

HOW TO BE A GOOD STUDENT



In university, you want to learn ACTIVELY not PASSIVELY. This means you are engaged with your learning and taking responsibility for it.

Here are some easy steps you can take to start walking the path of success.

Go to Class

- And be early
- The lecture material is the primary source from which your instructor will generate test/exam questions
- No one can make you go to class
- But nothing can recreate what you missed
- Even if your instructor posts their slides after class, they will still be incomplete notes
- These slides provide a framework as to how the class will be structured, but you will be missing all the information on which your instructor lectured
- You will also miss questions asked by your peers, any clarification your instructor might provide on certain information or assignments and verbal/written cues they might provide as to **what you might want to study for a test**
- You are also throwing away money. Each class is costing you about \$700, which comes down to about \$20/class. You wouldn't throw a \$20 bill in the trash, so why miss class?
- If it is not possible to attend class (illness, personal matters, etc.) do try and get notes from a classmate

Prepare and Participate

- Come to class prepared
- Do you have a pen or pencil? Are they sharpened or have ink? Do you have paper or is your computer charged?
- Were there readings to complete? Have you done them?

- There is a reason your instructor assigns readings
- They help with understanding ideas presented in class and they are the second source from which test/exam questions will be generated
- They might also be relevant to class participation/discussions (which are easy marks to earn)
- It is difficult to participate if you haven't read the material
- Participation also includes taking notes
- If you have a class that is boring or first thing in the morning (pardon the rhyming), writing notes or participating through discussion can help keep you awake, focused and paying attention

Take Notes

- Your instructors will lecture (meaning they will talk and talk and talk). It is your job to record this information by taking notes
- If you can, sit at the front of the class and in the middle
- This ensures you will hear everything your instructor says and see anything they might write on the board
- You will also not be distracted by all the other people in the room
- And if you have a question/need to participate in a discussion, it helps with nerves as you cannot see the other people in the classroom
- Writing notes also forces you to pay closer attention to what is being said
- You will recall more information after a lecture if you take notes than if you don't take notes
- If a lecture or instructor is boring (and this will happen), still try your best to take notes
- The lecture material is the primary source from which your instructor will generate test questions
- If you need to, try thinking of lecture material as answers to future test questions!
- If possible, write over type. You will recall more information if you physically write
- Date your notes. Use headings or leave space on the page when your instructor switches topics. It is important to keep your notes organized (have all related information together) for when you study
- ORGANIZE your class notes so related information is all in the same place, under **headings** or using **highlights** to show what is important

- If your instructor provides slides before class, print these off, read over them before class so you have an idea of what to expect, then add additional information as the lecture progresses
- Do not let go of your pen. Simply holding your pen will help with concentration
- Stay until the end of class
- Instructors often discuss reminders for due dates, reviews or what will be discussed next class
- And by taking notes (physical), you not only hear (auditory) what is being said, but can see (visual) it as well
- You can learn the same piece of information several different ways (physically, audibly and visually). This is important when it comes to studying!

Read and Read Well

- Reading in university is a bit different
- You are required to read ACTIVELY, to think about what you are reading
- Don't just highlight important information, ACTIVELY take notes in the margins or on a separate piece of paper
- Just as with lectures, you will recall more content if you take notes, than if you don't
- Do the readings before classes
- Instructors will expect you to be able to relate or connect the readings to the course material
- If you come across a word you don't understand, look it up
- How do you expect to understand what you're reading otherwise?
- This also improves your vocabulary!
- Read effectively too
- Try turning headings into questions
- By reading with a question already formed, that question will act like a magnet, attracting the important information you need to know
- EX: You have a heading that reads **Rabbits are Awesome**. Turn that into **Why are Rabbits Awesome?**. Then you will read the paragraphs below that heading searching for the information that answers that question
- Textbooks also have glossaries, indexes, headings, outlines, all of which break information into organized chunks
- Take special note of chapter summaries!!

- There is a reason 50 pages can be condensed into three (the information on those three pages is important)

Be Aware of Distractions

- Where you study often determines whether you study
- Figure out where you study best
- Do you need absolute quiet?
- Or do you like a bit of background noise
- Do you like studying alone or with people? Are you all studying or visiting?
- Where is your phone? What are you doing with it?
- Are you typing up that paper or are you looking at pictures of kittens?
- You are responsible for your learning
- This means you are responsible for selecting a location where you will be productive

Be Aware of Your Learning

- Because you are responsible for your learning, it is important to check in regularly with yourself on how you're doing
- Are you listening to what the instructor says during class? Are you taking notes? Are you attending class?
- Are you participating in class discussions?
- Are you doing the readings?
- Do you understand the material?
- The goal in university is to learn material deeply (long-term memory) as opposed to surface memorization
- Do you feel you have a solid grasp on how you spend your time?
- Are you utilizing the campus resources available to you?
- Are your study habits effective?
- **Be honest with yourself.** No one understands where you are in your learning better than you
- If you feel you are struggling in any of these areas, PLEASE REACH OUT
- There are so many resources available and designed for your success!

Cuseo, Joseph B, Aaron Thompson, Michele Campagna, Viki Sox Fecas. *Thriving in College and Beyond: Research-Based Strategies for Academic Success and Personal Development*. Dubuque: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2016.

Ellis, Dave. *Becoming a Master Student*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006