resources and services. All students must understand how to protect their sexual health. Thinking about choices, behavior and values helps with responsible decision making.



The Learning Portal provides information and advice on improving your Physical Health.

## 9. Successful students practice mental wellness



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Photo by MARK ADRIANE on Unsplash

Wellness is more than just avoiding disease. Wellness involves feeling good in every respect, in mind and spirit as well as in body. Your emotional health is just as important as your physical health—and maybe more so. If you're unhappy much of the time, you will not do as well as in college—or life—as you can if you're happy. You will feel more stress, and your health will suffer. Still, most of us are neither happy nor unhappy all the time. Life is constantly changing, and our emotions change with it. But sometimes we experience more negative emotions than normally, and our emotional health may suffer. Emotional balance is an essential element of wellness—and for succeeding in college. Emotional balance doesn't mean that you never experience a negative emotion, because these emotions are usually natural and normal. Emotional balance means we balance the negative with the positive, that we can be generally happy even if

we're saddened by some things. Emotional balance starts with being aware of our emotions and understanding them.

Everyone knows about stress, but not everyone knows how to control it. Stress is the great enemy of college success. But once you've learned how to reduce it where you can and cope with unavoidable stress, you'll be well on the road to becoming the best student you can be. We all live with occasional stress. Since college students often feel even more stress than

most people, it's important to understand it and learn ways to deal with it so that it doesn't disrupt your life.

## Emotional Health

### Emotions Can Be Problematic

When is an emotion problematic? Is it bad to feel anxious about a big test coming up or to feel sad after breaking up a romantic relationship?

It is normal to experience negative emotions. College students face so many demands and stressful situations that many naturally report often feeling anxious, depressed, or lonely. These emotions become problematic only when they persist and begin to affect your life in negative ways. That's when it's time to work on your emotional health, just as you'd work on your physical health when illness strikes.

### Anxiety

Anxiety is one of the most common emotions college students experience, often as a result of the demands of college, work, and family and friends. It's difficult to juggle everything, and you may end up feeling not in control, stressed, and anxious. Anxiety typically results from stress. Some anxiety is often a good thing if it leads to studying for a test, focusing on a problem that needs to be resolved, better management your time and money, and so on. But if anxiety disrupts your focus and makes you freeze up rather than take action, then it may become problematic. Using stress-reduction techniques often helps reduce anxiety to a manageable level.

Anxiety is easier to deal with when you know its cause. Then you can take steps to gain control over the part of your life causing the anxiety. But anxiety can become excessive and lead to a dread of everyday situations.

There are five types of more serious anxiety:

1. Generalized anxiety disorder is characterized by chronic anxiety, exaggerated worry and tension, even when there is little or nothing to provoke it.
2. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is characterized by recurrent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions), repetitive behaviors (compulsions), or both.
3. Panic disorder is characterized by unexpected and repeated episodes of intense fear accompanied by physical symptoms.
4. Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened.
5. Social phobia (or social anxiety disorder) is a persistent, intense, and chronic fear of being watched and judged by others and being embarrassed or humiliated by one's own actions.

These five types of anxiety go beyond the normal anxiety everyone feels at some times. If you feel your anxiety is like any of these, see your health-care provider. Effective treatments are available to help you regain control.

## Loneliness

Loneliness is a normal feeling that most people experience at some time. College students away from home for the first time are likely to feel lonely at first. Older students may also feel lonely if they no longer see their old friends. International students may also feel lonely. Loneliness involves not feeling connected with others. One person may need only one friend to not feel lonely; others need to feel more connected with a group. There's no set pattern for feeling lonely.



*Photo by Francisco Gonzalez on Unsplash*

If you are feeling lonely, there are many things you can do to meet others and feel connected. Don't sit alone in your room bemoaning the absence of friends. That will only cause more stress and emotional distress. You will likely start making new friends through going to classes, working, studying, and living in the community. But you can jump-start that process by taking active steps such as these:

- Realize you don't have to be physically with friends in order to stay connected. Many

students use social Web sites to stay connected with friends at other colleges or in other locations. Telephone calls, instant messaging, and e-mail work for many.

- Understand that you're not alone in feeling lonely. Many others like you are just waiting for the opportunity to connect, and you will meet them and form new friendships fast once you start reaching out.

- Become involved in campus opportunities to meet others. Every college has a wide range of clubs for students with different interests. If you're not the "joiner" type, look for individuals in your classes with whom you think you may have something in common and ask them if they'd like to study for a test together or work together on a class project.

- Remember that loneliness is a temporary thing—it's only a matter of time until you make new friends. If your loneliness persists and you seem unable to make friends, then it's a good idea to talk with one of the college counsellors. They can help.

## Depression

Depression, like anxiety and loneliness, is commonly experienced by college students. It may be a mild sadness resulting from specific circumstances or be intense feelings of hopelessness and helplessness.

Many people feel depressed from time to time because of common situations:

- Feeling overwhelmed by pressures to study, work, and meet other obligations
- Not having enough time (or money) to do the things you want to do
- Experiencing problems in a relationship, friendship, or work situation
- Feeling overweight, unhealthy, or not in control of oneself
- Feeling that your new life as a student lacks some of the positive dimensions of your former life
- Not having enough excitement in your life

Depression, like stress, can lead to unhealthy consequences such as poor sleep, overeating or loss of appetite, substance abuse, relationship problems, or withdrawal from activities that formerly brought joy. For most people, depression is a temporary state. But severe depression can have crippling effects.

Not everyone experiences the same symptoms, but the following are most common:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism

- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Irritability or restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Insomnia, early morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts
- Persistent aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems

If you have feelings like this that last for weeks at a time and affect your daily life, your depression is more severe than “normal,” temporary depression. It’s time to see your health-care provider and get treatment as you would for any other illness.



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## Stress



Image by geralt on Pixabay.com

We all live with occasional stress. Since college students often feel even more stress than most people, it's important to understand it and learn ways to deal with it so that it doesn't disrupt your life. Stress is a natural response of the body and mind to a demand or challenge. The thing that causes stress, called a stressor, captures our attention and causes a physical and emotional reaction. Stressors include physical threats, such as a car we suddenly see coming at us too fast, and the stress reaction likely includes jumping out of the way—with our heart beating fast and other physical changes. Most of our stressors are not physical threats but situations or events like an upcoming test or an emotional break-up. Stressors also include long-lasting emotional and mental concerns such as worries about money or finding a job.



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## What Causes Stress?

Not all stressors are bad things. Exciting, positive things also cause a type of stress, called eustress. Falling in love, getting an unexpected sum of money, acing an exam you'd worried about—all of these are positive things that affect the body and mind in ways similar to negative stress: you can't help thinking about it, you may lose your appetite and lie awake at night, and your routine life may be momentarily disrupted. But the kind of stress that causes most trouble results from negative stressors.

Life events that usually cause significant stress include the following:

- Serious illness or injury
- Serious illness, injury, or death of a family member or loved one
- Losing a job or sudden financial catastrophe
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Divorce or ending a long-term relationship (including parents' divorce)



- Being arrested or convicted of a crime
- Being put on academic probation or suspended

Life events like these usually cause a lot of stress that may begin suddenly and disrupt one's life in many ways. Fortunately, these stressors do not occur every day and eventually end—though they can be very severe and disruptive when experienced. Some major life stresses, such as having a parent or family member with a serious illness, can last a long time and may require professional help to cope with them.

Everyday kinds of stressors are far more common but can add up and produce as much stress as a major life event:

- Anxiety about not having enough time for classes, job, studies, and social life
- Worries about grades, an upcoming test, or an assignment
- Money concerns
- Conflict with a roommate, someone at work, or family member
- Anxiety or doubts about one's future or difficulty choosing a major or career
- Frequent colds, allergy attacks, other continuing health issues
- Concerns about one's appearance, weight, eating habits, and so on.
- Relationship tensions, poor social life, loneliness
- Time-consuming hassles such as a broken-down car or the need to find a new apartment

## Thought Exercise

Take a moment and reflect on the list above. How many of these stressors have you experienced in the last month? The last year? What additional things cause stress?



*Photo by Magnet.me from Unsplash*

How many stressors have you thought of? There is no magic number of stressors that an “average” or “normal” college student experiences—because everyone is unique. In addition, stressors come and go: the stress caused by a midterm exam tomorrow morning may be gone by noon, replaced by feeling good about how you did. Still, most college students are likely to experience about half the items on this list. But it’s not the number of stressors that counts. You might have only one item on that list—but it could produce so much stress for you that you’re just as stressed out as someone else who has all of them. The point of this thought exercise is to start by understanding what causes your own stress as a base for learning what to do about it.

## What’s Wrong with Stress?

Physically, stress prepares us for action: the classic “fight-or-flight” reaction when confronted with a danger. Our heart is pumping fast, and we’re breathing faster to supply

the muscles with energy to fight or flee. Many physical effects in the body prepare us for whatever actions we may need to take to survive a threat. But what about nonphysical stressors, like worrying about grades? Are there any positive effects there? Imagine what life would feel like if you never had worries, never felt any stress at all. If you never worried about grades or doing well on a test, how much studying would you do for it? If you never thought at all about money, would you make any effort to save it or make it? Obviously, stress can be a good thing when it motivates us to do something, whether it's study, work, resolving a conflict with another, and so on. So it's not stress itself that's negative—it's unresolved or persistent stress that starts to have unhealthy effects.

Chronic (long-term) stress is associated with many physical changes and illnesses, including the following:

- Weakened immune system, making you more likely to catch a cold and to suffer from any illness longer
- More frequent digestive system problems, including constipation or diarrhea, ulcers, and indigestion
- Elevated blood pressure
- Increased risk of diabetes
- Muscle and back pain
- More frequent headaches, fatigue, and insomnia
- Greater risk of heart attack and other cardiovascular problems over the long term



Photo by JESHOOOTS.COM on Unsplash

Chronic or acute (intense short-term) stress also affects our minds and emotions in many ways:

- Difficulty thinking clearly or concentrating
- Poor memory
- More frequent negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, frustration, powerlessness, resentment, or nervousness—and a general negative outlook on life
- Greater difficulty dealing with others because of irritability, anger, or avoidance

No wonder we view stress as such a negative thing! As much as we'd like to eliminate all stressors, however, it just can't happen. Too many things in the real world cause stress and always will.

## Unhealthy Responses to Stress

Since many stressors are unavoidable, the question is what to do about the resulting stress. A person can try to ignore or deny stress for a while, but then it keeps building and starts causing all those problems. So we have to do something. Consider first what you have typically done in the past when you felt most stressed. Here are a few examples of how college students have responded to stress.

1. Drinking alcohol
2. Drinking lots of coffee
3. Sleeping a lot
4. Eating too much
5. Eating too little
6. Smoking or drugs
7. Having arguments
8. Sitting around depressed
9. Watching television or surfing the Web
10. Complaining to friends
11. Exercising, jogging, biking
12. Practicing yoga or tai chi
13. Meditating
14. Using relaxation techniques
15. Talking with an professor or counsellor

What's wrong with the first ten stress-reduction behaviors listed first? Why not watch television or get a lot of sleep when you're feeling stressed, if that makes you feel better?

While it may feel better temporarily to escape feelings of stress in those ways, ultimately they may cause more stress themselves. If you're worried about grades and being too busy to study as much as you need to, then letting an hour or two slip by watching television will make you even more worried later because then you have even less time. Eating too much may make you sluggish and less able to focus, and if you're trying to lose weight, you'll now feel just that much more stressed by what you've done. Alcohol, caffeine, smoking, and drugs all generally increase one's stress over time. Complaining to friends? Over time, your friends will tire of hearing it or tire of arguing with you because a complaining person isn't much fun to be around. So eventually you may find yourself even more alone and stressed.

Yet there is a bright side: there are lots of very positive ways to cope with stress that will

also improve your health, make it easier to concentrate on your studies, and make you a happier person overall. The last five items on our list are more positive ways to cope.

## Coping with Stress



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Think about your list of stressors. For each, consider whether it is external (like bad job hours or not having enough money) or internal, originating in your attitudes and thoughts.



Photo by whoislimos on Unsplash

You may be able to eliminate many external stressors. Talk to your boss about changing your work hours. If you have money problems, work on a budget you can live with, look for a new job, or reduce your expenses by finding a cheaper apartment, selling your car, and using public transportation.

What about other external stressors? Taking so many classes that you don't have the time to study for all of them? Keep working on your time management skills.

Schedule your days carefully and stick to the schedule. Take fewer classes next term if necessary. What else can you do to eliminate external stressors? Change apartments, get a new roommate, find better child care – consider all your options. And don't hesitate to talk things over with one of our counsellors, who may offer other solutions.

Internal stressors, however, are often not easily resolved. We can't make all stressors go away, but we can learn how to cope so that we don't feel so stressed out most of the time. We can take control of our lives. We can find healthy coping strategies.

All the topics in this section involve stress one way or another. Many of the healthy habits that contribute to our wellness and happiness also reduce stress and minimize its effects.

## Get Some Exercise

Exercise, especially aerobic exercise, is a great way to help reduce stress. Exercise increases the production of certain hormones, which leads to a better mood and helps counter depression and anxiety. Exercise helps you feel more energetic and focused so that you are more productive in your work and studies and thus less likely to feel stressed. Regular exercise also helps you sleep better, which further reduces stress.

## Get More Sleep

When sleep deprived, you feel more stress and are less able to concentrate on your work or studies. Many people drink more coffee or other caffeinated beverages when feeling sleepy, and caffeine contributes further to stress-related emotions such as anxiety and nervousness.

## Manage Your Money

Worrying about money is one of the leading causes of stress.

## Adjust Your Attitude

You know the saying about the optimist who sees the glass as half full and the pessimist who sees the same glass as half empty. Guess which one feels more stress? Much of the stress you feel may be rooted in your attitudes toward school, your work—your whole life. If you don't feel good about these things, how do you change?

To begin with, you really need to think about yourself. What makes you happy? Are you expecting your college career to be perfect and always exciting, with never a dull class or

reading assignment? Or can you be happy that you are in fact succeeding in college and foresee a great life and career ahead? Maybe you just need to take a fun elective course to balance that “serious” course that you’re not enjoying so much. Maybe you just need to play an intramural sport to feel as good as you did playing in high school. Maybe you just need to take a brisk walk every morning to feel more alert and stimulated. Maybe listening to some great music on the way to work will brighten your day. Maybe calling up a friend to study together for that big test will make studying more fun. No one answer works for everyone—you have to look at your life, be honest with yourself about what affects your daily attitude, and then look for ways to make changes. The good news is that although old negative habits can be hard to break, once you’ve turned positive changes into new habits, they will last into a brighter future.

## Learn a Relaxation Technique

Different relaxation techniques can be used to help minimize stress. Following are a few tried-and-tested ways to relax when stress seems overwhelming. You can learn most of these through books, online exercises, CDs or MP3s, and DVDs available at your library or student services offices. Practicing one of them can have dramatic effects.

- **Deep breathing.** Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, filling your lungs completely. Exhale slowly and smoothly through your mouth. Concentrate on your breathing and feel your chest expanding and relaxing. After five to ten minutes, you will feel more relaxed and focused.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation.** With this technique, you slowly tense and then relax the body’s major muscle groups. The sensations and mental concentration produce a calming state.
- **Meditation.** Taking many forms, meditation may involve focusing on your breathing, a specific visual image, or a certain thought, while clearing the mind of negative energy. Many podcasts are available to help you find a form of meditation that works best for you.
- **Yoga or tai chi.** Yoga, tai chi, and other exercises that focus on body position and slow,



Photo by Le Minh Phuong on Unsplash

gradual movements are popular techniques for relaxation and stress reduction. You can learn these techniques through a class, online or from a DVD.

- **Music and relaxation CDs and MP3s.** Many different relaxation techniques have been developed for audio training. Simply play the recording and relax as you are guided through the techniques.
- **Massage.** Regular massages are a way to relax both body and mind. If you can't afford a weekly massage but enjoy its effects, a local massage therapy school may offer more affordable massage from students and beginning practitioners.



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## Get Counselling

If stress is seriously disrupting your studies or your life regardless of what you do to try to reduce it, you may need help. There's no shame in admitting that you need help, and college counsellors and health professionals are there to help.

## Try a Mindfulness Exercise



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## Tips for Success: Stress

- Pay attention to, rather than ignore, things that cause you stress and change what you can.
- Accept what you can't change and resolve to make new habits that will help you cope.
- Get regular exercise and enough sleep.
- Evaluate your priorities, work on managing your time, and schedule restful activities in your daily life. Students who feel in control of their lives report feeling much less stress than those who feel that circumstances control them.
- Slow down and focus on one thing at a time—don't check for e-mail or text messages every few minutes! Know when to say no to distractions.
- Break old habits involving caffeine, alcohol, and other substances.
- Remember your long-range goals and don't obsess over short-term difficulties.
- Make time to enjoy being with friends.
- Explore new activities and hobbies that you enjoy.
- Find a relaxation technique that works for you and practice regularly.
- Get help if you're having a hard time coping with emotional stress.



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## What is Good2Talk?

If you need someone to listen, we're good to talk.



### Post-Secondary Student Helpline

- Free, professional and confidential support for students in Ontario
- Counselling for anything you want to talk about:
  - Mental Health and Addictions
  - Relationships
  - Sexuality
  - Disability Supports
  - Academic and Health Services
  - Employment
  - Financial Stresses

Good2Talk is a free, confidential helpline providing professional counselling and information and referrals for mental health, addictions and well-being to post-secondary students in Ontario, 24/7/365.

If you are dealing with anxiety, depression, loneliness or stress, talking with a professional about it can help. The Good2Talk professionals are available day and night to talk to you whenever you need to. They can also help you with referrals to local resources and professionals for further support which can be helpful if you are studying away from home.

Good2Talk Helpline for postsecondary students  
1-866-925-5454

Good2Talk Helpline poster from  
<https://good2talk.ca/>

## The surprising link between Stress and Memory



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# CMHA Bounce Back

BounceBack® is a free skill-building program managed by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). It is designed to help adults and youth 15+ manage low mood, mild to moderate depression and anxiety, stress or worry. Delivered over the phone with a coach and through online videos, you will get access to tools that will support you on your path to mental wellness.



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## CMHA Bounce Back's 10 things you can do right now to reduce anxiety, stress, and worry.<sup>1</sup>



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1. Modified original poster to present text in this chapter with permission from BounceBack Ontario.

## CMHA Bounce Back Social Media Tips<sup>2</sup>

Seven ways to use social media to benefit your mental health



Picture by Sara Kurfeß from Unsplash

Social media and new technologies make it easier than ever to connect with friends, family and others that share the same interests as we do. They can help decrease feelings of isolation and loneliness. But excessive social media use can also alter our mood, motivation and concentration. Research shows that constantly checking social media sites can increase feelings of inadequacy and depression, as well as anxiety around the fear of missing out. Fortunately, there are ways to reap the benefits of social media without being impacted by the risks. Here are seven strategies on how to use social media to benefit your mental health:

2. Modified original poster to present text in this chapter with permission from BounceBack Ontario.

*Think about your goals.*



*Photo by Ronnie Overgoor from Unsplash*

Remember that social media is a tool – use it to achieve your personal and professional goals. Are you using it to connect with friends, family, colleagues? Are you using it to get your daily news? Are you using it to create professional social networks? Choose apps and platforms that *yt* with your goals accordingly and that contribute to positive behaviours. Participate in virtual communities that are supportive and provide insight into people, events or areas that interest you oline.

*Engage, don't scroll.*

Studies show that when people spend a lot of time passively consuming information on social media – such as scrolling, reading, and clicking on links – they report feeling worse afterward. In contrast, when people actively engage online by sharing, posting photos, and commenting, research has shown that it can increase positive well-being. Use social platforms to help feel connected to others or to learn about resources you might use to improve your life online. If you're unsure whether a social media platform is improving or dampening your mood, take some time after using it to check in and ask yourself “how does this app make me feel?” This will shift the focus from how much time you spend on the app to how it impacts you on a human level.

*Avoid comparisons.*



*Photo by Gratisography from Pexels*

View posts on social media with the perspective that they are only a highlight reel of someone's life. One survey revealed that more than 60 per cent of people admit to lying constantly on social media. Remember that celebrities and other influencers on social media are often paid to promote products and services through social media posts, and as a result, their photos and posts are often 'touched up' for marketing purposes.

*Share mindfully.*

Always pause and consider before posting. Remember that sharing personal information can cost you your privacy and safety. In addition, educational institutions and potential employers could review your online presence when considering your application. Everything on the Internet is permanent and even privacy settings are limited in their capacity – keep that in mind every time you share. If you are feeling emotional but want to reach out to someone on social media, consider sending a voice note or FaceTime instead.

Studies show that it's common for people to misinterpret text messages, while voice is rich with tone and less vulnerable to misinterpretation.

*Allow notifications from people, not machines.*



*Image by Brett Jordan from Unsplash*

Remember that social media apps are developed and engineered to encourage you to check in consistently with notifications and new content. To avoid mindlessly checking apps, turn off all notifications, except those from real people, from apps like WhatsApp, Messages, FB Messenger, etc.

*Address bullying.*

Your social media profile should be a safe space. Have a zero tolerance policy for bullying on your social media channels and do not be afraid to block and report any kind of harassment directed at yourself or others. Take screenshots of harassment and if someone threatens your safety or shares sexual pictures or videos of you, report it to the police

immediately.

*Take time to unplug.*



*Photo by Kelly Sikkema from Unsplash*

Research shows that taking breaks from social media and other forms of technology can help increase feelings of subjective well-being. If a full digital detox seems impossible, try these simple tips for a quick time-out:

- Study with your phone out of the room – research shows that the mere presence of these devices reduces available cognitive capacity.
- Limit use at bedtime as the light from the screen can interfere with your sleep.



- Charge your device outside the bedroom at night and avoid looking at it first thing in the morning.
- Try a device-free dinner or lunch with friends. Enjoy the time interacting together in person.
- Set physical boundaries. Limit your first screen on your phone to just the tools you use for in-and-out tasks – like Maps, Camera, Calendar, or Notes. Move all the rest away from the first page and into folders. Launch apps by typing rather than mindlessly clicking on them, or delete social media apps from your phone and only use them on the computer.
- Go outside. One of the best ways to improve your mental well-being is by simply spending more time in nature – either by yourself or with someone you enjoy being with.

For references, please visit the BounceBack tip sheet.

#### Key Takeaways

- Emotional balance starts with being aware of your emotions and understanding them, balancing the negative with the positive.
- Anxiety and Depression are common emotions we all feel at one time or another, if you are experiencing serious anxiety or depression, seek help from your healthcare professional or a college counsellor just like you would for any other illness.
- Loneliness is a normal feeling college students can experience in a new education setting. Getting involved in the college community, staying in touch with friends and family, and study with classmates are excellent coping strategies. If you are having difficulty making new friends or dealing with loneliness, see a college counsellor for assistance.
- Stress is a natural response to a demand or challenge. Stress can be good if it motivates you to action. Chronic or acute stress can cause unhealthy responses. Learning to cope with stress in a positive way can maintain and improve your health emotionally and physically.

Want more? The Learning Portal has additional tips on Stress Management and Sleep.

# 10. Successful students understand their finances



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If you're a new college student you may not yet have money problems or issues—but most college students soon do. It doesn't matter whether you're a “traditional” college student enrolled in college just after high school or a “nontraditional” student returning to school.

Younger students are likely to confront money issues for several reasons:

- If you are living away from home for the first time, you may have less experience setting and sticking to a budget and handling money in general.
- Because you need more time for studying and other aspects of college life, you may have less time to work and make money.
- Even if you receive financial support from your family, your funds are not unlimited, and you'll need to learn to live within a budget.

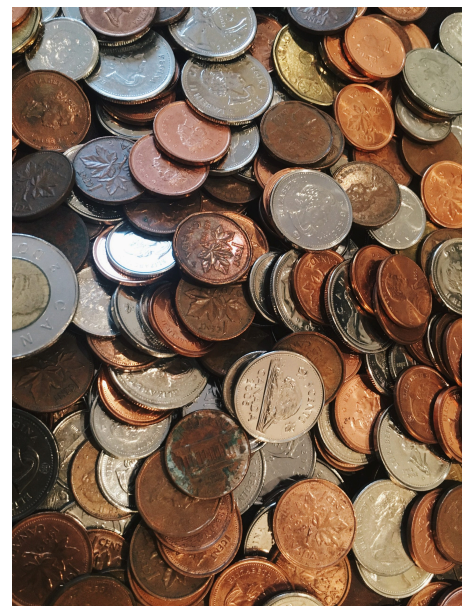


Photo by pina messina on Unsplash

You will have many new expenses including tuition and fees, room and board or housing and food bills, books and supplies, and so on. Nontraditional students who have worked or started a family before attending college may have already learned to manage their money well but usually still confront some financial issues:

- Because you need more time for studying and college, you likely have less time to work and make money.
- You will have many new expenses including tuition and fees, books and supplies, and so on.
- You are more likely to have to juggle a budget that may include a family, mortgage, and other established expenses.

Almost everyone eventually has money issues at college, and they can impact your academic success. Money problems are stressful and can keep you from concentrating on your studies. Spending too much may lead you to work more hours than you might otherwise, giving you less time to study. Or you might take fewer classes and thus spend more years in college than needed. Worse yet, money problems cause many students to drop out of college entirely. But it doesn't have to be this hard. Like other skills, financial skills can be learned, and they have lifelong value.

This section will help you:

- set financial goals
- consider jobs and making money
- learn how to spend less and manage a budget
- avoid credit card debt
- determine how best to finance your college expenses

## Setting your Financial goals and Budget

It's expensive to go to college. College tuition has risen for decades at virtually all schools, and very few students are fortunate enough to not have to be concerned with this reality. Still, there are things you can do to help control costs and manage your finances while in college. Begin by thinking about your financial goals.

### What Are Your Financial Goals?

Whatever it is you plan to do in your future, whether work or other activities, your financial goals in the present should be realistic to enable you to fulfill your plan.

Taking control of your personal finances begins with thinking about your goals and deciding what really matters to you. Here are some things to think about:

- Is it important for you to graduate from college with minimal debt?
- What are your priorities for summers and other “free time”? Working to earn money? Taking nonpaying internships or volunteering to gain experience in your field? Enjoying social activities and time with friends?
- How important is it to you to live in a nice place, or drive a nice car, or wear nice clothes, or eat in nice restaurants? How important in comparison to your educational goals?

There are no easy answers to such questions. Most people would like enough money to have and do what they want, low enough expenses that they don't have to work too much to stay on budget, and enough financial freedom to choose activities without being swayed by financial concerns. Few college students live in that world, however. Since you will have to make choices, it's important first to think about what really matters to you—and what you're willing to sacrifice for a while in order to reach your goals.

## Make More or Spend Less?

That often becomes an issue for college students. You begin by setting up a realistic budget and sticking to it. A budget is simply the best way to balance the money that comes in with the money that goes out. For most college students, the only way to increase the “money coming in” side of the budget is to work. Even with financial support from your family, financial aid from the college, your savings from past jobs, and the like, you will still need to work if all your resources do not equal the “money going out” side of the budget. The major theme of this chapter is avoiding debt except when absolutely necessary to finance your education. Why is that so important? Simply because money problems and debt cause more people to drop out of college than any other single factor. This chapter includes discussion of how students can earn money while in college and the benefits of working. But working too much can have a negative impact by taking up time you might need for studying. It's crucial, therefore, whenever you think about your own financial situation and the need to work, to also think about how much you need to work—and consider whether you would be happier spending less if that meant you could work less and enjoy your college life and studies more. As we'll see later, students often spend more than they actually need to and are often happier once they learn to spend less.

# The College Budget

More people get into financial trouble because they're spending too much than because they're making (or receiving) too little.

Here's a good place to start:

- Having money or not having money doesn't define who you are. Your real friends will think no less of you if you make your own lunch and eat it between classes or take the bus to campus rather than drive a new car. You are valued more by others for who you are as a person, not for what things you have.
- You don't have to spend as much as your friends to be one of the group. Some people always have more money than others and spend more. Resist any feeling that your friends who are big spenders are the norm. Don't feel you have to go along with whatever expensive activities they propose just so you fit in.
- A positive attitude leads to success. Learn to relax and not get stressed out about money. If you need to make changes in how you spend money, view this as an exciting accomplishment, not a depressing fact. Feel good about staying on a budget and being smart about how you spend your money.
- Be realistic about what you can accomplish. Most students have financial problems, and they don't just go away by waving a magic wand of good intentions. If your budget reveals you don't have enough money even while working and carefully controlling your spending, you may still need a student loan or larger changes in your lifestyle to get by. That's OK—there are ways to deal with that. But if you unrealistically set your sights so high about spending less and saving a lot, you may become depressed or discouraged if you don't meet your goals. Before you can make an effective budget, you need to look at what you're spending money on now and consider what's essential and what's optional.

Essential costs are the big things:

- Room and board or rent/mortgage, utilities, and groceries
- College tuition, fees, textbooks, supplies
- Transportation
- Insurance (health insurance, car insurance, etc.)
- Dependent care if needed
- Essential personal items (some clothing, hygiene items, etc.)

These things are sometimes called fixed costs, but that term can be misleading. If you have the option to move to a less expensive apartment that is smaller or a few blocks farther away, you can partly control that cost, so it's not really "fixed." Still, for most people, the real savings come from spending less on optional things. Most people spend by habit, not really thinking about where their money goes or how quickly their spending adds up. If you knew you were spending more than a thousand dollars a year on coffee you buy every day between classes, would that make you think twice? Or another thousand on fast food lunches rather than taking a couple minutes in the morning to make your lunch? When people actually start paying attention to where their money goes, most are shocked to see how the totals grow. If you can save a few thousand dollars a year by cutting back on just the little things, how far would that go to making you feel much better about your finances?

Following are some general principles for learning to spend less.

- Be aware of what you're spending. Carry a small notebook and write down everything—everything— you spend for a month. You'll see your habits and be able to make a better budget to take control.
- Look for alternatives. If you buy a lot of bottled water, for example, you may feel healthier than people who drink soft drinks or coffee, but you may be spending hundreds of dollars a year on something that is virtually free! Carry your own refillable water bottle and save the money.
- Plan ahead to avoid impulse spending. If you have a healthy snack in your backpack, it's much easier to not put a dollar in a vending machine when you're hungry on the way to class. Make a list before going grocery shopping and stick to it. Shopping without a list usually results in buying all sorts of unneeded (and expensive) things that catch your eye in the store.
- Be smart. Shop around, compare prices, and buy in bulk. Stopping to think a minute before spending is often all it takes.

## Managing a Budget

Budgeting involves analyzing your income and expenses so you can see where your money is going and making adjustments when needed to avoid debt. At first budgeting can seem complex or time consuming, but once you've gone through the basics, you'll find it easy and a very valuable tool for controlling your personal finances. Why create and manage a budget? Going to college changes your financial situation. There are many new expenses, and you likely don't know yet how your spending needs and habits will work out over the

long term. Without a budget, it's just human nature to spend more than you have coming in, as evidenced by the fact that most North Americans today are in debt. Debt is a major reason many students drop out of college. So it's worth it to go to the trouble to create and manage a budget.

Managing a budget involves three steps:

1. Listing all your sources of income on a monthly basis.
2. Calculating all your expenditures on a monthly basis.
3. Making adjustments in your budget (and lifestyle if needed) to ensure the money isn't going out faster than it's coming in.

## Balancing Your Budget

Now comes the moment of truth: compare your total monthly incoming with your total monthly outgoing.

How balanced is your budget at this point? Remember that you estimated some of your expenditures. You can't know for sure until you actually track your expenses for at least a month and have real numbers to work with. What if your spending total is higher than your income total? The first step is to make your budget work on paper. Go back through your expenditure list and see where you can cut. Remember, college students shouldn't try to live like working professionals. Maybe you are used to a nice haircut every month or two—but maybe you can go to a cheaper place or cut it yourself. There are dozens of ways to spend less, as suggested earlier.

The essential first step is to make your budget balance on paper. Then your job is to live within the budget. It's normal to have to make adjustments at first. Just be sure to keep the overall budget balanced as you make adjustments. For example, if you find you must spend more for textbooks, you may decide you can spend less on eating out—and subtract the amount from that category that you add to the textbook category. Get in the habit of thinking this way instead of reaching for a credit card when you don't have enough in your budget for something you want or need. Don't be surprised if it takes several months to make the budget process work. Be flexible, but stay committed to the process and don't give up



Image by Steve Buissonne from Pixabay

because it feels like too much work to keep track of your money. Without a budget, you may have difficulty reaching your larger goal: taking control of your life while in college.

## What If Your Budget Doesn't Work?

Your budget may be unbalanced by a small amount that you can correct by reducing spending, or it may have a serious imbalance. If your best efforts fail to cut your expenditures to match your income, you may have a more serious problem, unless you plan in advance to manage this with student loans or other funds. First, think about how this situation occurred. When you decided to go to college, how did you plan to finance it? Were you off in your calculations of what it would cost, or did you just hope for the best? Are you still committed to finding a way to continue in college?

If you are motivated to reach your college goal, good! Now look closely at your budget to determine what's needed. If you can't solve the budget shortfall by cutting back on "optional" expenses, then you need more dramatic changes. Are you paying a high rent because your apartment is spacious or near campus? Can you move a little farther away and get by temporarily in a smaller place, if the difference in rent makes a big difference in your overall finances? If you're spending a lot on your car, can you sell it and get by with public transportation for a year or two? Play with the numbers for such items in your budget and see how you can cut expenses to stay in college without getting deeply in debt.

If you worry you won't be as happy if you change your lifestyle, remember that money problems are a key source of stress for many college students and that stress affects your happiness as well as how well you do in college. It's worth the effort to work on your budget and prevent this stress. If all else fails, see financial aid at the college. Don't wait until you're in real financial trouble before talking to someone who may be able to offer help.



## What If You Get in Financial Trouble?



*Photo by Emil Kalibradov from Unsplash*

People often don't admit to themselves that they have a problem until it becomes unmanageable. We human beings are very good at rationalizing and making excuses to ourselves! Here are some warning signs of sliding into financial trouble: For two or three months in a row, your budget is unbalanced because you're spending more than you are bringing in. You've begun using your savings for routine expenses you should be able to handle with your regular budget. You've missed a deadline for a bill or are taking credit card cash advances or overdrawing your checking account. You have a big balance on your credit card and have paid only the required minimum payment for the last two months. You have nothing in the bank in case of an emergency need. You don't even know how much total debt you have. You're trying to cut expenses by eliminating something important, such as dropping health insurance or not buying required textbooks.

If you are experiencing any of these warning signs, first acknowledge the problem. It's not going to solve itself—you need to take active steps before it gets worse and affects your college career. Second, if you just cannot budget your balance, admit that you need help. There's no shame in that. Start with your college counsellor or the financial aid office; if they

can't help you directly, they can refer you to someone who can. Take your budget and other financial records with you so that they can see what's really involved. Remember that they're there to help—their goal is to ensure you succeed in college.

## Saving for the Future

If you're having problems just getting by on your budget, it may seem pointless to even think about saving for the future. Still, if you can possibly put aside some money every month into a savings plan, it's worth the effort: An emergency or unexpected situation may occur suddenly. Having the savings to cope with it is much less stressful than having to find a loan or run up your credit cards. Saving is a good habit to develop.

## Working While in College

Most college students work while in school. Whether you work summers only or part time or full time all year, work can have both benefits and drawbacks. The difference may result as much from the type of job you work as from the number of hours you work.

## A Job Can Help or Hurt

In addition to helping pay the bills, a job or internship while in school has other benefits:

- Experience for your résumé
- Contacts for your later job search network
- Employment references for your résumé

Here are some factors to consider as you look for a job:

- What kinds of people will you be interacting with? Other students, professors, researchers? Interacting with others in the world of college can broaden your college experience, help motivate you to study, and help you feel part of a shared experience. You may work with or meet people who in the future can refer you to employers in your field. On the other hand, working in a business far from campus, for example, may offer a steady paycheck but can separate you from the academic community and detract from a positive college experience.
- Is the job flexible enough to meet a college student's needs? Will you be able to change your work hours during final exam week or when a special project is due? A rigid work schedule may cause difficulty at times when you really need to focus on your classes.
- What will you be able to say about your work in your future résumé? Does it involve any skills—including people skills or financial or managerial responsibilities—that your employer can someday praise you for? Will working this job help you get a different, better job next year? These factors can make a job ideal for college students, but in the real world many students will have to work less than-ideal jobs. Working at a fast food restaurant or overnight shipping company may not seem very glamorous or offer the benefits described previously, but it may be the only job available at present. Don't despair—things can always change. Make the money you need to get by in college but don't become complacent and stop looking for more meaningful work. Keep your eyes and ears open for other possibilities. Visit the campus student employment office frequently (or check online) for new postings. Talk to other students. At the same time, even with a dull job, do your best and keep a good attitude. Remember that your boss



*Photo by Ahsan S. on Unsplash*

or supervisor may someday be a work reference who can help (or hurt) your chances of getting a job you really want.

## Student Jobs

The number of hours college students work per week varies considerably, from five to ten hours a week to full time and everywhere in between. Before deciding how much you need to work, first make a detailed budget as described earlier. Your goal should be to make as much as you need, and hopefully a little more to save, but first you need to know your true need. Remember your goals in college and stay focused on your education. Cut back on your optional spending so that you don't have to work so many hours that your studies are impacted.

## Balancing the Job You Have with Your Ideal Job



*Image by  
Elena Mozhvilo from Unsplash*

A growing percentage of students are working full time when they return to school, and many continue in the same jobs. If you're in this situation, you know that balancing work and college is one of the most difficult things you've ever done. You're used to working—but not used to finding time for class and studying at the same time. You likely feel harried and frustrated at times, and you may even start to wonder if you're cut out for college. The time may come when you start thinking about dropping classes or leaving college altogether. It may be hard to stay motivated. If you start feeling this way, focus on your big goals and don't let the day-to-day time stresses get you down. As difficult as it may be, try to keep your priorities, and remember that while you face temporary difficulties now, a college degree is forever.

- Acknowledge that sacrifice and compromise may be needed.
- Reduce your expenses, if you can, so you can cut back on the number of hours you work. This may mean temporarily giving up some things you enjoy in order to reach your goals.
- If you cannot cut your expenses and work hours and simply do not have the time to do well in your classes, you may have to cut back on how many classes you take per term. Try everything else first, but know that it's better to succeed a little at a time than to push too hard and risk not succeeding. If you do have to cut back, keep a positive attitude: you're still working toward your future ideal. If you ever feel the temptation to quit, see your college counsellor to explore all your options.



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=110#h5p-24>

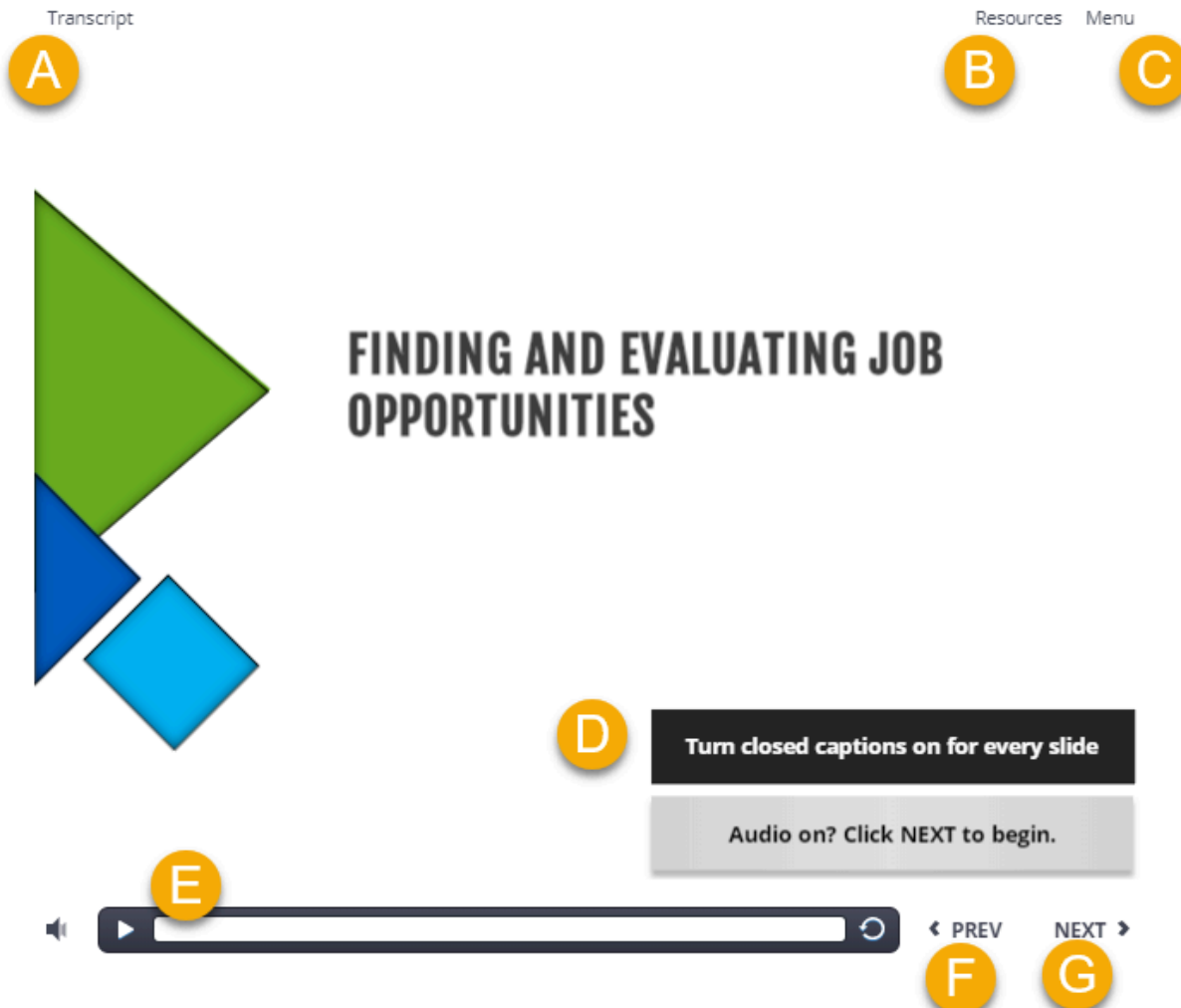
## Help for Finding A Job

These short optional tutorials are part of a Work Integrated Learning initiative by Ontario Colleges to support students in work readiness skills. We recommend five tutorials:

- Finding and Evaluating Job Opportunities
- Writing a Resume and Reference Page
- Writing a Cover Letter
- Interview Preparation, First Impressions, and Etiquette
- Interview Types, Formats, and Structures

All modules created for the Work Integrated Learning Open Module Initiative by Niagara College, Georgian College, Lambton College and Algonquin College are licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

## Features of the Module:



Each module is a presentation of multimedia contents within a player. Above the player, you will find:

A. Transcript – the transcript provides a text version of all audio presented in the module and is presented in the left top corner.

B. Resources – a variety of resource links are provided on the topics presented in the module and is presented in the right top corner before the Menu option.

C. Menu – a menu of all sections of the module is presented so that you can jump to different sections and is presented in the right top corner after the Resources option.

D. Before you begin, you have the option to turn on Captioning using the first button in the stack at the bottom right corner.

Below the player are navigation controls:

- E. Module progress bar is located at the bottom in the center.
- F. Prev – select to move back through module. This is located in the bottom right corner with the G. Next – select to move to the next section of the module.

## Finding and Evaluating Job Opportunities



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=110#h5p-125>

## Writing a Resume and Reference Page



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## Writing a Cover Letter



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## Interview Preparation, First Impressions, and Etiquette



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## Interview Types, Formats, and Structures



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## Credit Cards

Credit cards are such a big issue because they are easy to get, easy to use—and for many people, easy to accumulate debt.

Credit cards do have legitimate purposes:

- In an emergency, you may need funds you cannot obtain otherwise.
- You generally need a credit card for travel, for hotels, and other needs.
- Often it's less expensive to make significant purchases online, and to do that you usually need a credit card.

(Many ATM debit cards also function like a credit card for online purchases.)

- If you are young, responsible use of a credit card is a good way to start building a credit rating—but only if you use the credit card responsibly and always make sufficient payments on time.



*Image by Republica from Pixabay*

Your first goal with a credit card is to understand what you're getting into and how you are charged. Read the fine print on your monthly statements. You should understand about rate increases and know what happens if you miss a payment, pay less than the minimum, or pay late.

## Setting Limits

All credit cards come with a limit, the maximum total amount you can charge, but this is not the same as the limit you should set for how you use the card based on your budget. If you bought something that cost \$400, for example, would your monthly budget let you pay it off

when the bill comes? If it will take you two or three months to have that much available in your budget, are you also including the interest you'll be paying? What if an unexpected need then arises and you need to charge more? Set your personal use limit by calculating how much your budget allows you to charge. If you are using the card just for convenience, such as to pay for meals or regular purchases, be sure you have enough in those categories in your budget left at the end of the month to make the payment. If tempted to buy a significant item with your credit card, do the calculations in advance.

## Avoiding Debt



*Image by 1001Love from iStock*

If your credit card debt is not limited by your age, that balance can surely rise.

Following are tips that will help you avoid slipping into credit card debt:

- Pay with cash when you can. Use your budget as a guide for how much cash to carry with you. A good way is to plan how much you'll need for a week (lunches, parking meters, snacks or drinks between classes) and start the week with that amount from an ATM. Carrying that exact amount helps you stay informed of how you're doing on your budget and keeps you from "accidentally" spending too much on a whim.

- When possible, use a debit card instead of a credit card. A debit card is taken just like a credit card in most places, so you can use it instead of cash, but remember that a purchase is subtracted immediately from your account. Don't risk overdraft fees by using a debit card when you don't have the balance to back it up.
- Record a debit card purchase in your checkbook register as soon as possible.
- Make it a priority to pay your balance in full every month. If you can't pay it all, pay as much as you can—and then remember that balance will still be there, so try not to use the card at all during the next month.
- Don't get cash advances on your credit card. With most cards, you begin paying interest from that moment forward—so there will still be an interest charge even if you pay the bill in full at the end of the month. Cash advance interest rates are often considerably higher than purchase rates.
- Don't use more than one credit card. Multiple cards make it too easy to misuse them and lose track of your total debt.
- Get and keep receipts for all credit card purchases. Don't throw them away because you'll see the charges on your monthly statement.
- Write the amounts down in your spending budget. You also need the receipts in case your monthly statement has an error.

Stop carrying your credit card. If you don't have enough willpower to avoid spontaneous purchases, be honest with yourself. Don't carry the card at all—after all, the chances of having an emergency need for it are likely to be very small. Having to go home to get the card also gives you a chance to consider whether you really need whatever it is that you were about to buy.



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=110#h5p-25>

# Identity Security



*Photo by Toufiqu barbhuiya from Unsplash*

Identity theft is a serious and growing problem. Identity theft is someone else's use of your personal information—usually financial information—to make an illegal gain. A criminal who has your credit card number or bank account information may be able to make purchases or transfer funds from your accounts.

Someone with the right information about you, such as your social security number along with birth date and other data, can even pretend to be you and open new credit accounts that you don't know about—until the bank or collection agency tries to recover amounts from you. Although innocent, you would spend a lot of time and effort dealing with the problem.

Follow these guidelines to prevent identity theft:

- Never put in the trash any document with personal or financial information (e.g., your social insurance number, credit card number). Shred it first.
- Carefully review bank statements, credit card bills, and the like when you receive them. If the balance seems incorrect or you do not recognize charges, contact the bank or

credit card company immediately.

- Never give your social insurance number, credit card number, or other sensitive data when requested by telephone or e-mail. Many schemes are used to try to trick people to reveal this information, but legitimate companies do not make such requests.
- Do not use online banking or make online purchases with a credit card using a public computer or an unsecured Wi-Fi connection. Your data can be picked up by others lurking within the Wi-Fi signal range.

#### *Key Takeaways*

- Most college students encounter money issues in their academic life. Regardless if they are just out of school, or a “nontraditional” mature student.
- Being aware of your income and expenses in college is the beginning of developing a college budget.
- Learning to create and use a budget will help you control your spending and reduce debt.
- Working while a college student may help to provide more funds for college expenses, but it can impact your studies.



Want more: The Learning Portal has a Job Resources Hub with excellent advice on career exploration and job search skills.



## II. Introduction to Learn Independently



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Successful students understand that doing well in college requires using all the learning strategies that they have used in the past and find new strategies to adapt to new course demands. The most important difference between high school learning and college learning is that we expect you to take full responsibility for your learning. At college, you will find that there is less guidance than you may have experienced in the past. Professors may not remind you as often of upcoming tests and assignments because, as this is an adult learning environment, you are responsible for keeping track using your course outline and syllabus. You are expected to take initiative and approach your professor if you have questions. We use progressive assessment to test your knowledge and skills throughout the semester. This means focusing only on exams will not lead to success. Successful students use every quiz and assignment to demonstrate their learning. Professors will highlight important concepts in your course material but usually will not present everything you need to learn in depth.

This is why we say successful students learn independently using a four step cycle of Preparing, Absorbing, Capturing and Reviewing. In this section, we will review this cycle and explore some of the learning skills that can help you. For example:

- Improving your reading skills will help you manage your textbook and other assigned readings. Even if your professor does not talk about the textbook in class, you are still expected to read it and learn from it. Reading the chapter before class is one way to prepare. Actively attending and participating in classes is part of the absorbing step.
- Better notetaking skills will help you get the most of your class and be a guide for your independent learning. This is part of the capturing step. Improving your written communication skills will help with assignment and tests and may assignments will involve authentic work related writing which prepares you for your field.

- We have sections for you on studying, part of the reviewing step as well as test taking and group work.
- Our recommendation is that you scan all the sections. You may already have skills in some or even all of these areas. Confirming this can give you more confidence as you begin your study. If there are areas you can improve, the sections will give you an idea of strategies you can try. You may find out that you're not as skilled as you need to be in test taking... yet! Trying a new approach is often all you need to do to get there.

## Critical Thinking Skills



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# 12. Learning

## The Learning Cycle

In the realm of education, the process of learning evolves as we journey from primary and secondary school to the dynamic landscape of college. In this transition, the tapestry of responsibility for learning undergoes a transformation, placing the responsibility predominantly upon the learner. Unlike the structured environments of earlier education, the college experience empowers students with the freedom to embrace success or accept failure on their terms. This paradigm shift extends beyond mere outcomes; it encompasses the very essence of how one comprehends and engages with academic subjects.

## Four Steps to Learning

Adult learning is different from learning in primary and secondary school. In college, most of the responsibility for learning falls on the student. You're free to fail – or succeed – as you choose. This applies as well to how well you learn. Learning an academic subject means really understanding it, being able to think about it in meaningful ways and to apply that understanding in new situations. This is very different from simply memorizing something and repeating it back on a test.

Academic learning occurs most effectively in a cycle of four steps:

1. Prepare
2. Absorb
3. Capture
4. Review

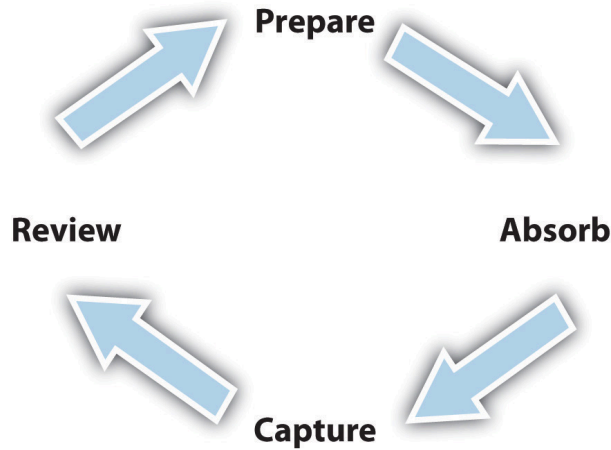


Figure from *College Success*, University of Minnesota, 2015, CC BY-NC-SA

### **Prepare**

Preparing to learn is the first step for learning. Partly, you are putting yourself in the right mind-set to learn.

### **Absorb**

Absorbing refers to the actual taking in of new ideas, information, or experiences. This happens at the moment a student listens to a class lecture or reads a textbook.

### **Capture**

Capturing refers to taking notes and other forms of documentation. Just hearing something once is seldom enough. You have to go back over the material again, sometimes several times again, thinking about it and seeing how it all fits together.

### **Review**

The step of reviewing your class notes and other materials is the next step for solidifying your learning and reaching a real understanding of the topic. Reviewing is also the step in which you discover whether you really understand the material.

Reviewing is also a way to prepare for new information and ideas. That's why this is a learning cycle: the end of the process loops back to the beginning as you prepare for additional learning.

## Using your Memory



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In your early and high school education, memorization was a key aspect of learning. You memorized multiplication tables, the names of the provinces, and vocabulary words. Memorized facts ensured your success on multiple-choice questions. In college, however, most of your work is focused on understanding the material in depth. Understanding themes and ideas and being able to think critically about them is really the key to your success in college learning. Although memorization is not the primary key to success, having a good memory is important to capture ideas in your mind, and it helps tremendously in certain subjects like sciences and foreign languages.



Image by ElisaRiva from Pixabay

## How Memory Works

Memory is the process of storing and retrieving information. There are two types of memory: short-term or active memory and long-term or passive memory.



Image by patpitchaya from iStock

### *Short-term Memory*

Short-term or active memory is made up of the information we are processing at any given time. Short-term memory involves information being captured at the moment as well as from information retrieved from our passive memory for doing complex mental tasks, such as thinking critically and drawing conclusions. But short-term memory is limited and suffers from the passing of time and lack of use. We begin to forget data within thirty seconds of not using it, and interruptions, such as phone calls or distractions, require us to rebuild the short term memory structure—to get “back on task.” To keep information in our memory, we must either use it or place it into our long-term memory (much like saving a document on your computer).

### *Long-term Memory*

Long-term memory is made up of the information you know. How we save information to

our long-term memory has a lot to do with our ability to retrieve it when we need it at a later date. Our mind “saves” information by creating a complex series of links to the data. The stronger the links, the easier it is to recall. You can strengthen these links by using the following strategies. You should note how closely they are tied to good listening and notetaking strategies.

### Tips for moving information from short-term to long-term memory

- Make a deliberate decision to remember the specific data. “I need to remember Richard’s name” creates stronger links than just wishing you had a better memory for names.
- Link the information to your everyday life. Ask yourself, “Why is it important that I remember this material?”—and answer it.
- Link the information to other information you already have “stored,” especially the key themes of the course, and you will recall the data more easily. Ask yourself how this is related to other information you have. Look for ways to tie items together.
- Mentally group similar individual items into “buckets.” By doing this, you are creating links, for example, among terms to be memorized.
- Use visual imagery. Picture the concept vividly in your mind. Make those images big, bold, and colorful—even silly!
- Break information down into manageable “chunks.”
- Work from general information to the specific. People usually learn best when they get the big picture first, and then look at the details.
- Eliminate distractions.
- Test your memory often. Try to write down everything you know about a specific subject, from memory. Then go back and check your notes and textbook to see how you did.



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- Learning at college goes beyond the memorization of facts; you are required to understand your subject materials so that you can think about it in meaningful ways and apply it to new situations.
- The academic learning cycle of preparing, absorbing, capturing and reviewing can help you better understand and use the information and skills presented in your courses.
- Short-term memory holds a limited amount of information that you process at one time, but it is temporary; long-term memory stores information by creating complex linkages that helps you recall important information at a later time. Moving information from short-term to long-term memory takes deliberate action on your part.



Want more? The Learning Portal includes a section on Memorizing and Understanding Concepts in their Study Skill Hub.

# 13. Reading

Active reading is a planned, deliberate set of strategies to engage with text-based materials with the purpose of increasing your understanding. This is a key skill you need to master for college. Along with listening, it is the primary method for absorbing new ideas and information in college. But active reading also applies to and facilitates the other steps of the learning cycle; it is critical for preparing, capturing, and reviewing, too.

In college, most professors do not spend much time reviewing the reading assignment in class. Rather, they expect that you have done the reading assignment before coming to class and understand the material. The class lecture or discussion is often based on that expectation. Tests, too, are based on that expectation. This is why active reading is so important, it's up to you to do the reading and comprehend what you read.

Note: It may not always be clear on a professor's syllabus, but the corresponding textbook chapter for the topics listed for that week should be read before coming to class.



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# How Do You Read to Learn?



Photo by Blaz Photo from Unsplash

The four steps of active reading are almost identical to the four phases of the learning cycle—and that is no coincidence! Active reading is learning through reading the written word, so the learning cycle naturally applies.

Active reading involves these steps:

1. Preparing
2. Reading
3. Capturing the key ideas
4. Reviewing

Let's take a look at how to use each step when reading.

## Preparing to Read

Your textbook as a whole – Start by thinking about why your professor has chosen this text. Look at the table of contents; how does it compare with the course syllabus?

Your chapter as a whole – Explore the chapter by scanning the pages of the chapter to get a sense of what the chapter is about. Look at the headings, illustrations and tables. Read the introduction and summary. Understanding the big picture of the chapter will help you add the details when doing close reading.

Give yourself direction by creating a purpose or quest for your reading. This will help you become more actively engaged in your reading. Create questions to find the answers to in your reading using the headings of each section. You may also have learning objectives listed at the front of each chapter which could be turned into questions or you may have chapter review questions prepared for you at the end of the chapter.

## Reading

Take the first question you have prepared and think about what you already know about this question. Jot the question down on paper. Begin to read the chapter and stop when you have found the answer.

Write down the answer in short form. Leave some space for additional notes you may want to add later and add the next question. Continue reading this way until you are done with the chapter or are done studying for this session.

## Capturing the key ideas

Before you put away your textbook and notes at the end of a reading session, go back through the questions you answered and pull out key ideas and words. You can highlight these, jot them in the space you left below your answer or note them in the margins.

## Reviewing what you read

For each question, cover up the answer and key ideas you have written. Can you still answer the question? Check your mental review against what you have written.

## Seven Reading Principles



Image by dizanna from DepositPhotos



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the text. You can view it online here:

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**1◆Read the assigned material.** I know this sounds like a no-brainer, but you might be surprised to learn how many students don't read the assigned material. Often, it takes longer to read the material than had been anticipated. Sometimes it is not interesting material to us and we procrastinate reading it. Sometimes we're busy and it is just not a priority. It makes it difficult to learn the information your instructor wants you to learn if you do not read about it before coming to class.

**2◆Read it when assigned.** This is almost as big of a problem for students as the first principle. You will benefit exponentially from reading assignments when they are assigned (which usually means reading them before the instructor lectures on them). If there is a date for a reading on your syllabus, finish reading it before that date. The background knowledge you will attain from reading the information will help you learn and connect information when your instructor lectures on it, and it will leave you better prepared for class discussions. Further, if your instructor assigns you 70 pages to read by next week, don't wait until the night before to read it all. Break it down into chunks. Try scheduling time each day to read 10 or so pages. It takes discipline and self-control but doing it this way will make understanding and remembering what you read much easier.

**3◆Take notes when you read.** You may recall Hermann Ebbinghaus' research from a previous chapter. He determined that 42% of information we take in is lost after only 20 minutes without review. For the same reasons that it's important to take notes during lectures, it's important to take notes when you are reading. Your notes will help you concentrate, remember and review.

**4◆Relate the information to you.** We remember information that we deem is important. The strategy then is to make what you are studying important to you. Find a way to directly relate what you are studying to something in your life. Sometimes it is easy and sometimes it is not. But if your attitude is "I will never use this information" and "it's not important," chances are good that you will not remember it.

**5◆Read with a dictionary or use an online dictionary.** Especially with information that is new to us, we may not always recognize all the words in a textbook or their meanings. If you read without a dictionary and you don't know what a word means, you probably still won't know what it means when you finish reading. Students who read with a dictionary (or who look the word up online) expand their vocabulary and have a better understanding of the text. Take the time to look up words you do not know. Another strategy is to try to determine definitions of unknown words by their context, thus eliminating the interruption to look up words.

**6◆Ask a classmate or instructor when you have questions or if there are concepts you**

**do not understand.** Visiting an instructor's office hours is one of the most underutilized college resources. I think some students are shy about going, and I understand that, but ultimately, it's your experience, and it's up to you if you want to make the most of it. If you go, you will get answers to your questions; at the same time, you'll demonstrate to your instructor that their course is important to you. Find out when your professor's office hours are (they are often listed in the syllabus), ask before or after class or e-mail your professor to find out. Be polite and respectful.

**7♦Read it again.** Some students will benefit from reading the material a second or third time as it allows them to better understand the material. The students who understand the material the best usually score the highest on exams. It may be especially helpful to reread the chapter just after the instructor has lectured on it.

Adapted from Nissila, P. (2016). How to learn like a pro! CC BY. Open Oregon Educational Resources.

## SQ<sub>4</sub>R – Reading Model

Our Read to Learn model is our favored way to approach college level reading, but it is not the only model. A very similar strategy is SQ<sub>4</sub>R.

### SQ<sub>4</sub>R Six Steps:

1. **SURVEY:** Flip through the chapter quickly to get a sense of what is covered. Look at headings and key terms, and read the final paragraph.
2. **QUESTION:** Turn headings into questions to guide your reading. You can keep track of your questions by using the Cornell Method of note-taking.
3. **READ:** Read the chapter, looking for the answer to the questions you posed.
4. **REFLECT:** Think about what you have read, and relate it to other information you have learned.
5. **RECITE:** Without looking at the text, restate your question and formulate an answer in your own words.
6. **REVIEW:** At the end of the chapter look over your notes and familiarize yourself with key points.



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## Troubleshooting Your Reading



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## Tech Tools for Reading

As a student at St. Clair College, you have access to Microsoft 365 Online as well as the option to download MS Office products on to your computer and device. Microsoft has a number of tools that can help you with your reading, particularly with your reading of online material. Let's take a look at three tech tools for reading:

- Reading View and Immersive Reader in MS Edge Browser
- Immersive Reader in other MS Office products
- Microsoft Lens

### Reading View and Immersive Reader in MS Edge Browser

When on a website that includes an article or long text passage, you can strip way all the images, ads, and other visual distractions on clicking on the “open book” icon on the

address bar in MS Edge Browsers. You are presented with just the text formatted for easy reading.

You could just read the text in this view or you can take advantage of more features in Immersiver Reader. This includes changing the font and font size, changing background and font color, highlighting parts of the sentences, and having the text READ ALOUD to you!

Instructions: Use Immersive Reader in MS Edge

Immersive Reader is available in a variety of Office products including:

- Word
- Teams
- Outlook
- Powerpoint
- Forms
- OneNote
- Flipgrid
- Microsoft Lens

While Immersive Reader can be used by all students as a productivity tool, students with learning disabilities, dyslexia, low vision and other disabilities can use Immersive Reader to ease challenges they experience with the kinds and volume of reading at the college level.



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## Microsoft Lens

Microsoft Lens is a free app available for IOS and Android devices. Office Lens is used with your camera to capture text written on whiteboards, flyers, signs, handouts and more.

Office Lens can save these images to various formats and can also transform the

information to editable text.

- You can capture a sign and Office Lens can translate the text to another language or read it out loud using Immersive Reader.
- You can capture a chart on a printed handout and Office Lens can save it as an Excel Spreadsheet.
- You can capture your professor's notes on a whiteboard and save as an image or add the text to your OneNote binder for that class.

## Do Quick Research

As you read, you might run into ideas, words, or phrases you don't understand, or the text might refer to people, places, or events you're unfamiliar with. It's tempting to skip over those and keep reading, and sometimes that actually works. But keep in mind that when you read something written by a professional writer or academic, they've written with such precision that every word carries meaning and contributes to the whole. Therefore, skipping over words or ideas could change the meaning of the text or leave the meaning incomplete.

When you're reading and come to words and ideas you're unfamiliar with, you may want to stop and take a moment to do a bit of quick research. Google is a great tool for this—plug in the idea or word and see what comes up. Keep on digging until you have an answer, and then, to help retain the information, take a minute to write a note about it.

Adapted from Burnell, C., Wood, J., Babin, M., Pesznecker, S. & Rosevear, N. (2020). The word on college reading and writing. CC BY. Open Oregon Educational Resources.



# Reading Graphics



*Image by 200degrees from Pixabay*

Listed below are various types of data found on most graphics, whether a pie chart, bar graph, line chart, or other type. The key to comprehending graphics and using them to get more meaning from a textbook chapter or an article, or to answer study questions, is to pay close attention to the typical elements of the graphic. Not every graphic includes all of the elements listed.

1. Title
2. Captions
3. Legend
4. Axis information (vertical information, or “Y” data, and horizontal information, or “X” data)
5. Publication date (important for the most current information)
6. Publisher (important for credibility)
7. Labels
8. Color (used to differentiate and compare data)

9. Size (also used to represent comparisons)
10. Spatial positions (helps for comparing and contrasting)
11. Patterns represented by the content, itself, and
12. Trends that appear more evident when viewing the visual representation of the data.

It is easy to overlook all of the information present in a graphic, so give yourself enough time to note all the elements and their meanings before answering questions about them. Adapted from Nissila, P. (2016). How to learn like a pro! CC BY. Open Oregon Educational Resources.

## What about other kinds of books?

Textbooks aren't the only books you can read for information about your field or topics you want to learn about. Here is a video about how to take notes while reading for personal interest as well as to supplement your textbook reading.



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## Additional Reading Tips:

The four steps to active reading provide a proven approach to effective learning from texts. Following are some tips you can use to enhance your reading even further:

- Pace yourself. Figure out how much time you have to complete the reading assignment. Divide the assignment into smaller blocks rather than trying to read the entire assignment in one sitting.
- Schedule your reading. Set aside blocks of time, preferably at the time of the day when you are most alert, to do your reading assignments.
- Read your most difficult assignments early in your reading time, when you are freshest.
- Get yourself in the right space. Choose to read in a quiet, well-lit space. Your chair should be comfortable but provide good support.
- Avoid distractions. Active reading takes place in your short-term memory. Every time you move from task to task, you have to “reboot” your short-term memory and you lose the continuity of active reading.
- Avoid reading fatigue. Work for about fifty minutes, and then give yourself a break for five to ten minutes. Put down the book, walk around, get a snack, stretch, or do some deep knee bends. Short physical activity will do wonders to help you feel refreshed.
- Make your reading interesting. Try connecting the material you are reading with your class lectures or with other chapters. Ask yourself where you disagree with the author. Approach finding answers to your questions like an investigative reporter. Carry on a mental conversation with the author.



Photo by Sharon McCutcheon on Unsplash



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## Key Takeaways

- You are expected to keep up with your chapter and other readings independently. While your professor may not remind you, the expectation is that you will have read and understood the chapter material for the topics listed in the course outline for that week BEFORE class begins.
- Active reading is a process of preparing, reading, capturing key ideas and reviewing.
- To prepare, scan the chapter to find out what the chapter is about. Give yourself direction by creating questions. Write down your first question and read until you find the answer. Write down your answer, leave some space and move on to the next question. Repeat. At the end of your reading session, go back and pull out key ideas and words to add in the spaces between questions. Review by mentally answering the questions and check yourself against your reading notes.



Want More? The Learning Portal has more ideas about how to Read college level materials.

# 14. Notetaking

When listening to a professor lecture, or your boss giving directions, how do you remember the details? Most people remember the basic idea, but need help to understand and remember the fine points that are often important. First, consider how you learn. People have several senses to absorb information that is compiled and sorted in the brain. Using this information frequently after it is acquired helps keep that



*Image by Mediamodifier from Pixabay*

idea easily accessible, so the more you use it, the stronger your memory and understanding of that idea. Recording this information in a variety of formats also helps to present that information to your brain in several ways, which also increases your memory and understanding. So, if you hear something once and never repeat it, it will be buried deeper than if you express the idea to someone else or in writing. Each time you bring that idea to the surface and express it in any format (orally, written, demonstration, etc.), you strengthen your understanding and memory of the concept. Notes are a system to write new ideas and organize them so that you can recall them readily.

Notes also provide a venue for a listener or reader to converse with the author of the idea. As you write the ideas presented, you may have questions to ask or comments to share about the concept, include a place for these additional tidbits. Ballenger (2012) shared, notes are useful to have a dialog with an author or presenter, and are often the foundation of research. So, converse with the author with questions and comments about what is shared in your notes.

Excerpt from *Bridging the Gap: A Guide to College-Level Research* by Catherine J Gray is licensed under a CC BY License

## Effective notetaking is important because it:

- supports your listening efforts,
- allows you to test your understanding of the material,

- helps you remember the material better when you write key ideas down,
- gives you a sense of what the professor thinks is important,
- creates your “ultimate study guide.”

There are various forms of taking notes, and which one you choose depends on both your personal style and the professor’s approach to the material. Each can be used in a notebook, index cards, or in a digital form on your laptop. No specific type is good for all students and all situations, so we recommend that you develop your own style, but you should also be ready to modify it to fit the needs of a specific class or professor. To be effective, all of these methods require you to listen actively and to think; merely jotting down words the professor is saying will be of little use to you.



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## Styles of Notetaking

### Lists

Lists are a sequential notation of ideas as they are presented. Lists may be short phrases or complete paragraphs describing ideas in more detail. This method is what most students use as a fallback if they haven’t learned other methods. This method typically requires a lot of writing, and you may find that you are not keeping up with the professor. It is not easy for students to prioritize ideas in this method.

The list method is usually not the best choice because it is focused exclusively on capturing as much of what the professor says as possible, not on processing the information.

Most students who have not learned effective study skills use this method, because it's easy to think that this is what notetaking is all about.

## Outlines

The outline method places most important ideas along the left margin, which are numbered with roman numerals. Supporting ideas to these main concepts are indented and are noted with capital letters. Under each of these ideas, further detail can be added, designated with an Arabic number, a lowercase letter, and so forth. A good method to use when material presented by the professor is well organized. Easy to use when taking notes on your computer. The advantage of the outline method is that it allows you to prioritize the material.

At first you may have trouble identifying when the professor moves from one idea to another. This takes practice and experience with each professor, so don't give up! In the early stages, you should use your syllabus to determine what key ideas the professor plans to present. Your reading assignments before class can also give you guidance in identifying the key ideas. After class be sure to review your notes and then summarize the class in one or two short paragraphs using your own words. This summary will significantly affect your recall and will help you prepare for the next class.



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## Concept Maps

When designing a concept map, place a central idea in the center of the page and then add lines and new circles in the page for new ideas. Use arrows and lines to connect the various ideas. Great method to show relationships among ideas. Also good if the professor tends to hop from one idea to another and back.



Image by TeroVesalainen from Pixabay

This is a very graphic method of notetaking that is especially good at capturing the relationships among ideas. Concept maps harness your visual sense to understand complex material “at a glance.” They also give you the flexibility to move from one idea to another and back easily so they are helpful if your professor moves freely through the material.

To develop a concept map, start by using your syllabus to rank the ideas you will listen to by level of detail, from high-level or abstract ideas to detailed facts. Select an overriding idea from the professor’s lecture and place it in a circle in the middle of the page. Then create branches off that circle to record the more detailed information, creating additional limbs as you need them. Arrange the branches with others that interrelate closely. When a new high-level idea is presented, create a new circle with its own branches. Link together circles or concepts that are related. Use arrows and symbols to capture the relationship between the ideas. For example, an arrow may be used to illustrate cause or effect, a double-pointed arrow to illustrate dependence, or a dotted arrow to illustrate impact or effect. As with all notetaking methods, you should summarize the chart in one or two paragraphs of your own words after class.



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# Notetaking Video



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## Develop Your Notetaking Style

Many students combine elements from each of these methods to create their own style. No matter what style you use, there are several tips to help your notes work for you.

- First, make sure you leave *white space* on every page to add details you discover were omitted as you wrote the original notes. Crowding each page with details leaves no room for questions and clarification you discover when you review them, so leave space for questions and the answers you need to understand your notes at the same level or better than when the information was introduced.
- Secondly, make sure you review your notes on a daily basis to make sure the concepts are clear and accessible in your memory. As you review, *add the questions and details* you left room for originally.
- Thirdly, *express the ideas and concepts* in writing, orally or demonstrate them with props each time you review. Many students find reviewing their notes with a study partner helps with this process, since there is someone to listen to their explanation that can notice gaps and inaccuracies, raise questions and together the students refine their understanding of the material.

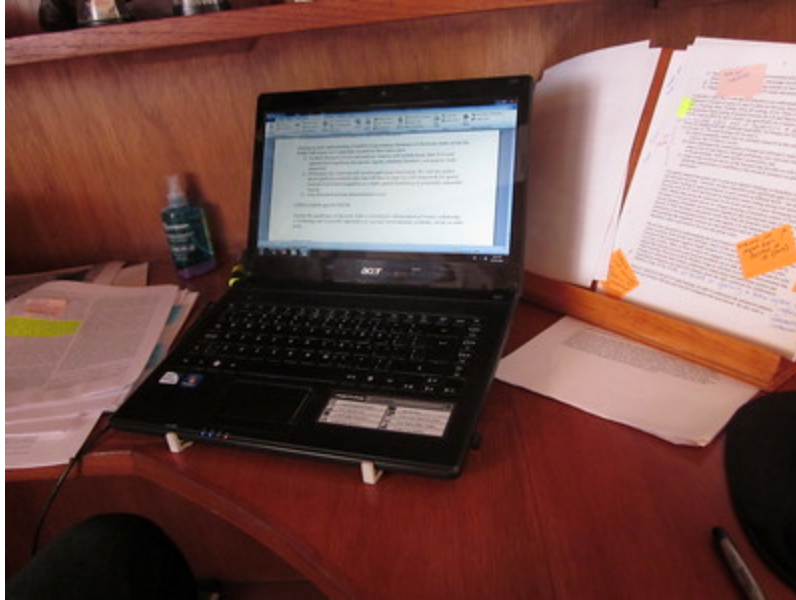


Photo by Raul Pacheco-Vega on Flickr

In summary, make sure your notes explain the material in a manner that you, the *student can understand* and refer to anytime for a review of the concepts. Use abbreviations, symbols and phrases that make sense to you, and write the information in a style that makes sense to you. Grammar, punctuation, capitalization should not be a concern, rather focus on recording the main ideas presented by the author or speaker, knowing that you will review them later and fill in the details. Many students may ask to use your notes if they miss class, and they may not be able to understand your notes, which is understandable if you wrote them in your personal style. Each student needs to take notes in their own style, focusing on the main ideas.

In many situations, notes are useful to prepare for tests that may happen a month or two later, and students need to refer to material that has been buried with more recent content. Make sure that the notes taken are understood clearly over time. You might even make a “clean copy” at the end of each semester, so you can review them if you have classes that build on the information presented, or comprehensive exams that are often part of graduation requirements.

Many students understand each of these steps, but don’t know what to put in their notes. Much of the information presented is material already known, and the student does not want to make the effort or use the paper to write down material they already know. This often leads to frustration for the instructor as well, because the instructor is using the introductory material to lay a foundation essential to the understanding of future concepts.

- The general guideline for students is to know that *information is presented for a purpose*, and students need to understand all of the material presented. A student's choice to not include elementary material may prove detrimental to the understanding of more advanced concepts.
- If material appears to be “too basic” to be included in notes, at least include a simple reference to the idea presented. This can be helpful when reviewing with a partner as well, especially if that partner has questions about the concept.

Adapted from *Bridging the Gap: A Guide to College-Level Research* by Catherine J Gray is licensed under a CC BY License

## Taking Notes in Class

Effective notetaking is important because it

- supports your listening efforts,
- allows you to test your understanding of the material,
- helps you remember the material better when you write key ideas down,
- gives you a sense of what the professor thinks is important,
- creates your “ultimate study guide.”

There are various forms of taking notes, and which one you choose depends on both your personal style and the professor's approach to the material. Each can be used in a notebook, index cards, or in a digital form on your laptop. No specific type is good for all students and all situations, so we recommend that you develop your own style, but you should also be ready to modify it to fit the needs of a specific class or professor. To be effective, all of these methods require you to listen actively and to think; merely jotting down words the professor is saying will be of little use to you.

## General Tips on Notetaking



*Photo by cottonbro studio from Pexels*

Regardless of what notetaking method you choose, there are some notetaking habits you should get into for all circumstances and all courses:

1. Be prepared. Make sure you have the tools you need to do the job.
2. Write on only one side of the paper. This will allow you to integrate your reading notes with your class notes.
3. Label, number, and date all notes at the top of each page. This will help you keep organized.
4. When using a laptop, position it such that you can see the professor and white board right over your screen. This will keep the professor in your field of vision even if you have to glance at your screen or keyboard from time to time. Make sure your focus

remains with the professor and not on your laptop.

5. Don't try to capture everything that is said. Listen for the big ideas and write them down. Make sure you can recognize the professor's emphasis cues and write down all ideas and keywords the professor emphasizes.
6. Copy anything the professor writes on the board. It's likely to be important.
7. Leave space between ideas. This allows you to add additional notes later.
8. Use signals and abbreviations. Which ones you use is up to you, but be consistent so you will know exactly what you mean by "att." when you review your notes.
9. Review your notes as soon after class as possible, the same day is best. This is the secret to making your notes work! Review the notes to call out the key ideas and organize facts. Fill in any gaps in your notes and clean up or redraw hastily drawn diagrams.
10. Write a summary of the main ideas of the class in your own words. This process is a great aid to recall.

## How Can You Use Notes to Review?

- **Do review them.** If you take notes and don't review them, you will forget as much as a person who just listened. Use distributed study; do multiple reviews with time intervals between reviews.
- **Review soon after the lecture.** You will remember more right away than if you wait till later and your memory has gone cold. This early review will repeat associations you made during the lecture and add new ones. When you review two or three times more, each review makes the associations firmer so that test questions about the new knowledge will trigger strong associations and let you recall it.
- **Review both your lecture notes and similar textbook passages at the same time.** It will build associations that make memory easier.
- **If you use the Cornell system, write key words and questions in the left margin.** Then cover the right side, look at the material on the left, and try to recite the full material. Then you should check your memory by looking at the material on the right. If you missed some points, cover it up and try again.
- **If it's possible, try to recite aloud.** If not, try to "talk to yourself" silently. Do not mumble in your head. Do not make vague pictures of the answer. Vagueness in review causes poor memory. Since you know you will be tested with words, you need to use clear precise words while you review.

- **Think about the meaning of the material.** Compare where it is similar to textbook material or different.
- **Study the examples** until you can tell how the principles are used in them.

Exerpt from Taking Useful Notes by Dan Hodges under a CC BY SA licence.

## Why take notes on online content?



*Photo by Christin Hume from Unsplash*

After all, you can easily search for it and read it again. However, re-reading is not always the most effective use of time. Taking good notes helps you to quickly review the key points in the material that you have read.

Taking notes is also an effective learning strategy. Intentionally annotating the texts that you read requires you to critically engage with the material. You are doing the work of identifying the important content, and considering its implications for your course and your professional practice. This practice facilitates deep learning, and ensures that you

remember key material.

Choose the note taking method that is most effective for you. You may prefer traditional notebooks. Many readers underline, highlight, and put key notes in the margins of their books. You may prefer to create typewritten notes, and to store these notes in using your electronic notebook/ information management system.

## MS OneNote

As a St. Clair College student, you have access to Microsoft 365 and all the Microsoft Apps. One of these apps can be very helpful to taking and managing notes on your devices and computer. MS OneNote is a digital Note-taking app that allows you to type, draw, and dictate your notes in easy to organize notebooks.



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## Hypothesis

One tool that can help you take notes electronically is Hypothesis. Hypothesis is a free tool that you add to the Chrome browser that allows you to highlight and add notes to online text. In this video, you will learn how to install Hypothesis, create notes and highlights, and create a group to work collaboratively with your classmates.



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## How To Take Notes When Reading Articles



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## How to Draw to Remember More



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Key Takeaways

- Taking notes is more than creating a record of what a professor said in class, it supports active listening, aids in remembering, gives clues to important concepts as well as tests your understanding of the materials and creates a study guide.
- Lists, outlines, concept maps and the Cornell method are ways to take notes; the later three are preferred because they provide opportunities to prioritize and organize the materials.
- It is vital to return to your notes after class to review, make corrections, fill in gaps and call out key ideas.



Want More? Check out more ideas for Notetaking from the Learning Portal.

## 15. The Writing Process



*Image by Free-Photos from Pixabay*

Writing is one of the key skills all successful students must acquire. In college courses, writing is how ideas are exchanged, from scholars to students and from students back to scholars. While the grade in some courses may be based mostly on class participation, oral reports, or multiple choice exams, writing is by far the single most important form of instruction and assessment. Professors expect you to learn by writing, and they will grade you on the basis of your writing.

As a form of communication, writing is different from oral communication in several ways. Professors expect writing to be well thought out and organized and to explain ideas fully.

In oral communication, the listener can ask for clarification, but in written work, everything must be clear within the writing itself.

Our goal here is to introduce some important writing principles, if you're not yet familiar with them, or to remind you of things you may have already learned in a writing course. As with all advice, always pay the most attention to what your professor says – the terms of a specific assignment may overrule a tip given here!

Academic writing refers to writing produced in a college environment. Often this is writing that responds to other writing – to the ideas or controversies that you'll read about. While this definition sounds simple, academic writing may be very different from other types of writing you have done in the past. Often college students begin to understand what academic writing really means only after they receive negative feedback on their work.



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## The Writing Process

Writing professors distinguish between process and product. The expectations described here all involve the “product” you turn in on the due date. Although you should keep in mind what your product will look like, writing is more involved with how you get to that goal. “Process” concerns how you work to actually write a paper.

What do you actually do to get started? How do you organize your ideas? Why do you make changes along the way as you write? Thinking of writing as a process is important because writing is actually a complex activity. Even professional writers rarely sit down at a keyboard and write out an article beginning to end without stopping along the way to revise portions they have drafted, to move ideas around, or to revise their opening and thesis. Professionals and students alike often say they only realized what they wanted to say

after they started to write. This is why many professors see writing as a way to learn. Many writing professors ask you to submit a draft for review before submitting a final paper.

## How Can I Make the Process Work for Me?

No single set of steps automatically works best for everyone when writing a paper, but writers have found a number of steps helpful. Your job is to try out ways that your professor suggests and discover what works for you. As you'll see in the following list, the process starts before you write a word.

Generally there are three stages in the writing process:

1. Preparing before drafting, sometimes called prewriting
2. Writing the draft
3. Revising and editing

Involved in these three stages are a number of separate tasks—and that's where you need to figure out what works best for you.

# Preparing and Drafting

## Preparing

Before you begin writing:

- Understand the requirements of the assignment.
- Conduct your research.
- Brainstorm ideas for your assignment based on the requirements, your course materials and your research.
- Outline your paper structure and note where your research will help to develop your ideas.



*Image by Pexels from Pixabay*

## Writing the draft

Title the paper to identify your topic. This may sound obvious, but it needs to be said. Some students think of a paper as an exercise and write something like “Assignment 2: History 101” on the title page. Such a title gives no idea about how you are approaching the assignment or your topic. Your title should prepare your reader for what your paper is about or what you will argue.

In your introduction, define your topic and establish your approach or sense of purpose. Think of your introduction as an extension of your title. Professors, like all readers, appreciate feeling oriented by a clear opening.

Build from a thesis or a clearly stated sense of purpose. Many college assignments require you to make some form of an argument. To do that, you generally start with a statement that needs to be supported and build from there. Your thesis is that statement; it is a guiding assertion for the paper. Be clear in your own mind of the difference between your topic and your thesis. The topic is what your paper is about; the thesis is what you argue about the topic. Some assignments do not require an explicit argument and thesis, but even then

you should make clear at the beginning your main emphasis, your purpose, or your most important idea.



*Image from Clipart Library*

Develop ideas patiently. You might, like many students, worry about boring your reader with too much detail or information. But college professors will not be bored by carefully explained ideas, well-selected examples, and relevant details.

Integrate, do not just plug in relevant quotations, graphs, and illustrations. Remember that a quotation, graph, or illustration does not make a point for you. You make the point first and then use such material to help back it up. Make sure the reader understands why you are using it and how it fits in at that place in your paper.

Document your sources appropriately. If your paper involves research of any kind, indicate clearly the use you make of outside sources. If you have used those sources well, there is no reason to hide them. Careful research and the thoughtful application of the ideas and evidence of others is part of what college professors value.

# Microsoft Dictate

Microsoft Dictate is speech to text software that allows you to speak into your microphone and have the text appear in Microsoft Word and other software products. This can be a productivity tool for many students!



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Microsoft has helpful articles on how to use Dictate in Word Online and in products such as Outlook, OneNote, and Powerpoint.

## Dictating Quick Tips

- **Use a quality microphone.** While you can use the microphone built into your desktop or laptop computer, you will get better accuracy using a headset.
- **Think before you speak.** May a plan for your content before you begin. You can simply mentally review before you begin speaking or create a short outline by hand.
- **Speak in phrases.** The dictation AI figures out what you are saying by comparing your spoken words to common speak patterns, speaking in phrases helps improve the accuracy of the text that will be added to Word.
- **Speak clearly.** Speak like an announcer or newscaster. You don't have to be loud but you do need to speak clearly without slang or jargon.
- **Speak punctuation out loud.** Add punctuation simply by saying comma, period, question mark and more out loud. You can also say "new line" to move text to the next line or "new paragraph" to add a new paragraph.
- **Check for mistakes.** You will still need to edit your paper to check for recognition errors and clarity as well as to set up special formatting.
- **Practice.** It takes a bit of practice to learn to use dictate smoothly and you will see your accuracy improve when you do.



# Revising and Editing

## *Revising*

Revising suggests seeing again in a new light generated by all the thought that went into the first draft. Revising a draft usually involves significant changes including the following:

- Making organizational changes like the reordering of paragraphs (don't forget that new transitions will be needed when you move paragraphs)
- Clarifying the thesis or adjustments between the thesis and supporting points that follow
- Cutting material that is unnecessary or irrelevant
- Adding new points to strengthen or clarify the presentation

Another way of looking at the revising process is to read your paper with one focus at a time. Point First Legal Writing Academy from the University of Ottawa describes this as layered editing in the video below.



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## Editing

Correcting a sentence early on may not be the best use of your time since you may cut the sentence entirely. Editing and proofreading are focused, late-stage activities for style and correctness. They are important final parts of the writing process, but they should not be confused with revision itself. Editing and proofreading a draft involve these steps:

- Careful spell-checking. This includes checking the spelling of names.
- Attention to sentence-level issues. Be especially attentive to sentence boundaries, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and pronoun referents.
- You can also attend, at this stage, to matters of style.

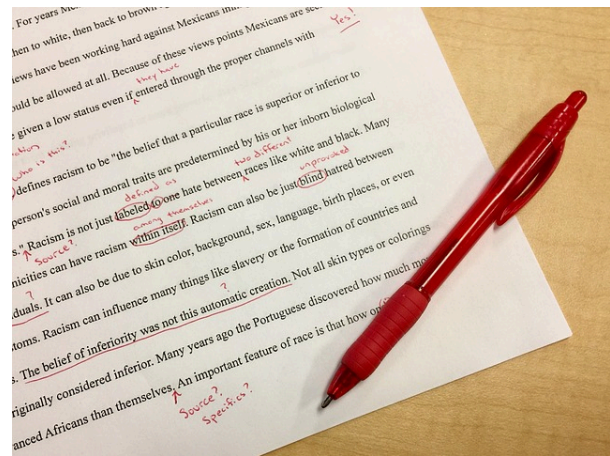


Image by Anne Karakash from Pixabay

Remember to get started on a writing assignment early so that you complete the first draft well before the due date, allowing you needed time for genuine revision and careful editing.



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## Microsoft Word Editor

Microsoft Word now has a powerful Editor function that can help improve your writing. It will check your spell and grammar as well as give you suggestions for conciseness, formality, clarity, and more. It also has the ability to check your writing against online documents looking for similarities which can help you avoid citation errors and plagiarism. Before you submit any written assignment, take a few minutes to run the Editor!

## Quick Introduction on how to use MS Word Editor:



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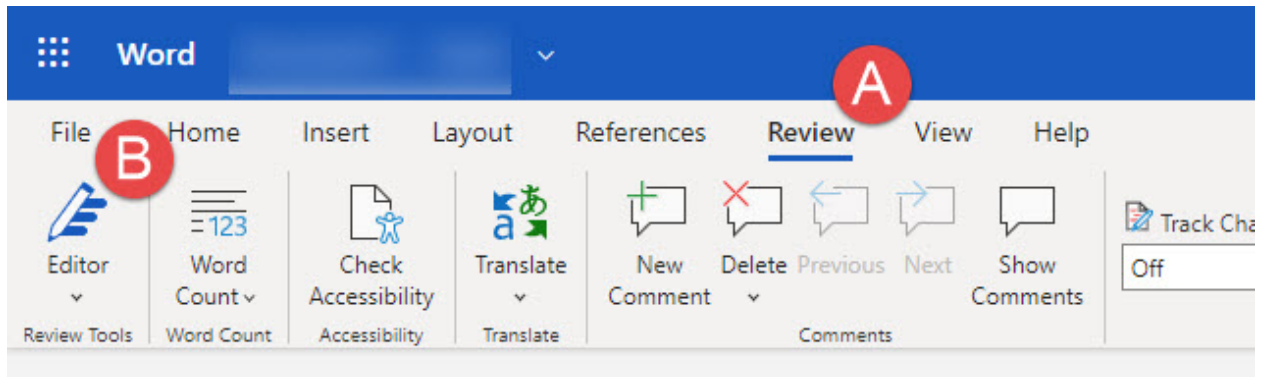
## Instructions for MS Word Editor

Microsoft Word Online's Editor offers a wide range of features that can help you proofread and edit your papers, including checking for similarities. Microsoft Word's editor makes various suggestions to improve writing, including:

- **Spelling and grammar:** checks for spelling and grammar errors and suggests corrections.
- **Conciseness:** suggests ways to simplify and shorten sentences.
- **Clarity:** identifies ambiguous or unclear phrases and suggests alternative phrasing.
- **Style:** checks for consistency in writing style, tone, and voice.
- **Vocabulary:** suggests alternative words to improve the variety and impact of your writing.
- **Punctuation:** checks for incorrect or inconsistent use of punctuation and suggests corrections.
- **Sentence structure:** identifies long or complex sentences and suggests ways to restructure them.
- **Formatting:** checks for inconsistencies in formatting, such as font size, spacing, and alignment.

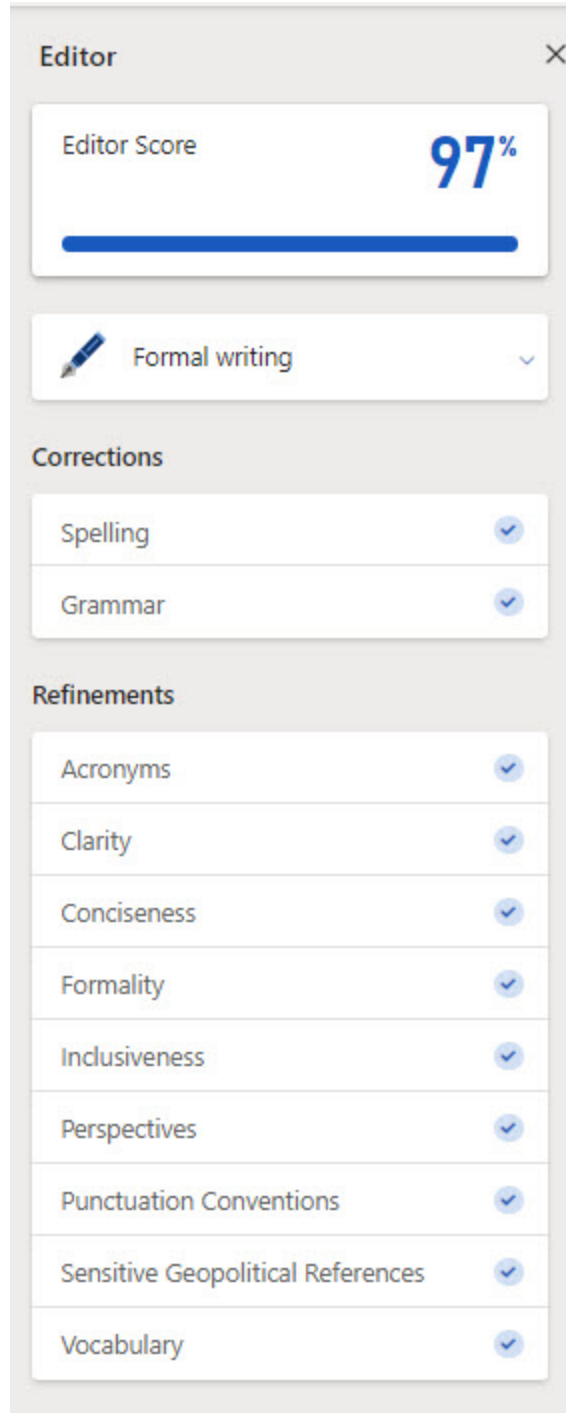
Here are the steps to use the Editor for proofreading and editing papers:

- Open your paper in Microsoft Word Online.
- Select Review tab in the ribbon.



Screenshot by Irene Stewart

- Select Editor in the Proofing section. This will open the Editor pane on the right side of the screen. In the Editor pane, you will see suggestions for grammar, spelling, and style.



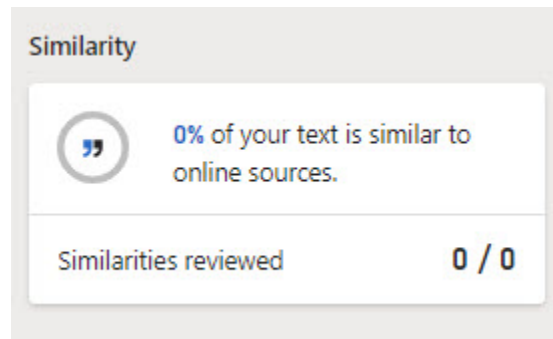
Screenshot by Irene Stewart

- Select each suggestion to see more information about it and to accept or reject the suggestion.

## Check for Similarities

The Similarity option in the Editor pane will check your document for any content that may have been copied from other sources. The Similarity checker will display a percentage score, indicating how much of your paper matches content from other online sources. To check for similarities:

- Select the Similarity option in the Editor pane.



*Screenshot by Irene Stewart*

- Select the score to see a detailed report that highlights the sections of your paper that match other sources.
- Review the highlighted sections and make any necessary changes to ensure that your paper is original and properly cited.

Once you have made all the necessary changes, save and submit your paper.

Learn more about Microsoft Editor

How to use Microsoft Editor

## Self-Edit Your Work





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### Key Takeaways

- Academic writing through assignments is one way that professors use to help you learn course concepts and check your understanding of course concepts.
- The final assignment you turn in is the product, however, this chapter is interested in the process of writing that includes three major steps: preparing, writing the draft, and revising and editing.
- Preparing before you write includes understanding your assignment, researching, brainstorming and outlining.
- Writing the draft starts with a good title, then developing a purpose or thesis, developing ideas, and integrating ideas from your course materials and research.
- Revising is making changes to the organization, logic or details to strengthen your work while editing is paying final attention to spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentences and style.
- Before you begin an assignment, understand what product the assignment is asking you to produce and use outlines and marking schemes to ensure you give specific areas of your assignment appropriate space.
- Plagiarism is representing another's words or ideas as your own. This can include blatant copying or using resources without proper citation. Avoid this when incorporating research into your writing.



Want more? The Learning Portal has more ideas for Editing and Proofreading.

# 16. Dealing With Assignments

## Understanding Your First Assignment

The number of assignments you will receive in a semester often surprises students. For some students, figuring out how to manage assignments is a new experience. For others who have had assignments in the past, the amount of work needed to complete assignments at the college level is what is unexpected. Most of the assignments you will receive will take longer than one session of study to complete. You will likely need to work on your assignment over several days or weeks. In this section, we will provide you with advice on how to understand the requirements of your assignment, and how to manage and track the tasks you will need to complete. We will provide you with some time management tips and an assignment tracker to try.

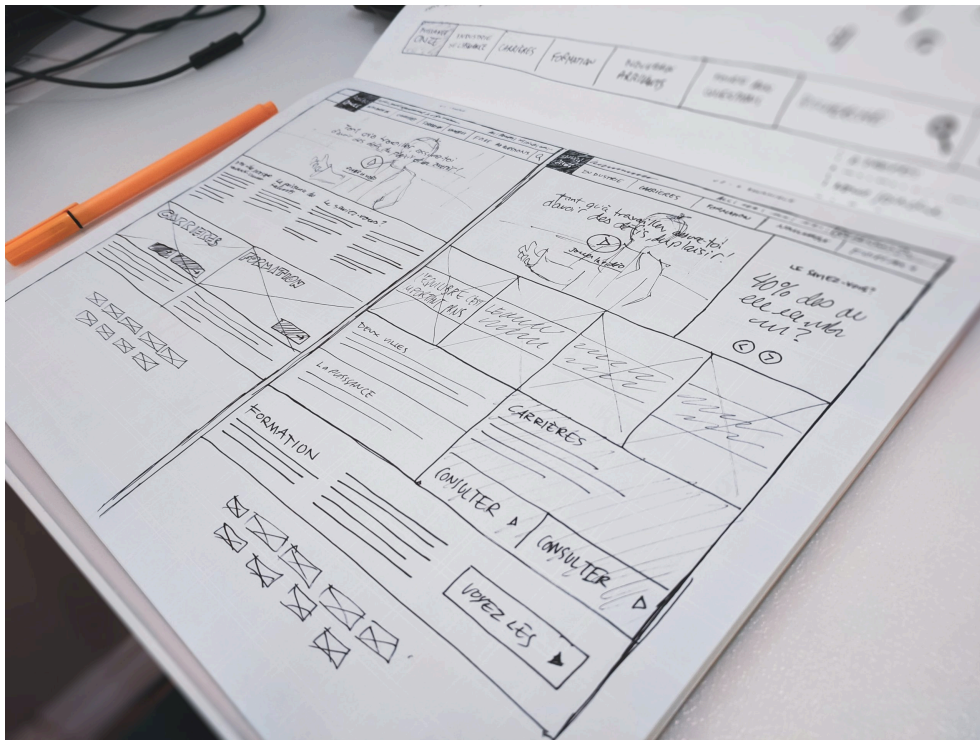


Photo by Sigmund from Unsplash



When you first get a writing assignment, pay attention first to keywords for how to approach the writing. These will also suggest how you may structure and develop your paper.

## Assignment Terms

Look for terms like these in the assignment:

**Summarize.** To restate in your own words the main point or points of another's work.

**Define.** To describe, explore, or characterize a keyword, idea, or phenomenon.

**Classify.** To group individual items by their shared characteristics, separate from other groups of items.

**Compare/contrast.** To explore significant likenesses and differences between two or more subjects.

**Analyze.** To break something, a phenomenon, or an idea into its parts and explain how those parts fit or work together.

**Argue.** To state a claim and support it with reasons and evidence.

**Synthesize.** To pull together varied pieces or ideas from two or more sources.

## Assignment Questions

Sometimes the keywords listed don't actually appear in the written assignment, but they are usually implied by the questions given in the assignment. What, why and how are common question words that require a certain kind of response. Look back at the keywords listed and think about which approaches relate to what, why, and how questions.

**What questions** usually prompt the writing of summaries, definitions, classifications, and sometimes compare-and-contrast essays.

**Why and how questions** typically prompt analysis, argument, and synthesis essays.

Successful academic writing starts with recognizing what the professor is requesting, or what you are required to do. So pay close attention to the assignment. Sometimes the essential information about an assignment is conveyed through class discussions, however, so be sure to listen for the keywords that will help you understand what the professor expects. If you feel the assignment does not give you a sense of direction, seek clarification. Ask questions that will lead to helpful answers.

## Outlines and Marking Schemes

Some professors will include an outline of different sections that they expect to see in your paper along with marks for each section. It is important to ensure you cover each section with sufficient detail to provide material to achieve the marks.

Pay attention to the areas with the most marks and devote more space in your paper to those areas. If your discussion section is worth 20 marks and your conclusion is worth 5 marks, the amount of space for your conclusion should be much less.

## Breaking Down Large Assignments



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## How to breakdown assignments into tasks

Breaking down a large writing assignment into manageable tasks can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed and make the writing process more manageable.

Here are some steps you can take to break down a large writing assignment into manageable tasks:

1. Understand the assignment: Read the assignment instructions carefully, and make sure you understand what is required. If you do not understand what you need to do, ask your professor as soon as possible.
2. Create a task list: What are the smaller tasks you need to do to complete this

assignment? Smaller tasks are activities like conducting research at the library or setting up group meetings for a group project.

3. Create a timeline: Create a timeline that includes all the tasks that need to be completed. Consider how much time you will need to complete that task and when you will work on it. Set due dates for each task.
4. Brainstorm ideas: Before you start writing, brainstorm ideas for the assignment. Think about the main points you want to cover, any research you need to do, and any supporting evidence you might need.
5. Create an outline: Once you have a list of ideas, create an outline for your assignment. An outline can help you organize your thoughts and make sure you cover all the necessary points.
6. Schedule time for research: Do your research before you begin writing. As you find sources, gather the information you will need to create a reference and take notes about essential information the source will provide and where this information fits in with your outline.
7. Schedule time for revision: Plan to review your work before you submit. This can include checking your work against the assignment instructions or rubric, making changes to the content, and proofreading.

Here is an example of this process:



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## Key Takeaway from video

- Breaking down a large or medium-sized assignment into smaller pieces can help

reduce stress, ensure completion of all parts of the assignment, and allow you to get other important tasks done too.

## Using an Assignment Tracker

Algonquin College provided a video to walk students through the process. This process and form can also be used to create a study plan to prepare for a test.



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## Time Management Considerations



*Photo by Brad Neathery from Unsplash*

Time management is the practice of organizing and prioritizing one's activities and tasks effectively in order to maximize productivity and achieve one's goals. For college students, time management involves creating a plan for allocating their time efficiently and balancing academic responsibilities with social activities, work, and personal obligations. It requires identifying tasks and goals, setting realistic deadlines, and using tools such as schedules, to-do lists, and reminders to stay on track. Effective time management helps students to reduce stress, increase productivity, and achieve academic success while still enjoying a balanced lifestyle.

Students often face challenges related to time management when faced with a large assignment. These challenges include:

- **Procrastination:** Students tend to put off starting a large writing assignment until the last minute, leaving themselves with insufficient time to complete the assignment.
- **Lack of Planning:** Many students do not adequately plan their time for the writing process, which can result in poor time management and a lower quality of work.
- **Perfectionism:** Students may spend too much time trying to perfect every aspect of

their writing, which can lead to time wastage and increased stress.

To overcome these challenges, here are some time management tips:

- **Break the Task into Smaller Parts:** Instead of attempting to complete the entire assignment in one sitting, break it down into smaller, more manageable parts, and set specific deadlines for each.
- **Create a Schedule:** Create a schedule for the writing process and stick to it. This will help you stay on track and ensure that you have enough time to complete the assignment.
- **Avoid Distractions:** Avoid any distractions that can lead to time wastage, such as social media, television, and video games.
- **Set Priorities:** Set priorities for your writing tasks, focusing on the most critical aspects of the assignment first.
- **Use Writing Tools:** Utilize writing tools such as spell check, grammar check, and citation generators to save time and reduce the need for extensive revisions.
- **Take Breaks:** Taking regular breaks can help you stay focused and prevent burnout, ensuring that you produce your best work.

## Avoiding Procrastination



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## Key Takeaways





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Want more? The Learning Portal has more ideas for Managing Assignments.

# 17. Evaluating Websites as Scholarly Sources

## Is this webpage credible?

There are several factors to questions you can ask when determining if a source is credible:

- When was the information published?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Where did the information come from?
- Do you trust the source?
- Can the information be verified in other reliable sources?
- Why was this information created?
- Does it seek to inform, provide facts, to sell, or to persuade you of something?
- Is there evidence of political, religious, institutional, or personal biases?
- Is the information objective and impartial?

It is always recommended to use multiple sources and to check their credibility and reliability before using them in your work.

To make remembering the factors to consider when evaluating sources, you can use the CRAAP test. A short video presents the CRAAP test below.

---

**Hot Tip:** If your assignment requires a specific number of references, consider at least three times that number before choosing the ones you will include in your assignment. For example, if you must supply 3 scholarly sources, scan over at least 9 sources and choose the best three for your topic.

---

Example from Irene:

I was searching for information about what documents a traveler would need when visiting Canada. I found a webpage from the Government of Canada. I know I can trust information from the Government of Canada.



← → ↻ 🏠 canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada.html

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

Search IRCC


Franglais

MENU ▾

[Canada.ca](#) > [Immigration and citizenship](#)

## Visit Canada

Find out what document you need to travel, visit family and friends, do business, or transit through Canada, and how to extend your stay.



- ▶ [Special measures for Syrian and Turkish temporary residents in Canada](#)
- ▶ [Special measures for Iranian temporary residents in Canada](#)

Screenshot by Irene Stewart

I scrolled down to the bottom of the page as I did not see a date. The bottom of the page indicated that this material was last updated on March 1, 2023. This is up-to-date information.

← → ↻ 🏠 canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada.html

**Help Centre**  
Find quick and direct answers to your questions, including how to complete application forms, extend your stay as a visitor, extend permits, and replace lost documents.

**Use advanced declaration before entering Canada**  
Submit your customs and immigration declaration before you enter Canada.

**Consultant fraud**  
If you give an immigration agent (consultant, lawyer or Quebec notary) money for their services, they're considered a paid representative and must be authorized.

▶ Report a problem or mistake on this page

🔄 Share this page

Date modified: 2023-07-17

Immigration and citizenship

Help Centre Contact us

Screenshot by Irene Stewart

This page did not have the information I was specifically looking for but instead of leaving this credible, timely website, I search using more specific words to find the information I was looking for regarding the documents one would need to visit Canada.

[Canada.ca](#) > [Immigration and citizenship](#)

## Visit Canada

Find out what document you need to travel, visit family and friends, do business, or transit through Canada, and how to extend your stay.



- ▶ Special measures for Syrian and Turkish temporary residents in Canada
- ▶ Special measures for Iranian temporary residents in Canada

Screenshot by Irene Stewart

Government of Canada. (2023). Visit Canada.

## 8 Tips for Evaluating Websites



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# Scholarly vs Popular Sources



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## The CRAPP Test



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## CRAAP Test Exercise



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Key Takeaways

- Evaluating websites as scholarly sources is essential for academic research to ensure credibility and reliability. Factors to consider when determining a source's credibility include:
  - a. Publication date: Check when the information was published to ensure it's up-to-date.
  - b. Intended audience: Identify who the target audience is to understand the source's purpose.
  - c. Source origin: Determine where the information came from and if it can be trusted.
  - d. Verification: Look for information that can be cross-referenced with other reliable sources.
  - e. Purpose: Analyze why the information was created (to inform, provide facts, sell, or persuade).
  - f. Biases: Assess if there are any political, religious, institutional, or personal biases.
  - g. Objectivity: Evaluate if the information is presented objectively and impartially.
- Using the CRAAP test (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose) is a helpful method for evaluating sources' credibility.
- It's recommended to use multiple sources and check their credibility and reliability before using them in academic work.
- When searching for sources, consider looking at least three times the required number of references to choose the most suitable ones for your topic.



Want More? The Learning Portal has information on Evaluating Evidence in their Health Sciences Research section.

# 18. Incorporating Information From Sources Into Your Writing

## Before we begin

Before we begin, let's review some common terminology used in this chapter.



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## How to Paraphrase and Summarize?



*Photo by Unseen Studio from Unsplash*

Paraphrasing and summarizing are important skills for academic writing as they allow you to incorporate information from webpages and other courses into your papers. This helps to demonstrate that you understand the information from the sources and how it relates to your assignment as well as assists you in avoiding plagiarism. Here is a discussion of the two skills:

**Paraphrasing:** Paraphrasing involves restating information from a source in your own words. This information is usually one idea or one fact. When paraphrasing, it is important to retain the meaning of the original text while using different words and sentence structure.

**Summarizing:** Summarizing involves condensing the main ideas of a source into a shorter form. The goal of summarizing is to capture the most important points of the source material while omitting fewer key details. Generally, a summary is a few sentences or one paragraph.

The basic steps for paraphrasing and summarizing are the same:

- Read the webpage carefully and highlight or take notes on the idea you want to include. Use keywords and phrases rather than copying a sentence or paragraph.
- Close the webpage and write down the main points of the webpage in your own words. This will help you avoid copying the original text.
- Compare your paraphrase or summary to the original text to ensure you retain the original's meaning while using your own words.
- Cite the source of the information using the appropriate citation style.

## Comparing Paraphrasing and Quoting



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# Process of Paraphrasing



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## Using Signal Verbs

If you want to smoothly integrate a smaller detail into your paper, use signal verbs. Avoid verbs like “says,” “writes,” “states” or “discusses” tend to be commonly over-used to signal a quotation and are vague. The list of signal verbs below offers suggestions for introducing quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material that convey more information about the purpose of the information in the original source: What is the author doing in the quoted passage? Is the author describing something? Explaining something? Arguing? Giving examples? Estimating? Recommending? Warning? Urging? Be sure the verb you choose accurately represents the intention of the source text.

Commonly used signal verbs (Last, 2019):

- **Making a claim:** argue, assert, believe, claim, emphasize, insist, remind, suggest, hypothesize, Maintains.
- **Recommending:** advocate, call for, demand, encourage, exhort, implore, plead, recommend, urge, warn.
- **Disagreeing or questioning:** challenge, complicate, criticize, qualify, counter, contradict, refute, reject, deny, question.
- **Showing:** illustrates, conveys, reveals, demonstrates, proposes, points out, exemplifies, indicates.
- **Expressing agreement:** agree, admire, endorse, support, affirm, corroborate, verify, reaffirm.
- **Additional signal verbs:** responds, assumes, speculates, debates, estimates, explains,

implies, uses.

Be careful with the phrasing after your signal verb. In some cases, you will use “that” to join the signal phrase to the summarized or paraphrased text:

- Smith argues that bottled water should not be allowed on college campuses (Smith, 20XX).

But not all signal verbs can be followed by “that.” We can use clauses with that after verbs related to thinking and after verbs related to saying.

## The ICE model



*Image from abbreviations.com*

The ICE model is a framework for incorporating sources into academic writing. The model consists of three components: Introduce, Cite, and Explain.

- **Introduce:** The first step is to introduce the source you will be using. This can be done by providing some background information on the author or the source itself. This



helps to establish the context of the source and its relevance to the topic being discussed.

- **Cite:** The second step is to provide the important information from the source and a citation for the source being used. This includes the author's name, the title of the work, and the publication information. The citation should follow the appropriate citation style guidelines.
- **Explain:** The last step is to explain how the source supports the point being made in the paper. The explanation should be detailed and provide a clear understanding of the source's contribution to the paper.



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## Example 1:

Here is an example paragraph using the ICE model for an attraction on a provincial tourism website:

**Introduce:** Located in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, the Banff Gondola is one of the top attractions in Alberta, Canada.

**Cite:** According to the Banff Gondola website, “the eight-minute ride to the top of Sulphur Mountain offers stunning panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and valleys” (Banff Gondola, n.d., para. 2).

**Explain:** Visitors to the Banff Gondola can enjoy a range of activities at the summit, including guided interpretive walks, a visit to the interactive Above Banff Interpretive Centre, and dining with a view at one of the on-site restaurants. The Banff Gondola also offers seasonal experiences, such as stargazing in the evening or snowshoeing in the winter months. As the Banff Gondola is a popular attraction, visitors are encouraged to book their tickets in advance to secure their spot on this unforgettable experience.

As mentioned in the Paraphrasing and Summerizing section, after reading the website

carefully, you should take some brief notes about the information you want to include in your paper. Here is an example of notes of the Banff Gondola attraction:

Sure, here is the outline rewritten in point form:

- Banff Gondola is a must-visit attraction in Alberta, Canada.
- Use a direct quote: “the eight-minute ride to the top of Sulphur Mountain offers stunning panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and valleys” (Banff Gondola, n.d., para. 2).
- Activities at the Summit: Guided interpretive walks, interactive Above Banff Interpretive Centre, On-site dining with a view
- Seasonal experiences such as stargazing in the evening or snowshoeing in the winter months.
- Importance of Booking Tickets in Advance

## Example 2:

Here is an example paragraph using the ICE model for a food critic’s review of a new restaurant:

**Introduction:** The restaurant critics from The New York Times recently visited the newly opened restaurant, La Petite Brasserie, in downtown Manhattan.

**Cite:** As noted in the review by restaurant critic Jane Doe, because of its innovative treatment of French cuisine dishes everyone is talking about La Petite Brasserie (Doe, 2022).

**Explain:** Doe’s review highlights several standout dishes, including the restaurant’s signature dish, the Coq Au Vin. She also praises the restaurant’s attention to detail in plating which enhances each dish. Overall, Doe’s review presents La Petite Brasserie as a must-visit restaurant for lovers of French cuisine, with inventive dishes and impeccable presentation that are sure to impress even the most discerning of diners.

## How to use ICE to write a paragraph



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## How to write a summary



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# Plagiarism—and How to Avoid It



Image by pikisuperstar from Freepik

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of material from a source. At the most obvious level, plagiarism involves using someone else’s words and ideas as if they were your own. There’s not much to say about copying another person’s work: it’s cheating, pure and simple. But plagiarism is not always so simple. Notice that our definition of plagiarism involves “words and ideas.” Let’s break that down a little further.

**Words.** Copying the words of another is clearly wrong. If you use another’s words, those words must be in quotation marks, and you must tell your reader where those words came from. But it is not enough to make a few surface changes in wording. You can’t just change some words and call the material yours; close paraphrasing is not acceptable.

**Ideas.** Ideas are also a form of intellectual property. When you are summarizing an original idea, that is, stating the main idea in compressed form in language that does not come from the original, it could still be seen as plagiarism if the source is not cited.

This probably makes you wonder if you can write anything without citing a source. To help you sort out what ideas need to be cited and what not, think about these principles:

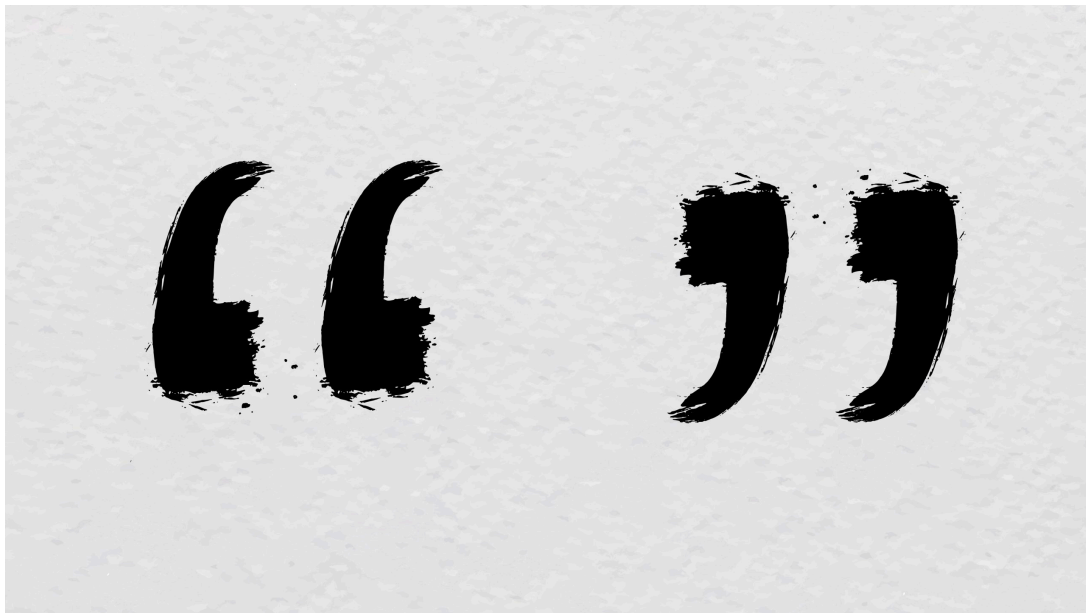
**Common knowledge.** There is no need to cite common knowledge. Common knowledge does not mean knowledge everyone has. It means knowledge that everyone can easily

access. If the information or idea can be found in multiple sources and the information or idea remains constant from source to source, it can be considered common knowledge.

**Distinct contributions.** One does need to cite ideas that are distinct contributions. A distinct contribution need not be a discovery from the work of one person. It need only be an insight that is not commonly expressed and not universally agreed upon.

**Disputable figures.** Always remember that numbers are only as good as the sources they come from. If you use numbers like attendance figures, unemployment rates, or demographic profiles or any statistics at all, always cite your source of those numbers.

## Forms of Citation



*Image by rawpixel.com from Freepik*

You should generally check with your professors about their preferred form of citation when you write papers for courses. No one standard is used in all academic papers. You can learn about the three major forms or styles used in most any college writing handbook and on many Web sites for college writers:

- The Modern Language Association (MLA) system of citation is widely used but is most commonly adopted in humanities courses, particularly literature courses.

- The American Psychological Association (APA) system of citation is most common in the social sciences.
- The Chicago Manual of Style is widely used but perhaps most commonly in history courses.



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## Plagiarism Self-Check



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## Paraphrasing and Plagiarism Tutorial



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Key Takeaways

- Paraphrasing and summarizing are crucial skills for academic writing, allowing you to incorporate information from various sources into your papers. They demonstrate your understanding of the material and help you avoid plagiarism.
- Paraphrasing involves restating information from a source using your own words while retaining the original meaning.
- Summarizing entails condensing the main ideas of a source into a shorter form, omitting less important details.
- The basic steps for paraphrasing and summarizing are the same: read the material carefully, take notes on the key points, write the information in your own words, compare to the original to ensure accuracy, and cite the source appropriately.
- Signal verbs can help smoothly integrate information into your paper. Choose appropriate verbs that accurately represent the intention of the source text.
- The ICE model (Introduce, Cite, Explain) is a framework for incorporating sources into academic writing. Introduce the source, cite the important information, and explain how it supports your point.
- Plagiarism involves using someone else's words or ideas without proper acknowledgment. Always cite sources when using others' words, even when summarizing an idea in your own language.
- Common knowledge doesn't need citation, but distinct contributions and disputable figures require proper referencing.
- Different forms of citation (MLA, APA, Chicago Manual of Style) are used in academic papers; check with your instructor for the preferred citation style.



Want more? Find out more about Paraphrasing and Summarizing from The Learning Portal

# 19. Studying

## Learning From Past Tests



Image by Lucia Grzeskiewicz from Pixabay

While it may seem strange to talk about how to learn from past tests before other topics about tests, it is important that students use test results to their greatest benefit. Some of your most important learning begins when your graded test paper is returned to you. Your first reaction, of course, is to see what grade you received and how you did compared with your classmates. This is a natural reaction. However, when students don't achieve the results on tests and exams that they would like, it is tempting

to just try to do better next time and forget about it.

Reviewing your test and examining the questions you got wrong can help you determine what you need to change – the problem could lie in the way you take tests, study for tests or even how well you read and understand test questions. Based on your analysis of your test, identify the kind of corrective steps you should take to improve your learning and test performance. Implement those steps as you begin your preparation for your next test. If you don't learn from your mistakes, you are doomed to repeat them; if you don't learn from your successes, it will be harder to repeat them.



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# How to use past tests to improve your future results

## Three step process



Image by Nikolai Zriachev

### *Step 1: Evaluating your test results*

- When you receive your test back, sit quietly and take a close look at it.
- What questions did you get wrong? What kind of mistakes were they? Do you see a pattern?
- What questions did you get right? What were your strengths? What can you learn from the professor's comments?
- Now think of the way in which you prepared for the exam. Were you prepared for the exam? Did you study the right material? What surprised you?
- Did you read the entire test before starting? Did your time allocation work well, or were you short of time on certain parts of the exam?

## *Step 2: Correcting Your Mistakes*

The second step in making your test work for you is to correct your wrong answers. The last time you wrote the information (when you took the test), you created a link to wrong information in your memory, so that must be corrected.

- For multiple-choice questions, write out the question stem with the correct answer to form a single correct sentence or phrase.
- For true-or-false questions, write the full statement if it is true; if it is false, reword it in such a way that it is true (such as by inserting the word “not”). Then write the new statement.
- For math and science questions involving calculations, redo the entire solution with the calculations written out fully.
- You need not rewrite an entire essay question if you did not do well, but you should create a new outline for what would be a correct answer. Make sure you incorporate any ideas triggered by your professor’s comments.
- When you have rewritten all your answers, read them all out loud before incorporating your new answers in your notes.

## *Step 3: Integrating Your Test into Your Study Guide*

Your corrected quizzes and midterm exams are an important study tool for final exams. Make sure you file them with your notes for the study unit. Take the time to annotate your notes based on the quizzes, test or exam. Pay particular attention to any gaps in your notes on topics that appeared in the quiz or exam. Research those points in your text or online and complete your notes. Review your tests throughout the term (not just before the final) to be sure you cement the course material into your memory. When you prepare for the final exam, start by reviewing your quizzes and other tests to predict the kinds of questions the professor may ask on the final. This will help focus your final studying when you have a large amount of coursework to cover.

# Exam Errors and How to Correct Them

## Preparation / Content Errors

- Incorporate weekly review sessions.
- Practice predicting possible questions.
- Go to all classes, labs, and review sessions.

## Focus Errors or Carelessness

- Read the entire test before starting.
- Slow down during the test.
- Read carefully and think before answering.
- Check your work.

## If You Don't Get Your Test Back

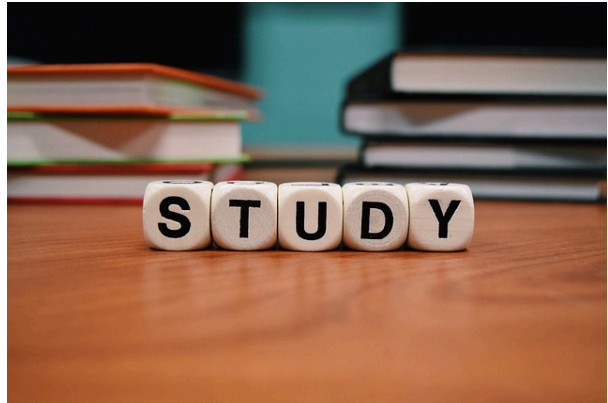
If your professor chooses not to return tests to students, make an appointment to see the professor soon after the test to review it and your performance. Take notes on what you had trouble with and the expected answers. Add these notes into your study guide. Make sure you don't lose out on the opportunity to learn from your results.



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# Effective Studying

Effective studying is an ongoing process of reviewing course material. The first and most important thing you should know is that studying is not something you do a few days before an exam. To be effective, studying is something you do as part of an ongoing learning process, throughout the duration of the term.



*Image by Wokandapix from Pixabay*

## Studying Every Day

Studying begins after each class or assignment when you review your notes. Each study session should involve three steps:

- Gather your learning materials. Take time to merge your class notes with your reading notes. How do they complement each other? Stop and think. What do the notes tell you about your material? What aspects of the material are you unsure about? Do you need to reread a part of your text? Write down any questions you have for your professor and pay a visit during office hours. It is better to clear up any misconceptions and get your questions answered soon after you are exposed to the material, rather than to wait, for two reasons: (1) the question or doubt is fresh in your mind and you won't forget about it and (2) professors usually build their lessons on material already presented. If you don't take these steps now, you are setting yourself up for problems later in the course.
- Apply or visualize. What does this material mean to you? How will you use this new knowledge? Try to find a way to apply it in your own life or thoughts. If you can't use the knowledge right away, visualize yourself using the knowledge to solve a problem or visualize yourself teaching the material to other students.
- Cement your knowledge. If you use the two-column notetaking method, cover up the right side of your notes with a piece of paper, leaving the questions in the left column exposed. Test yourself by trying to answer your questions without referring to your notes. How did you do? If you are unsure about anything, look up the answer and write

it down right away. Don't let a wrong answer be the last thing you wrote on a subject, because you will most likely continue to remember the wrong answer.

## Studying in Course Units

At the end of each unit, or at least every two weeks or so, use your notes and textbook to write an outline or summary of the material in your own words. (Remember the paragraphs you wrote to summarize each class or reading? They'll be very helpful to you here.) After you have written the summary or outline, go back and reread your outline from the prior unit followed by the one you just wrote. Does the new one build on the earlier one? Do you feel confident you understand the material?

## Studying before the Exam

At least a week before a major exam, ask yourself these questions:

- What has the professor said about what is included on the exam?
- Has the professor said anything about what types of questions will be included?
- If you were the professor, what questions would you ask on an exam?

Challenge yourself to come up with some really tough open-ended questions. Think about how you might answer them. Be sure to go to any review sessions the professor holds.

Now go back and review your outlines. Do they cover what the professor has suggested might be on the exam? After reviewing your outlines, reread the sections of your notes that are most closely associated with expected exam questions. Pay special attention to those items the professor emphasized during class.

## More Tips for Success



*Image by Racool\_studio from Freepik*

- Schedule a consistent study-review time for each course at least once a week, in addition to your class and assignment time. Keep to that schedule as rigorously as you do your class schedule. Use your study time to go through the steps outlined earlier; this is not meant to be a substitute for your assignment time.
- Get yourself in the right space. Choose to study in a quiet, well-lit space. Your chair should be comfortable but provide good support. Remember that libraries were designed for reading and should be your first option.
- Minimize distractions. Turn off your cell phone and get away from social media, television, other nearby activities, and chatty friends or roommates. All of these can cut into the effectiveness of your study efforts. Multitasking and studying don't mix.
- If you will be studying for a long time, take short breaks at least once an hour. Get up, stretch, breathe deeply, and then get back to work. (If you keep up with your daily

assignments and schedule weekly review sessions for yourself—and keep them—there should be almost no need for long study sessions.)

## Effective Study Self Check



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## How to study from the Learning Scientists!

From [learningscientist.org](http://learningscientist.org), we have more advice on how to study. Based on research by cognitive scientist, these six study strategies out perform typical student study strategies such as re-reading or highlighting:



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## Group Studying

Study groups are a great idea—as long as they are thoughtfully managed. A study group can give you new perspectives on course material and help you fill in gaps in your notes. Discussing course content will sharpen your critical thinking related to the subject, and being part of a group to which you are accountable will help you study consistently. In a

study group, you will end up “teaching” each other the material, which is the strongest way to retain new material. But remember, being in a group working together doesn’t mean there will be less work for you as an individual; your work will just be much more effective.

## Picking Group Members

- Think small. Limit your study group to no more than three or four people. A larger group would limit each student’s participation and make scheduling of regular study sessions a real problem.
- Go for quality. Look for students who are doing well in the course, who ask questions, and who participate in class discussions. Don’t make friendship the primary consideration for who should be in your group. Meet up with your friends instead during “social time”—study time is all about learning.
- Look for complementary skills and learning strengths. Complementary skills make for a good study group because your weaknesses will be countered by another student’s strengths. When a subject requires a combination of various skills, strengths in each of those skills is helpful (e.g., a group with one student who is really good at physics and another at math would be perfect for an engineering technology course). Finally, a variety of learning strengths is helpful because each of you pick up differing signals and emphases from the professor that you can share with each other, so you will not likely miss important points.

Meet regularly. When you first set up a study group, agree to a regular meeting schedule and stick to it. Moving study session times around can result in nonparticipation, lack of preparation, and eventually the collapse of the study group.

## How to conduct a group study session

1. Assign a moderator, and rotate the role of moderator or discussion leader. This helps ensure “ownership” of the group is spread equally across all members and



Photo by Jacek Dylag on Unsplash



ensures active participation and careful preparation.

2. Define an agenda and objectives. Give your study sessions focus so that you don't get sidetracked. Based on requests and comments from the group, the moderator should develop the agenda and start each session by summarizing what the group expects to cover and then keep the group to task.
3. Assign follow-up work. If there is any work that needs to be done between meetings, make sure that all team members know specifically what is expected of them and agree to do the work.
4. Include some of the following items on your agenda:
  - Review and discuss class and assignment notes since your last meeting.
  - Discuss assigned readings.
  - Quiz each other on class material.
  - "Reteach" aspects of the material team participants are unsure of.
  - Brainstorm possible test questions and responses.
  - Review quiz and test results and correct misunderstandings.
  - Critique each other's ideas for paper themes and approaches.
  - Define questions to ask the professor.



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### Key Takeaways

- Review your past tests to learn from your mistakes. Evaluate your results and consider why you got answers right or wrong; think about how you studied for this test and what you might need to change about your study habits; and finally, judge whether you managed your test-taking tasks well. Next, correct your mistakes and write out the correct answers. Finally, make your past tests part of your study notes and make adjustments to how you study or take tests to prevent making similar mistakes in the future.

- Frequent study is more effective than just studying before a test or exam. Study every day merging your class and reading notes, and creating questions for your professor on areas of confusion.
- Apply or visualize the material to make it more meaningful and cement your knowledge by testing yourself.
- Study in course units by using notes and text to create summaries or outlines of the material.
- A least a week before a major test or exam, gather what you know about what the test will cover, review your summaries and outlines and come up with likely test questions to use to test yourself. You may need to go back to review sections of notes based on expected test questions.
- Group study that is well managed can be an effective way to deepen your learning and understanding. Pick quality group members, meet regularly, assign a rotating moderator, set up an agenda and assign follow up work for group members.



Want More? The Learning Portal has resources to help you decide what to study.

## 20. Tests

**Tested at every turn!** Testing is a part of life. They alone are not good measurements of how smart or gifted you are—they show only how much you know or can do at that moment. We can learn from how we have performed, and we can think about how to apply what we have learned to do even better next time. We can have fun measuring our progress. Many of our daily activities are measurements of progress toward mastery of skills or knowledge. We welcome these opportunities as both work and fun. But when these opportunities are part of our academic life, we often dread them and rarely feel any sense of fun.

In reality, however, academic tests are similar to real-life tests in the following ways:

- They help us measure our progress toward mastery of a particular skill.
- They are not a representation of how smart, talented, or skilled we are but rather are a measurement only of what we know about a specific subject at a specific point in time.
- They are extraordinary learning opportunities.

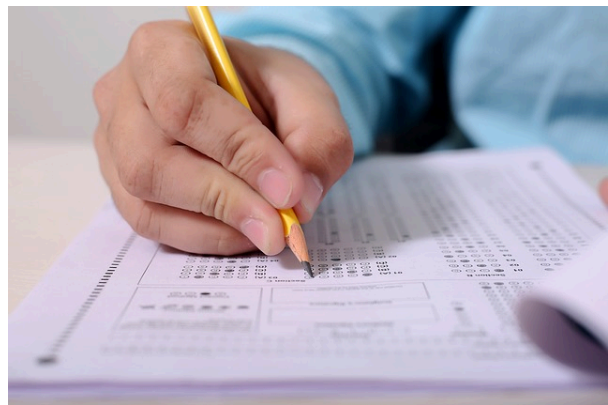


Image by F1 Digital from Pixabay

Academic tests in college may be different from those you took in other school settings. College professors expect to see much more of you in an exam: your thoughts, your interpretations, your thinking process, your conclusions. This is why you need to modify your study habits and your strategies for taking tests in college.

### Critical Thinking and Tests

Why critical thinking is needed when taking tests.





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## Types of Tests

Strategies for different types of tests: each type has its own peculiar strategies:

### Paper tests

Paper tests are still a very common type of test, requiring students to write answers on the test pages or in a separate test booklet. They are typically used for in-class tests. Neatness and good grammar count, even if it's not an English test. Remember that the professor will be reading dozens of test papers and will not likely spend much time trying to figure out your hieroglyphics, arrows, and cross-outs.

## Open-book tests

Open-book tests allow the student to consult their notes, textbook, or both while taking the test. Professors often give this type of test when they are more interested in seeing your thoughts and critical thinking than your memory power. Be prepared to expose and defend your own viewpoints. When preparing, know where key material is present in your book and notes. Create an index for your notes and use sticky notes to flag key pages of your textbook before the test. Be careful when copying information or formulas to your test answers, because nothing looks worse in an open-book test than misusing the material at your disposal.

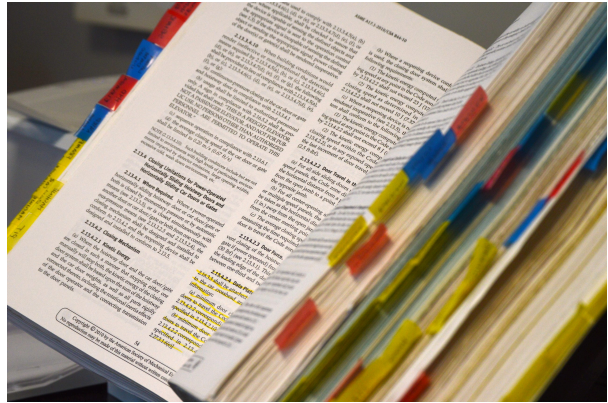


Photo by Russ Ward on Unsplash

## Take-home tests

Take-home tests are like open-book tests except you have the luxury of time on your side. Make sure you submit the test on time. Know what the professor's expectations are about the content of your answers. The professor will likely expect more detail and more complete work because you are not under a strict time limit and because you have access to reference materials. Be clear about when the test is due. Some professors will ask you to e-mail your test to them by a specific time. Also, find out if the professor allows or expects you to collaborate with classmates. Be sure to type your test and don't forget to spellcheck!

## Online tests

Online tests are most commonly used for formative assessments, although they are starting to find their way into high-stakes tests, particularly in large lecture classes that fulfill a graduation requirement. The main advantage of online tests is that they can be computer graded, providing fast feedback to the student and allowing the professor to grade hundreds of tests easily. Since these tests are computer graded, be aware that the professor's

judgment is not involved in the grading. Your answers will be either right or wrong; there is no room for partially correct responses. With online tests, be sure you understand the testing software. Are there practice questions? If so, make sure you use them. Find out if you will be allowed to move freely between test sections to go back and check your work or to complete questions you might have skipped. Some testing software does not allow you to return to sections once they are “submitted.” Unless your test needs to be taken at a specific time, don’t wait until the last minute to take the test. Should you have technical problems, you want to have time to resolve the issues. To avoid any conflicts with the testing software, close all other software applications before beginning the testing software.

## Preparing For and Taking Tests



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## The Secrets of the Q and A’s

You can gain even more confidence in your test-taking abilities by understanding the different kinds of questions a professor may ask and applying the following proven strategies for answering them. Most professors will likely use various conventional types of questions. Here are some tips for handling the most common types.

## Multiple-Choice Questions

Read the instructions carefully to determine if there may be more than one right answer. If there are multiple right answers, does the professor expect you to choose just one, or do you need to mark all correct options?

1. Read each question carefully and try to answer it in your head before reading the answer options. Then consider all the options.
2. Eliminate first the options that are clearly incorrect.
3. Read the questions and one of the options as a sentence and turn it into a True/False question.
4. Look for clue words that hint that certain option answers might be correct or incorrect.
5. Ensure the option you choose best matches what the question is asking.

## True-or-False Questions

Answer the questions that are obvious to you first. Then go back to statements that require more thought. If the question is stated in the positive, restate it to yourself in the negative by adding the word “not” or “never.” Does the new statement sound truer or falser?

## Short Answer Questions

Short answer questions are designed for you to recall and provide some very specific information: When you read the question, ask yourself what exactly the professor wants to know. Keep your answers short and specific.

## Essay Questions

Essay questions are used by professors to evaluate your thinking and reasoning applied to

the material covered in a course. Good essay answers are based on your thoughts, supported by examples from classes and reading assignments.

- Careful planning is critical to answering essay questions effectively. Note how many essay questions you have to answer and how difficult each question seems. Then allocate your time accordingly.
- Read the question carefully and underline or circle keywords. Watch for words that describe the professor's expectations for your response.
- If time allows, organize your thoughts by creating a quick outline for your essay. This helps ensure that you don't leave out key points, and if you run out of time, it may pick up a few points for your grade. Jot down specific information you might want to use, such as names, dates, and places.
- Introduce your essay answer, but get right to the point. Remember that the professor will be grading dozens of papers and avoid "filler" text that does not add value to your answer.
- Write direct and concise statements.
- Write neatly and watch your grammar and spelling. Allow time to proofread your essay. You want your professor to want to read your essay, not dread it. Remember that grading essays is largely subjective, and a favorable impression can lead to more favorable grading.
- Be sure to answer all parts of the question. Essay questions often have more than one part. Remember, too, that essay questions often have multiple acceptable answers.

## How to study for an Exam



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# Strategies for Math Tests

Math tests require some special strategies because they are often problem based rather than question based.

## Do the following before the test:

- Attend all classes and complete all assignments. Pay special attention to working on all assigned problems. After reviewing problems in class, take careful notes about what you did incorrectly. Repeat the problem and do a similar one as soon as possible. It is important that the last solution to a problem in your mind is a correct solution.
- Think about how each problem solution might be applied in a real-world situation. This helps make even the most complex solutions relevant and easier to learn.
- In your study group, take turns presenting solutions to problems and observing and correcting everyone's work.
- If you are having difficulty with a concept, get help right away. Remember that math especially builds new material on previous material, so if you are having trouble with a concept now, you are likely to have trouble going forward. Make an appointment with your professor. Don't be shy about asking for a tutor—tutoring is not just for students needing remedial help; many successful students seek them out, too.

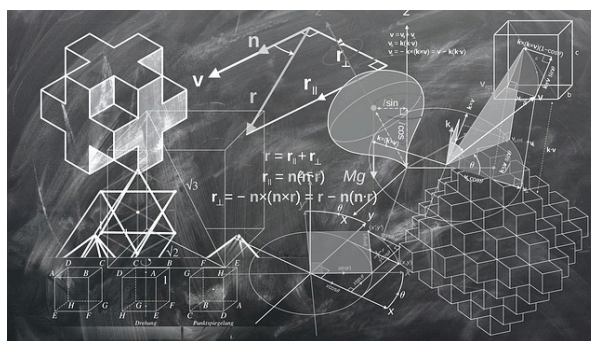


Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay

## Do the following during the test:

Review the entire test before you start and work on the problems you feel most confident with first. Approach each problem following three distinct steps:

1. Read the problem through twice: the first time to get the full concept of the question,

and the second time to draw out pertinent information. After you read through the problem the first time, ask yourself, “What is this problem about?” and “What is the answer likely to look like?” The second time through, consider these questions: “What facts do I have available?” “What do I know?” “What measurable units must the answer be in?” Think about the operations and formulas you will need to use. Try to estimate a ballpark answer.

2. Compute your answer. First, eliminate as many unknowns as possible. You may need to use a separate formula for each unknown. Use algebraic formulas as far as you can before plugging in actual numbers; that will make it easier to cancel and combine factors. Remember that you may need two or more tries before you come up with the answer.
3. Check your work. Start by comparing your actual answer to the estimate you made when you first read the problem. Does your final answer sound likely? Check your arithmetic by opposite operations: use multiplication to check division and addition to check subtraction, and so on. You should consider using these three steps whenever you are working with any math problems, not just when you get problems on tests.

# Strategies for Science Tests



*Image by Freepik*

Science tests also are often problem based, but they also generally use the scientific method. This is why science tests may require some specific strategies.

- Before the test, review your lab notes as well as your class notes and assignments. Many test questions build upon lab experience, so pay close attention to your notes, assignments, and labs. Practice describing the experimental process.
- Read the question carefully. What does the professor expect you to do? Prove a hypothesis? Describe an experiment? Summarize research? Underline the words that state the objective of the question.
- Look carefully at all the diagrams given with the question. What do they illustrate? Why are they included with the question? Are there elements on the diagram you are expected to label?
- Many science questions are based on the scientific method and experimental model. When you read the test question, identify the hypothesis the problem is proposing; be

prepared to describe an experimental structure to prove a hypothesis. When you check your work, make sure the hypothesis, experimental steps, and a summary of results (or expected results) are clear. Some of these elements may be part of the question, while others you may need to provide in your answer.

## Test Anxiety

### Thought Activity: Testing Your Test Anxiety

Consider the following statements. The quiz might display some of the answers as wrong, but remember: there are no wrong answers.



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It is normal to feel stress before an exam, and in fact, that may be a good thing. Stress motivates you to study and review, generates adrenaline to help sharpen your reflexes and focus while taking the exam, and may even help you remember some of the material you need. But suffering too many stress symptoms or suffering any of them severely will impede your ability to show what you have learned. Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which a person feels distress



Photo by Lacie Slezak on Unsplash

before, during, or after a test or exam to the point where stress causes poor performance. Anxiety during a test interferes with your ability to recall knowledge from memory as well as your ability to use higher-level thinking skills effectively.

**There are steps you should take if you find that stress is getting in**

## your way:

- Be prepared. A primary cause of test anxiety is not knowing the material. If you take good classes and read notes and review them regularly, this stressor should be greatly reduced if not eliminated. You should be confident going into your exam (but not overconfident).

- Make sure you eat well and get a good night's sleep before the exam. Hunger, poor eating habits, energy drinks, and lack of sleep all contribute to test anxiety.

- Bounce bad vibes. Your own negative thoughts – “I’ll never pass this exam” or “I can’t figure this out, I must be really stupid!” – may move you into a spiraling stress cycle that in itself causes enough anxiety to block your best efforts. When you feel you are brewing a storm of negative thoughts, stop what you are doing and clear your mind. Once your mind is clear, repeat a reasonable affirmation to yourself – “I know this stuff” – before continuing your work.

- It’s all about you! Don’t waste your time comparing yourself to other students in the class, especially during the exam. Keep focused on your own work and your own plan. Exams are not a race, so it doesn’t matter who turns in their paper first.

- Chill! You perform best when you are relaxed, so learn some relaxation exercises you can use during an exam. Before you begin your work, take a moment to listen to your body. Which muscles are tense? Move them slowly to relax them. Tense them and relax them. Exhale, then continue to exhale for a few more seconds until you feel that your lungs are empty. Inhale slowly through your nose and feel your rib cage expand as you do. This will help oxygenate your blood and reenergize your mind.

## Simple Relaxtion Exercises for Everyone

Try a Guided Belly Breathing Meditation.



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# Test Taking Tips



*Image by Starline from Freepik*

## Before the test:

1. Learn as much as you can about the test.
2. Try to foresee the questions likely to be on the test.
3. Don't be tempted to stay up late cramming.
4. The night before, get some exercise, watch what you eat and get a good night's rest.

5. Get to the test site early with all your tools

## During the test:

1. When you receive your test, scan the entire test first. Evaluate the importance of each section. Then create a time allocation plan.
2. Write it down. Take a couple minutes to write down key facts, dates, principles, statistics, and formulas on a piece of scratch paper or in the margin of the test paper.
3. Read the directions carefully.
4. Do the easy questions first.
5. Keep an eye on the time. Keep as close to your plan as possible.
6. Check your work. Ensuring that you have complete answers according to the directions; then look for other common mistakes.

### Key Takeaways

- Tests help use measure your progress but are not representations of how smart, talented or skilled you are; rather, they measure what you know as a specific point in time.
- Paper, open book, take-home and online tests require different study techniques to help you prepare.
- Multiple choice, true-or-false, short answer and essay questions are common types of questions you will encounter and each can be tackled differently using proven strategies.
- Math and science tests are problem based and require unique preparation.
- Test Anxiety can interfere with your ability to recall knowledge as well as use higher level thinking skills. Simple strategies such as being prepared, eating and sleeping well before the text, re-framing negative thoughts, and not paying attention to others can help. Often, relaxation techniques can help you minimized the effects of test anxiety. For significant test anxiety, visit a college counsellor for additional strategies.



Want More? The Learning Portals has advice on Taking a Test or Exam in their Study Skills Hub.

## 21. Group Work

Group work is a common practice at college. Learning to work well in a group is a skill you can take forward into your career where it is routine to accomplish tasks as part of a team.



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### Group Writing Projects

College professors sometimes assign group writing projects. The terms of these assignments vary greatly. Sometimes the professors specifies roles for each member of the group, but often it's part of the group's tasks to define everyone's role.

Follow these guidelines:

- Get off to an early start and meet regularly through the process.
- Sort out your roles as soon as you can. You might divide the work in sections and then meet to pull those sections together. But you might also think more in terms of the specific strengths and interests each of you bring to the project. You might also assign tasks that relate to the stages of the writing process. Remember that whatever you do, you cannot likely keep each person's work separate from the work of others. There will be and probably should be significant overlap if you are to eventually pull together a successful project.
- Don't let any lack of confidence you may feel as a writer keep you from doing your share. One of the great things about a group project is that you can learn from others. Another great thing is that you will teach more about your own strengths that others



value.

- Complete a draft early so that you can collectively review, revise, and finally edit together.



Image by StockSnap from Pixabay

## How to study in a group



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## Effective Brainstorming in a Group

Brainstorming is a process of generating ideas for solutions in a group. This method is very effective because ideas from one person will trigger additional ideas from another. The following guidelines make for an effective brainstorming session:

- Decide who should moderate the session. That person may participate, but his main role is to keep the discussion flowing.
- Define the problem to be discussed and the time you will allow to consider it.
- Write all ideas down on a board or flip chart for all participants to see.
- Encourage everyone to speak.
- Do not allow criticism of ideas. All ideas are good during a brainstorm. Suspend disbelief until after the session. Remember a wildly impossible idea may trigger a creative and feasible solution to a problem.

## Group Writing Projects

College professors sometimes assign group writing projects. The terms of these assignments vary greatly. Sometimes the professors specifies roles for each member of the group, but often it's part of the group's tasks to define everyone's role.

*Key Takeaways*

- Being part of a team is common in today's workplace, group work let's you practice your teamwork skills; be a good teammate and do your fair share of the work.
- Brainstorming as a group can bring out new ideas and better solutions.
- Group writing projects takes some planning and organization as well as final attention to bring everyone's contribution together.



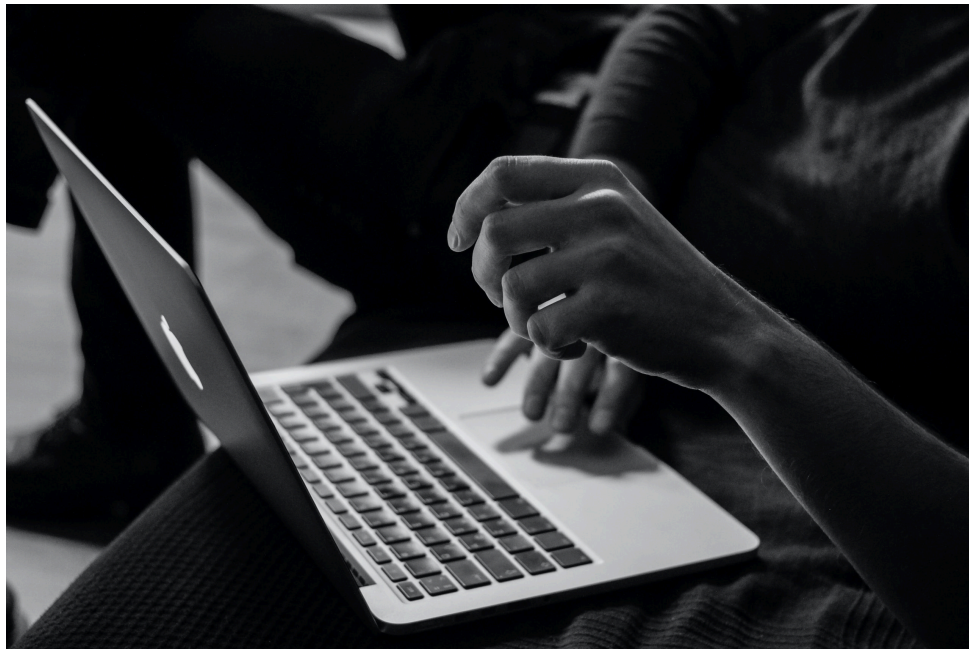
Want more? Check out advice on how your Group can work well together on the Learning Portal.

# 22. Online Learning

KIMBERLY DAIGNEAU AND IRENE STEWART

## Online Learning

Online learning can be both enjoyable and challenging. You have the ability to set your own schedule and work on your studies when you want to but you also have the responsibility to ensure that you stick with that schedule and stay motivated to complete all of your work.



*Picture by Sergey Zolkin from Unsplash*

## Online Courses – Things to consider

Most colleges now offer some online courses or regular courses with an online component. You experience an online course via a computer rather than a classroom. Many different variations exist, but all online courses share certain characteristics, such as working independently and communicating with the professor (and sometimes other students)

primarily through written computer messages. If you have never taken an online course, carefully consider what's involved to ensure you will succeed in the course.

Online courses have a number of practical benefits but also pose special issues, primarily related to how students interact with other students and the professor. Some online courses do involve “face time” or live audio connections with the professor and other students, via Webcasts or Webinars, but many are self-paced and asynchronous, meaning that you experience the course on your own time and communicate with others via messages back and forth rather than communicating in real time. All online courses include opportunities for interacting with the professor, typically through e-mail or a bulletin board where you may see comments and questions from other students as well.

Many educators argue that online courses can involve more interaction between students and the professor than in a large lecture class, not less. But two important differences affect how that interaction occurs and how successful it is for engaging students in learning. Most communication is written, with no or limited opportunity to ask questions face to face or during office hours, and students must take the initiative to interact beyond the requirements of online assignments.

Many students enjoy online courses, in part for the practical benefit of scheduling your own time. Some students who are reluctant to speak in class communicate more easily in writing. But other students may have less confidence in their writing skills or may never initiate interaction at all and end up feeling lost. Depending on your learning strengths, an online course may feel natural to you (if you learn well independently and through language skills) or more difficult (if you are a more visual or kinesthetic learner).



*Photo by Maya Maceka from Unsplash*

Success in an online course requires commitment and motivation. Follow these guidelines:

- **Make sure you have the technology.** We recommend that students use a laptop or desktop to access Blackboard or any other online platform used by the college, particularly to take tests and quizzes. There is a Blackboard app that can be used to access most course materials, videos, readings and collaborate meetings. A webcam and microphone headset are also recommended. Access to stable wifi/internet connection will be needed for testing situations.
- **Accept that you'll have to motivate yourself and take responsibility for your learning.** It's actually harder for some people to sit down at the computer on their own than to show up at a set time. Be sure you have enough time in your week for all course activities and try to schedule regular times online and for assignments. Evaluate the course requirements carefully before signing up.
- **Work on your writing skills.** If you are not comfortable writing, you may want to defer taking online courses until you have had more experience with college-level writing. When communicating with the professor of an online course, follow the guidelines for effective e-mail outlined earlier.
- **Use critical thinking skills.** Most online courses involve assignments requiring problem solving and critical thinking. It's not as simple as watching video lectures and

taking multiple-choice tests. You need to actively engage with the course material.

- **Take the initiative to ask questions and seek help.** Remember, your professor can't see you to know if you're confused or feeling frustrated understanding a lecture or reading. You must take the first step to communicate your questions.
- **Be patient.** When you ask a question or seek help with an assignment, you have to wait for a reply from your professor. You may need to continue with a reading or writing assignment before you receive a reply. If the professor is online at scheduled times for direct contact, take advantage of those times for immediate feedback and answers.
- **Use any opportunity to interact with other students in the course.** If you can interact with other students online, do it. Ask questions of other students and monitor their communications. If you know another person taking the same course, try to synchronize your schedules so that you can study together and talk over assignments. Students who feel they are part of a learning community always do better than those who feel isolated and on their own.



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## Participating in Online Classes and Meetings

You will likely have opportunities to participate in live classes or meetings with your Professors and fellow classmates. This might be to have a discussion, meet as a group to work on a project, or a live class for a test or unit review. The two common methods for live classes at St. Clair are through Blackboard Collaborate and Microsoft Teams. For each of these, there are software and hardware considerations as well as technical knowledge needed as you will need to set up your device to run these programs and set up your video and audio. You should test these before your first meeting or class.



Photo by Chris Montgomery from Unsplash

## Tips for Online Meetings:

- Use a headset and microphone – this will offer you a better experience and will also ensure that background noises at your location are minimized for others.
- Join the session early to set up your video and audio and test your connection.
- Keep your microphone muted when you are not speaking.
- Position your webcam so that your face is centered top to bottom and left to right. Look straight at the camera, not from above or below.
- Sit at a desk or table, rather than lying in bed or sitting on a couch.
- Wear what you would like to a face-to-face class but avoid green shirts and stripes.
- Sit with your back against a wall when using your webcam to minimize the view others have of your surroundings. Alternately, you can use “blur” to fade out your background.
- Generally, having a sip of a drink is acceptable when your video is on, but eating should be avoided.



There are other ways you can put a face to your name. Ensure that you have added head and shoulder profile pictures to Blackboard and MS Teams. Instructions for this are available on the Internet.

## Online Etiquette

It is important to practice good online etiquette (often referred to as netiquette) when communicating with classmates and faculty by email, weekly posts in class discussions boards/forums or through chat feature on learning platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Blackboard Collaborate or any other online platform used by the college. Just like in a regular classroom, these netiquette rules are put in place for everyone to follow in order to create a respectful judgement free environment for all participants.



*Image by PixelsAway from DepositPhotos*

## General rules

- Demonstrate respectful behaviour. Be mindful that everyone comes from different backgrounds, has different experiences and the right to express their opinions

whether you agree with them or not. Make sure you always follow the golden rule and treat everyone the same way you expected to be treated.

- Respect others' privacy. Do not forward emails or share posts outside of the discussion forms without getting permission from the original sender or poster.
- Be forgiving. Remember that not everyone will know proper online etiquette rules right away. Try to be patient and understanding.
- Pick the right tone for your writing for chats and discussion posts. Keep in mind that the meaning being communicated through written words can easily be misinterpreted. Emotions such as sarcasm or humour may be hard to detect and be misconstrued as offensive rather than funny. Try to maintain a formal, neutral, and respectful tone when communicating with others.

## A light-hearted look at online meetings



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=318#h5p-81>

## How will you go to class in an online course?



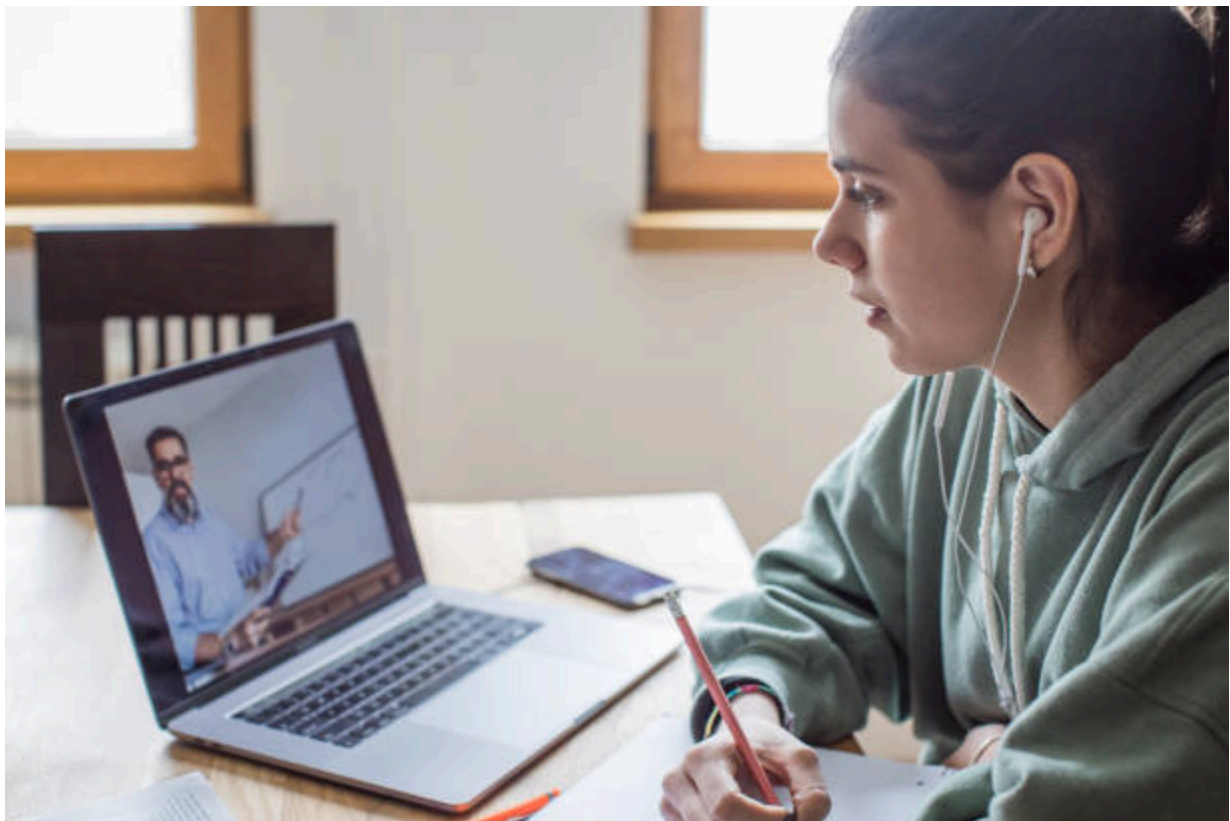
*Photo by Wes Hicks from Unsplash*

There are two ways online classes are delivered: asynchronous and synchronous. Asynchronous learning is the most common because it self-directed by the student. It offers students the flexibility and convenience to decide when and where they study as long as they have access to a decent internet connection and electronic device (preferably a laptop or desktop computer). With this mode of online learning, professors may decide to post pre-recorded lectures, slideshow presentations and other course materials on the approved learning platforms such as Blackboard that students can access and view at any time. Students simply have to make the time weekly to login into the platform, view the course materials, participate in online discussions/meetings, and complete and submit coursework by the assigned deadlines.

Synchronous learning, on the other hand, requires students to attend live lectures or meetings in real-time usually by phone or through video-conferencing platforms/software. With this mode of learning, professors will have a scheduled meeting time on the approved learning platform that students will be expected to login into and attend. Students may

even be expected to participate in the live class discussions. One of the advantages to this mode of learning is that students get to have interaction with their professor and other classmates in a real time setting and can get feedback and clarification on material they do not understand immediately. Though, students can still work on their coursework/assignment at their discretion as long as they submit it by the assigned due date. One of the most important tips for online learning is to make sure you are setting aside the appropriate amount of time a week to dedicate towards your courses. It is easier to fall behind and for coursework to pile up as a remote learner if you are not committed to your studies because of the self-pacing learning style.

## How is a professor's role different in an online course?



*Photo by svetikd from iStock*

What is the role of your professor in an online course? Your online professor provides the

teaching presence to design significant learning experiences for you and your fellow students. Professors also thoughtfully facilitate the content that will support your learning in the class. They also direct you by answering questions and challenging your assumptions to help you grow in your knowledge and skills. Online professor roles: design, facilitation, and direction

In online classrooms, your professor takes on the following roles:

**Designer:** In a museum, a curator locates the best artifacts to create an effective experience for those who visit. In an online learning environment, your professors take on the role like that of a curator as they design the course. They will guide you towards readings and other learning materials that will serve your learning goals. Based on their experience in their field, they are able to help you focus your attention on learning resources that are accurate and relevant.

**Facilitator:** Your professor carefully creates opportunities for you to learn the skills you need for your future career, and designs assignments and learning activities to lead you towards intellectual, personal, and professional growth. As you review the course presentation, consider each of the learning activities and assignments. Think about the reasons why your professor may have selected these course components to contribute to your development.

**Director:** Online professors are available to answer questions along the way. As you learn, you will inevitably find areas that are unclear to you, either related to the course content or your learning process. By communicating with your professor effectively, you will take full advantage of their role in guiding you on your journey.

This material was adapted from Learning to Learn Online (2018) by Page and Vincent, Kwantien Polytechnic University Centre under a Creative Commons By Share-alike license.

## Online Discussions: Tips for Students

Online discussions can help you prepare for class, learn discussion skills, practice your writing skills, and learn from others. To be successful, you need to translate your face-to-face discussion skills to the online environment. Remember that online discussions are first and foremost dialogues, not writing assignments. The following tips highlight key features of effective online discussion strategies, whether for discussion groups or live chats.



mourning and melancholia: A false divide.”

**Encourage discussion:** If you’re the first to post, strive to encourage discussion. Get others thinking (and writing) by making bold statements or including open-ended questions in your message. Those who post first are most often responded to and cited by others. Remember to check back and see if and how others have responded to your ideas.

**Make postings short, clear, and purposeful:** In general, write one to two meaningful paragraphs because long messages are difficult to read online. Another rule of thumb is to make only one main point in each posting, supported by evidence and/or an example. Be concise (Vonderwell, 2003).

**Your stance need not be forever:** It can be intimidating to take a stand on an issue at times, especially when you put it in writing, which we associate with permanence. Remember that you are allowed to change your mind! Simply indicate that with the new information raised in the discussion, you have changed your stance. Learning is about change.

## Other practical considerations for discussion board postings

It can be frustrating to read through a busy discussion forum with lots of posts and replies. Make sure to create new threads if new topics evolve in the discussion. Subscribing to receive email alerts of new postings can help participants keep up with a conversation without checking back into the discussion forum repeatedly. You can configure the tool to receive alerts whenever a new post appears or receive a daily summary of the posts.

## Responding to other posts

### **Make the context clear**

An informative title will help, but also consider including in your reply a quotation from the original message that you’re responding to. If the original message is lengthy, cut out what is not relevant to your response. And if the original has many paragraphs, you could place your comments between the paragraphs to give readers the context for your ideas (Vonderwell, 2003).

### **Add value to the conversation**

Saying “I agree” does not move the discussion forward. Ask yourself why you agree and explain your rationale so that others have something else to respond to (Vonderwell, 2003).

**Ask probing questions;** consider using the following questions when trying to extend a

discussion:

- What reasons do you have for saying that?
- Why do you agree (or disagree) on that point?
- How are you defining the term that you just used?
- What do you mean by that expression?
- Could you clarify that remark?
- What follows from what you just said?
- What alternatives are there to such a formulation? (Roper, 2007)

### **Feel free to disagree with your classmates**

To air different perspectives or help others clarify their thinking, you may need to contradict a classmate. Remember to disagree respectfully (no name-calling or obscenities) and support your point with evidence, but do not feel bad about offering a different interpretation. Your contribution should help to make the discussion more productive for all involved.

### **Work to create group cohesion**

Discussions are about group learning. When you function well as a group, you will be more open to all the benefits that this type of learning can offer. Give positive feedback to one another, use light humour, avoid comments that could be taken as insulting, use first names, respond promptly to each other, and offer assistance. Also remember the lack of nonverbal and vocal cues in the online environment. You'll need to label emotions (e.g., "I'm confused about this" or "I feel strongly") because no one will pick up on how you feel otherwise.

### **Be aware when postings prompt emotional responses**

If you feel very emotional about a message, wait before responding. It's very easy to write something in the heat of the moment and then wish you could retract it. If you send it to the discussion, the damage is done. Even waiting overnight can give you enough distance to respond in a calmer and more professional manner.



## Developing a positive perspective




Photo by Fokusiert from iStock

- **Engaging in online chats:** Like Twitter in the classroom, online chats can provide an opportunity to ask questions or make comments during an online lecture. Try to make your comments concise and clear.
- **Remember to be respectful and professional:** don't write anything that you wouldn't speak in class. Also, avoid clogging up the chat with links to extraneous resources.
- **Stay focused** and aim to add value to the class experience.
- **Be open to new ideas:** Discussion is about hearing what others have to say and working to shape and re-shape your own thoughts and perspectives. Different perspectives can further everyone's understanding of the issue or concept being discussed—they represent opportunities for learning.
- **Enjoy yourself:** The online environment comes with many benefits, including learning from your peers in addition to your instructor. Use the time productively to hone lifelong skills and refine your ideas about the course content.



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<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=318#h5p-188>

## Participating in Online Discussions Self Check



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## Tips for online group projects



*Photo by Marvin Meyer from Unsplash*

Group projects are an important part of the learning process. Working in groups with classmates helps to build collaboration, empathy, and problem-solving skills. Group projects can be a positive, rewarding and enjoyable experience for all those involved if everyone is willing put in equal effort and do their part.

The same rules and effort should be applied to online group projects as in-class. Everyone needs to contribute to the project whether they are working online or in-class. However, there are some additional complications to working online that don't occur with in-class projects. For example, you may not have the opportunity to officially meet your group members or get to know them, especially if you are taking online classes and live in different places. This makes it difficult working in a group settling especially when it comes to arranging a time that is convenient for everyone to connect and work on the project together.

Here are some tips to help you successfully work and complete online group projects with classmates.

## To begin

Connect with your group members and introduce yourself. Once your professor arranges and shares with you the group topic and members you will be working with, introduce yourself to them. Most likely you will be provided with an email address or your professor may setup a group forum on Blackboard, MS Teams or any other online platform used by the college for you to communicate with your group member. Take this opportunity to let your group members know you are excited to get started and looking forward to working with them. This will help to break the ice.

If it possible to arrange a group chat, whether it is through a conference call, text message or video chat with your classmates, do it as this will make it easier to organize and to distribute the tasks evenly amongst everyone based on their interests and individual strengths.

## At your first meeting

- Discuss the overall purpose of the project with your group members to make sure everyone understands what needs to be done and is on the same page.
- If there is confusion about what the project entails, seek clarification from your professor.
- Choose a leader for the group, someone who is organized and will keep everyone on task or agree to rotate the role of leader.

## Planning process

- Identify the tasks and roles required for the completion of the project.
- Determine which group member is doing what task and role.
- Set deadlines for everyone to complete their portion of the project.
- Setup regular group check-ins for everyone to connect and discuss the progress or issues that have come up such as group members doing their tasks.

## Working through conflict

- Don't be afraid to bring up issues or friction between members in the group in a meeting as this may help to demystify any conflicts.
- If needed, contact your professor and let them know of any conflict or lack of communication with any group members.
- Remember everyone has their own opinions, views and works at their own pace.
- Try to maintain a calm, respectful and cordial attitude with all group members. It is okay if you do not like everyone, but you do still have to work with them.

Enjoy your experience as much as possible. If you are open, you can come away with some great friendships.

## Acknowledgements

This chapter was adapted from the materials provided by **Kimberly Daigneau**. Daigneau's thorough research and the additional resources she shared played a vital role in shaping the depth and quality of this chapter. Her dedication and attention to detail were invaluable in making this content comprehensive and insightful.

## References



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/?p=318#h5p-178>

*Key Takeaways*

- Online learning offers both enjoyment and challenges. While it provides flexibility, it also demands self-discipline and motivation to stay on track.
- Online students can set their schedules but must take responsibility for adhering to it and completing their work.
- Online learners must exercise critical thinking, take initiative to seek assistance, and actively participate in discussions, group projects, and assignments.



Want more? The Learning Portal has more advice on how to learn through online courses.

# Authors

**Irene Stewart** is a Retention Coordinator in the Student Services department of St. Clair College and has served in this role for over 15 years. For the past two year, Stewart has been dedicated to developing faculty resources in Accessibility and Open Education in her part-time role with the CAE. Previously, she was a Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist and a part-time Business professor. Stewart is tasked as the faculty lead for the THRIVES project which has been offered to St. Clair College students for 14 semesters as of Fall, 2023. Stewart enthusiastically shares the benefits of Open Education resources and pedagogy to anyone who will listen.

**Aaron Maisonville** was a part-time Instructional Design Technician for the THRIVES project in the Student Services department of St. Clair College. As a former tutor, senior tutor and acting Retention Coordinator, Maisonville brought both personal and professional experience to the challenge of articulating student success strategies. Maisonville's contribution to this text and to the THRIVES course is unmeasurable. Maisonville is currently in the Data Analytics field with an International company.

**Nikolai Zriachev** has been working as a Rover Learning Technologist at St. Clair College since 2022. As a former tutor and a silver medalist in 2023 (IT Network Systems Administration), Nikolai brought his technological expertise to the team in order to develop materials related to digital accessibility. His commitment to creating accessible resources reflects his passion for promoting open education and benefiting the faculty and student community alike.

# Links to external resources

Below is a comprehensive list of the hypertext links embedded within each chapter of the book:

## Preface

- St. Clair College <https://www.stclaircollege.ca/>
- eCampus Ontario Open Library <https://openlibrary.ecampusontario.ca/>

## Accessibility

- Web version of the book and book format options:  
<https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/studyprocaff2/>

## Accessibility Statement

- St. Clair College Accessibility Policy 2.2 [https://intranet.stclaircollege.ca/pandp/docs/scc\\_policy\\_2-2.pdf](https://intranet.stclaircollege.ca/pandp/docs/scc_policy_2-2.pdf)
- BC Open Textbook Accessibility Toolkit <https://opentextbc.ca/accessibilitytoolkit/>
- Accessibility Policy 2.2 [https://intranet.stclaircollege.ca/pandp/docs/scc\\_policy\\_2-2.pdf](https://intranet.stclaircollege.ca/pandp/docs/scc_policy_2-2.pdf)



## 10 Things Successful Students Do:

### 1) Introduction:

- THRIVES Defining Success in College [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDFNi5cKxTo&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDFNi5cKxTo&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- THRIVES – Your Educational Past Experiences [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nnef8acPcqs&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nnef8acPcqs&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)

### 2) Successful students have goals:

- THRIVES: Setting Goals in College [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGQHMuEzwaI&t=1s&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGQHMuEzwaI&t=1s&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- SMART Goals – Quick Overview [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-SvuFIQjK8&t=109s&ab\\_channel=DecisionSkills](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-SvuFIQjK8&t=109s&ab_channel=DecisionSkills)
- Getting stuck in the negatives (and how to get unstuck) | Alison Ledgerwood | TEDxUCDavis [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XFLTDQ4JMk&t=1s&ab\\_channel=TEDxTalks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XFLTDQ4JMk&t=1s&ab_channel=TEDxTalks)
- The Science of Productivity [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHfjvYzr-3g&ab\\_channel=AsapSCIENCE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHfjvYzr-3g&ab_channel=AsapSCIENCE)
- The Eisenhower matrix: How to manage your tasks with EISENHOWER [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tT89OZ7TNwc&t=2s&ab\\_channel=EISENHOWER](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tT89OZ7TNwc&t=2s&ab_channel=EISENHOWER)
- Want more? Setting goals. <https://tlp-lpa.ca/study-skills/setting-goals>

### 3) Successful students take responsibility:

- THRIVES: Take Responsibility [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sSo3LLEIYU&t=20s&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1sSo3LLEIYU&t=20s&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- College, The St Clair Way [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHylmJUKPPw&ab\\_channel=St.ClairCollege](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHylmJUKPPw&ab_channel=St.ClairCollege)
- Decision-Making Strategies <https://www.youtube.com/>

- watch?v=pPIhAm\_WGbQ&t=2s&ab\_channel=GCFLearnFree
- THRIVES – Academic Integrity [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_85339KboDo&t=1s&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_85339KboDo&t=1s&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
  - RSA ANIMATE: The Truth About Dishonesty [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBmJay\\_qdNc&t=1s&ab\\_channel=RSA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBmJay_qdNc&t=1s&ab_channel=RSA)
  - Want more? Academic Integrity. <https://tlp-lpa.ca/learning-online/academic-integrity>

#### 4) Successful students embrace a diverse community:

- THRIVES: Embracing Diversity [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXIjWJtKgIY&t=16s&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXIjWJtKgIY&t=16s&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- The word Indigenous – explained | CBC Kids News [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CISeEFTsgDA&ab\\_channel=CBCKidsNews](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CISeEFTsgDA&ab_channel=CBCKidsNews)
- Diversity & Inclusion in 90 Secs or Less [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIId77I0kNM&ab\\_channel=AMPGlobalYouth](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIId77I0kNM&ab_channel=AMPGlobalYouth)
- TV 2 | All That We Share [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD8tjhVO1Tc&ab\\_channel=TV2Play](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD8tjhVO1Tc&ab_channel=TV2Play)
- THRIVES – Classroom Values [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9FxecQZMK8&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9FxecQZMK8&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- Things I Wish I Knew About Making Friends in College/University [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02HPL8Q9C-Q&ab\\_channel=Monicology](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02HPL8Q9C-Q&ab_channel=Monicology)
- THRIVES Conflict Resolution [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GLayJ0Xd7E&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GLayJ0Xd7E&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- Want More? Maamwi Hub. <https://tlp-lpa.ca/maamwi/>

#### 5) Successful students go to class:

- THRIVES: Go to Class [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Lh8w3rucr4&t=20s&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Lh8w3rucr4&t=20s&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- THRIVES – Classroom Etiquette [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iojT6GOerzc&t=5s&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iojT6GOerzc&t=5s&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- THRIVES Classroom Participation [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcTSJNNxMus&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcTSJNNxMus&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)

- How to Participate in Class even if you're Shy| OutofSkool TV  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaRVnX6d1oY&t=3s&ab\\_channel=OutOfSkoolTV](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaRVnX6d1oY&t=3s&ab_channel=OutOfSkoolTV)
- Want more? <https://tlp-lpa.ca/learning-online/home>

## 6) Successful students ask for help:

- THRIVES – Ask for Help [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYiJLW6mQ2o&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYiJLW6mQ2o&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- THRIVES – Your Professors [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9\\_FZwX0sNg&t=5s&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9_FZwX0sNg&t=5s&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- How to Email Your Professor [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fDiUHjl6w4&ab\\_channel=KPULearningCentres](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fDiUHjl6w4&ab_channel=KPULearningCentres)

## 7) Successful students get it together:

- THRIVES – Time Management [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Yuk\\_b6vYvo&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Yuk_b6vYvo&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- Time Management for College Students [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2g\\_o-hRBeMA&ab\\_channel=UBuffaloEngineeringandAppliedSciences](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2g_o-hRBeMA&ab_channel=UBuffaloEngineeringandAppliedSciences)
- Creating a Semester Schedule [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjiOv7vLxli&ab\\_channel=KPULearningCentres](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjiOv7vLxli&ab_channel=KPULearningCentres)
- Managing Daily Tasks [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a54mf\\_Odli4&ab\\_channel=KPULearningCentres](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a54mf_Odli4&ab_channel=KPULearningCentres)
- THRIVES – Schedule Study Blocks [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ds1axfbUQ1M&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ds1axfbUQ1M&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)

## 8) Successful students get involved:

- THRIVES: Your College Social Life [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa0BNmqhsv4&t=29s&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa0BNmqhsv4&t=29s&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)

## 9) Successful students take control of their health:

- THRIVES: Health in College [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w\\_RNtmgUcEQ&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_RNtmgUcEQ&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- Student Health 101: Learn with Flynn [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zl5z-7AYyOs&t=82s&ab\\_channel=JamieChaves](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zl5z-7AYyOs&t=82s&ab_channel=JamieChaves)
- ParticipACTION Workout Videos | Get Fit as You Sit [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ra9TWisWBUy&t=1s&ab\\_channel=ParticipACTION](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ra9TWisWBUy&t=1s&ab_channel=ParticipACTION)
- Exercises. Healthier.Happier <https://www.healthier.qld.gov.au/fitness/exercises/?category=beginner>
- Let's Get Started Beginner's workout.Healthier.Happier <https://www.healthier.qld.gov.au/fitness/exercises/lets-get-started/>
- No Sweat Lunch Break.Healthier.Happier <https://www.healthier.qld.gov.au/fitness/workouts/no-sweat-lunch-break/>
- Do Yoga With Me <https://www.youtube.com/user/doyogawithme/videos>
- Tea Consent (Clean) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU&t=1s&ab\\_channel=BlueSeatStudios](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU&t=1s&ab_channel=BlueSeatStudios)

## 10) Successful students practice mental wellness:

- THRIVES: Emotional Wellness [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sq6qrrCXMJk&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sq6qrrCXMJk&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- Stress, Sex, and Gender: See Equality Differently [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3X91\\_gB1UqY&ab\\_channel=Women%27sHealthResearchatYale](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3X91_gB1UqY&ab_channel=Women%27sHealthResearchatYale)
- How Stress Affects Your Body and Mind [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZTc8\\_FwHGM&t=2s&ab\\_channel=Braive](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZTc8_FwHGM&t=2s&ab_channel=Braive)
- Simple Mindfulness Strategy – Take 5 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqariSXiSvs&ab\\_channel=CoryMuscara](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqariSXiSvs&ab_channel=CoryMuscara)
- Mindfulness moment [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLNohyvR6A8&t=1s&ab\\_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaid%E2%80%99Apprentissage](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLNohyvR6A8&t=1s&ab_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaid%E2%80%99Apprentissage)
- Does stress affect your memory? – Elizabeth Cox [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyg7lcU4g8E&ab\\_channel=TED-Ed](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyg7lcU4g8E&ab_channel=TED-Ed)
- Tip sheet. Canadian Mental Health Association <http://ontario.cmha.ca/bbtipsheet>
- CMHA Bounceback Ontario <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AL24KIVR->

Fk&ab\_channel=cmhaontario

## 10) Successful students practice mental wellness:

- THRIVES: Managing Your Finances [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VpzhUMal3o&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VpzhUMal3o&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- How To Conduct A Job Search- InterAct Program Module 1 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IloPyDH5o3A&ab\\_channel=EnactusSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IloPyDH5o3A&ab_channel=EnactusSt.Clair)
- Building a Resume and Cover Letter- InterAct Module 2 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_RNFderWd1g&ab\\_channel=EnactusSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RNFderWd1g&ab_channel=EnactusSt.Clair)
- InterAct- Job Interview [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4BvsDP6zO8&ab\\_channel=EnactusSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4BvsDP6zO8&ab_channel=EnactusSt.Clair)

## And #11 Successful Students Learn Independently:

### 1) Introduction to Learn Independently

- THRIVES: Learning In College [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpEDraR\\_l2E&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpEDraR_l2E&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- THRIVES – Critical Thinking [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxNx1gx8QoU&t=3s&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxNx1gx8QoU&t=3s&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)

### 2) Learning:

- THRIVES: Using Your Memory [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9\\_9V5Tyxls&t=1s&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9_9V5Tyxls&t=1s&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- Memorizing and Understanding Concepts <https://tlp-lpa.ca/study-skills/memorizing-and-understanding-concepts>

### 3) Reading:

- THRIVES: Seven Reading Principles [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qxy2blb3yPk&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qxy2blb3yPk&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- Nissila, P. (2016). How to learn like a pro! CC BY. Open Oregon Educational Resources. <https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/collegereading/>
- SQ4R tlp [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwrrYLjt4Wc&t=1s&ab\\_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaid%E2%80%99Apprentissage](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwrrYLjt4Wc&t=1s&ab_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaid%E2%80%99Apprentissage)
- How to use the Immersive Reader – making reading more accessible [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVIXk3BsLVE&ab\\_channel=MikeTholfesen](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVIXk3BsLVE&ab_channel=MikeTholfesen)
- How To Take Effective Notes When Reading [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTdX-Ua0BAM&t=1s&ab\\_channel=AunAbdi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTdX-Ua0BAM&t=1s&ab_channel=AunAbdi)
- Want More? The Learning Portal has more ideas about how to Read college level materials. <https://tlp-lpa.ca/study-skills/reading-with-purpose>

### 4) Notetaking:

- THRIVES: The Benefits of Notetaking [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4SLMciC-A0&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4SLMciC-A0&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- Note-taking Training – Outline Method [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjcOl82EFMg&ab\\_channel=UTMRGASCAcademicSkills](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjcOl82EFMg&ab_channel=UTMRGASCAcademicSkills)
- How to Create a Concept Map [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZj6DwCqSU&ab\\_channel=UofGLibrary](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZj6DwCqSU&ab_channel=UofGLibrary)
- Cornell Notes Method of Taking Notes [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsR-10piMp4&ab\\_channel=SacramentoCityCollegeWebsiteMedia](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsR-10piMp4&ab_channel=SacramentoCityCollegeWebsiteMedia)
- NoteTaking [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Be4IDARL\\_fQ&t=1s&ab\\_channel=ISULibraries](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Be4IDARL_fQ&t=1s&ab_channel=ISULibraries)
- Bridging the Gap: A Guide to College-Level Research by Catherine J Gray is licensed under a CC BY License <https://pressbooks.pub/informationliteracy/front-matter/bridging-the-gap-a-guide-to-college-level/>
- How to use OneNote [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjnQ937cg8g&ab\\_channel=KevinStratvert](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjnQ937cg8g&ab_channel=KevinStratvert)
- Active Reading with Hypothes.is [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XxoIVOX3IU&t=1s&ab\\_channel=KPULearningCentres](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XxoIVOX3IU&t=1s&ab_channel=KPULearningCentres)

- How to Read, Take Notes On and Understand Journal Articles | Essay Tips  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfTpYruV7AE&t=1s&ab\\_channel=TomNicholas](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfTpYruV7AE&t=1s&ab_channel=TomNicholas)
- How to draw to remember more | Graham Shaw | TEDxVienna  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gj3ZnKIHqxI&t=1s&ab\\_channel=TEDxTalks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gj3ZnKIHqxI&t=1s&ab_channel=TEDxTalks)
- Want More? Check out more ideas for Notetaking from the Learning Portal.  
<https://tlp-lpa.ca/study-skills/taking-notes>

## 5) Writing:

- THRIVES: Why Writing is Important in College [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6nTrYMYun0&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6nTrYMYun0&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- How to use Dictation in Microsoft Word for the web [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzCgC2TW5N0&ab\\_channel=Microsoft365](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzCgC2TW5N0&ab_channel=Microsoft365)
- Dictate your documents in Word. Microsoft Support <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/dictate-your-documents-in-word-3876e05f-3fcc-418f-b8ab-db7ce0d11d3c>
- Dictate in Microsoft 365. Microsoft Support <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/dictate-in-microsoft-365-eab203e1-d030-43c1-84ef-999b0b9675fe>
- Learn an efficient 5-layer strategy. Point First Legal Writing Academy  
<http://www.pointfirstwriting.com/edit-your-own-work/index.html>
- How to Edit in 5 Layers [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MLq0hpQ950&ab\\_channel=EllenZweibell](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MLq0hpQ950&ab_channel=EllenZweibell)
- How to use Editor in Microsoft Word – your intelligent writing assistant  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ebf\\_68gUJCw&ab\\_channel=MikeTholfsen](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ebf_68gUJCw&ab_channel=MikeTholfsen)
- How to Use Microsoft Editor: A Beginner’s Guide. MakeUseOf  
<https://www.makeuseof.com/how-to-use-microsoft-editor/>
- Self-Edit your Work [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eShBB\\_o\\_MtA&t=2s&ab\\_channel=KPULearningCentres](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eShBB_o_MtA&t=2s&ab_channel=KPULearningCentres)
- Want more? The Learning Portal has more ideas for Editing and Proofreading.  
<https://tlp-lpa.ca/writing/editing-proofreading>

## 6) Dealing With Assignments:

- THRIVES – Breaking Down Large Assignments <https://www.youtube.com/>

- watch?v=NzlyaMjmVmw&ab\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair
- Breakdown tasks to complete assignments [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A1sGPMTwyQ&ab\\_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaid%E2%80%99Apprentissage](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A1sGPMTwyQ&ab_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaid%E2%80%99Apprentissage)
  - How to Use an Assignment Tracker [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II8eoOrMNo4&t=1s&ab\\_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaid%E2%80%99Apprentissage](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II8eoOrMNo4&t=1s&ab_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaid%E2%80%99Apprentissage)
  - Avoiding Procrastination [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SvwPqpyzJE&t=1s&ab\\_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaid%E2%80%99Apprentissage](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SvwPqpyzJE&t=1s&ab_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaid%E2%80%99Apprentissage)
  - Want more? The Learning Portal has more ideas for Managing Assignments. <https://tlp-lpa.ca/study-skills/assignment-tracker>

## 7) Evaluating Websites as Scholarly Sources:

- Government of Canada. (2023). Visit Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada.html>
- 8 Tips to Help Students Evaluate Websites [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVptfuj6\\_yk&t=1s&ab\\_channel=Edutopia](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVptfuj6_yk&t=1s&ab_channel=Edutopia)
- Scholarly and Popular Sources [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tN8S4CbzGXU&t=1s&ab\\_channel=CarnegieVincentLibrary](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tN8S4CbzGXU&t=1s&ab_channel=CarnegieVincentLibrary)
- How Library Stuff Works: How to Evaluate Resources (the CRAAP Test) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_M1-aMCJHFg&ab\\_channel=McMasterLibraries](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_M1-aMCJHFg&ab_channel=McMasterLibraries)
- The Learning Portal has information on Evaluating Evidence in their Health Sciences Research section. <https://tlp-lpa.ca/health-sciences/evaluate-evidence>

## 8) Incorporating Information From Sources Into Your Writing:

- Comparing Paraphrasing and Quoting\* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_mMSReRhqqw&t=6s&ab\\_channel=WUWritingCenter](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mMSReRhqqw&t=6s&ab_channel=WUWritingCenter)
- Paraphrasing Process Demonstration\* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZJXWaOWqT0&ab\\_channel=WUWritingCenter](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZJXWaOWqT0&ab_channel=WUWritingCenter)
- ICE Statement [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfD5tJNHma0&ab\\_channel=MeganLynsky](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfD5tJNHma0&ab_channel=MeganLynsky)



- How to Write a Summary [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGWO1ldEhtQ&t=5s&ab\\_channel=SmrtEnglish](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGWO1ldEhtQ&t=5s&ab_channel=SmrtEnglish)
- Want more? Find out more about Paraphrasing and Summarizing from The Learning Portal <https://tlp-lpa.ca/writing/sources>

## 9) Studying:

- THRIVES: Reviewing Past Tests [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdU5Gox8KyI&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdU5Gox8KyI&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- How to Study Effectively for School or College [Top 6 Science-Based Study Skills] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPxSzxyIRCI&t=1s&ab\\_channel=MemorizeAcademy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPxSzxyIRCI&t=1s&ab_channel=MemorizeAcademy)
- Want More? The Learning Portal has resources to help you decide what to study. <https://tlp-lpa.ca/study-skills/deciding-what-to-study>

## 10) Tests:

- THRIVES – Critical Thinking and Tests [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQ9HEOIE0mA&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQ9HEOIE0mA&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- THRIVES – Progressive Assessment [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9au4cliRUoA&ab\\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9au4cliRUoA&ab_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair)
- Preparing for an Exam [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqKcWruEES0&ab\\_channel=UNCLearningCenter](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqKcWruEES0&ab_channel=UNCLearningCenter)
- Guided belly breathing [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH157ZamcH8&ab\\_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaild%E2%80%99Apprentissage](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH157ZamcH8&ab_channel=TheLearningPortal%2FLePortaild%E2%80%99Apprentissage)
- Want More? The Learning Portals has advice on Taking a Test or Exam in their Study Skills Hub. <https://tlp-lpa.ca/study-skills/taking-tests-and-exams>

## 11) Group Work:

- THRIVES – Group Assignments <https://www.youtube.com/>

watch?v=TeuIOfN0hAM&t=1s&ab\_channel=THRIVESSt.Clair

- Starting a Study Group [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mg1n6WV17Sk&ab\\_channel=AlgonquinCollegeLibrary](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mg1n6WV17Sk&ab_channel=AlgonquinCollegeLibrary)
- Want more? Check out advice on how your Group can work well together on the Learning Portal. <https://tlp-lpa.ca/study-skills/group-work>

## 12) Online Learning:

- Study Tips to Succeed as an Online Student [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1DRETk-mns&ab\\_channel=LeidenLearning%26InnovationCentre](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1DRETk-mns&ab_channel=LeidenLearning%26InnovationCentre)
- 5 Tips for Online Meetings (Zoom, Google Hangouts, Google Meet) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbeVUYOrw2k&t=1s&ab\\_channel=BiggerBrains](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbeVUYOrw2k&t=1s&ab_channel=BiggerBrains)
- Alice. (2019). 4 Tips for Creating Successful Online Group Projects. <https://hacklibraryschool.com/2019/04/09/4-tips-for-creating-successful-online-group-projects/>
- Bowman, L, (2016) 5 Success Tips for Online Group Projects. <https://top5onlinecolleges.org/2016/5-success-tips-for-online-group-projects/>
- Elearners. (2020) How to Survive Virtual Group Work. <https://www.elearners.com/education-resources/online-learning/how-to-survive-virtual-group-work/>
- Get Educated. (2020). Online Learning Tips: 5 Rules for Online Group Work. <https://www.geteducated.com/elearning-education-blog/online-learning-tips-5-rules-for-online-group-work/>
- Haynie, D. (2020). Tips for online group projects resources. <https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/articles/2014/02/04/3-tips-for-surviving-group-projects-in-an-online-class>
- Vazquez, C. C. (2019). Tips on Managing Group Projects for Online Students. <https://www.biola.edu/blogs/studentlife/2019/tips-on-managing-group-projects-for-online-students>
- Want more? The Learning Portal has more advice on how to learn through online courses. <https://tlp-lpa.ca/learning-online/home>