

How To Get

GOOD

GRADUATES

In College

by Linda O'Brien



Dear Students,

It takes more than being smart or studying hard to be successful in college. You need to know how to manage your time, how to take good notes, and how to do well on tests. You also need to know how to study effectively. This booklet will show you how to do all of these things and more.

College is an investment in your future. Work hard and make the most of it!

Linda O'Brien

How to Get Good Grades in College

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Know What to Expect

People generally experience greater success when they know what to expect. Expect to find the following in college.

A wide range of class sizes

Class sizes vary, depending on the college and the course. While most classes have fewer than 30 students, college classes can have anywhere from 10 to 200+ students.

The need for critical thinking skills

College students do a lot of reading, and they are expected to understand and remember what they read. Students are also expected to be able to draw conclusions, form opinions, and evaluate ideas.

More emphasis on tests and less busywork

All instructors assign work to be done outside of class. Homework grades, however, often account for only a small portion of a student's final grade. In many cases, the midterm, a research paper, and/or the final exam will make up the majority of a student's final grade.

The need for personal responsibility

You have a great deal of freedom and independence in college. No one monitors your progress, no one checks to see if you're going to class, and no one knows whether or not you are doing your assignments. You are responsible for your own academic progress.

Consequences for low grades

All colleges have academic standards that students must meet in order to stay enrolled. Students who let their grades fall below a certain point are usually put on academic probation. Most colleges require that students on probation bring their grades up by the end of the following term, or they are withdrawn from school.

Less time in class/More independent study

Expect to do most of your learning on your own. For every hour you spend in class, plan to spend two hours reading, studying, and completing assignments.



Set Academic Goals

In the grid below, list the courses you're currently taking. In the "Grade" column, write down the highest grade you think you can earn in each course. Think of these grades as your academic goals for the term.

If you follow the ten steps in this book, you are sure to achieve your goals!

	Course	Grade
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

The Ten Steps to Getting Good Grades in College



STEP ONE

Attend Every Class

If you want to get good grades in college, you must attend every class—not almost every class.

The importance of regular class attendance cannot be overemphasized. When you miss classes, you miss lectures, notes, class discussions, homework explanations, and assignments. Without meaning to, you may also miss quizzes and tests.

It can be tempting to skip a class now and then, particularly when you have an instructor who doesn't seem to care, or even notice, whether or not you're there. Don't kid yourself into thinking that missing a class won't make a difference, or that missing a class is okay as long as you get copies of the notes. Getting copies of someone's notes is not the same as being in class, and it's often more of a hassle. *You cannot make up what you miss, and you cannot get it from someone else.*



STEP TWO

Be Organized

This section will give you several ideas on how to be organized. You, of course, must determine what works best for you.

Use an academic planner. Take your planner to every class, record each assignment under the date it's given, and write down the date each assignment is due. When an assignment is completed, check it off. Use your planner to also keep track of test dates, activities, appointments, and anything else you need to remember.

October 5
✓ Math p. 110 due 10-6
Bio report due 10-7
✓ Study for History quiz
✓ Do Eng. paper outline
Meet Jessica at Lib 7 PM

At the beginning of each term, many instructors give their students a syllabus that lists the course assignments and their due dates. Whenever you are given a syllabus, copy the assignments into your planner.

Break down large assignments. Large assignments and projects are more manageable if you break them down into smaller parts. For example, if a research paper is assigned on Jan. 11 and it's due Jan. 18, you could give yourself the following assignments:

Jan. 11 – Do research

Jan. 14 – Write first draft

Jan. 13 – Create outline

Jan. 16 – Revise and rewrite

Writing these smaller assignments in your planner will ensure that you do your big assignments over a period of time, not at the last minute.

Use three-ring notebooks for class notes. Three-ring notebooks work well because handouts can easily be inserted, and if you do miss a class, you can copy someone else's notes and insert them where they belong. If you keep a 3-hole punch in your notebook, you can hole punch your handouts in class and put them in your notebook as soon as you get them.

Keep important course information (syllabus, instructor's email address, office hours, etc.) in the front of your notebook.

Organize and save computer work. Save your work often, and make sure that you have back-up copies of important files.

Keep returned papers, quizzes, and tests. Have a file or folder for each class for returned papers, quizzes, and tests. Returned tests can help you study for future tests, and they may come in handy if there's ever a question about your grade.

To eliminate surprises at the end of the term, keep a record of your homework, quiz, and test grades for each course. If you are ever unsure as to how you're doing in a class, talk to your instructor.

Have phone numbers for classmates.

Have a phone number for at least two people in each class. If you miss a class or have a question about an assignment, you'll then have someone to contact.



Get organized for the next day. Before you go to bed each night, get everything organized for the following day. If there's something you need to remember to do in the morning, write yourself a note.

STEP TWO REVIEW

Be Organized

- ▶ Use an academic planner.
- ▶ Break down large assignments.
- ▶ Use three-ring notebooks for class notes.
- ▶ Organize and save computer work.
- ▶ Keep returned papers, quizzes, and tests.
- ▶ Have phone numbers for classmates.
- ▶ Get organized for the next day.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." Aristotle



STEP THREE

Manage Your Time Well

With good time management, you have more free time, less stress, and a feeling that you're in control and "on top of things."

Don't overextend yourself. If you never seem to have enough time, look at your life to make sure that you're not overextended. If you feel you're doing more than you can handle, look for activities you can eliminate or postpone, and try to find ways to simplify your life.

Be organized. Being organized is a tremendous time saver. When you're organized, you know what you have to do, and you have the information and materials you need. To help you stay organized, use a planner to keep track of your daily assignments, and a monthly calendar to record major events, project deadlines, academic breaks, etc.

Schedule 90-minute study sessions. Set a specific time to get started on your studying. Silence your phone, and take steps to make sure that you won't be interrupted. During your study sessions, don't do anything else. Focus completely on your work.

Make efficient use of your time. Consciously make choices about how to use your time. For example, you could decide to limit yourself to one hour of TV on weeknights. Also come up with ways to streamline and combine tasks. Study while you're doing your laundry, get your exercise by jogging to the library, or go over your class notes while waiting for a friend.

Look for "chunks of time" that are wasted and figure out how to use this time more effectively. If you have time between classes, talk to an instructor, run an errand, study, or just relax. The important thing is that you think about how you can best use the time you have available.

Learn to say no. In college, there's so much to do and so much going on that it's easy to get sidetracked. It's also easy to tell yourself that you'll have time to study later. Know what you need to do, and don't let anything get in the way of your academics.

Make To Do lists and prioritize tasks. Make a daily list of the things you need to do. Rate each item as an A (must do today), B (should do today), or C (would like to do today, but it can wait). Then take all of the As and rank them in order of importance (1, 2, 3...). Do the same with the Bs and Cs. Now, rewrite your list with the As at the top (in the order of importance), followed by the Bs and the Cs.

Focus on one task at a time. When a task is completed, cross it off your list. At the end of each day, add the tasks that didn't get done to the next day's To Do list.

Having a To Do list allows you to concentrate on what you need to do, instead of wasting time worrying about how you're going to get everything done. Listing and prioritizing your tasks only takes a few minutes, and it's a great way to organize your time.

	Wed
A	1 Study for hist test 2 Turn in lab report 3 Finish Eng. assignment
B	1 Do psych outline 2 Call Olivia
C	1 Do laundry 2 Go to computer lab 3 Get haircut

One of the biggest mistakes college students make is thinking that they have lots of time to get things done. In college, you can't wait until the last minute to do your assignments or to study for tests. It just doesn't work.

Remember, you alone are responsible for managing your time and for keeping up with your assignments.

STEP THREE REVIEW

Manage Your Time Well

- ▶ **Don't overextend yourself.**
- ▶ **Be organized.**
- ▶ **Schedule 90-minute study sessions.**
- ▶ **Make efficient use of your time.**
- ▶ **Learn to say no.**
- ▶ **Make To Do lists and prioritize tasks.**

*To do well in your classes, you must be healthy and alert.
Eat the right foods, get plenty of sleep, and take time to exercise.
Also make room in your schedule for fun and relaxation.*



STEP FOUR

Be Successful in Class

You'll enjoy college more and get higher grades if you follow these tips.

Do every class assignment. Don't think of assignments as something you should do. Think of them as something you must do. Complete every assignment, regardless of how much it counts towards your final grade.

When you've done your assignments, you get more out of your classes, lectures are easier to follow, and you can participate in class discussions. Your instructor expects you to know the assigned material, and you can expect to be tested on it.

Do your assignments on a regular basis so that you don't get behind. Once you get behind in a class, it can be very difficult to get caught up.

Learn how to adapt to different instructors. Part of your education is to learn how to adapt to different personalities and teaching styles. At the start of each term, learn what each instructor expects with regard to attendance, assigned work, and class participation.

Sit in the front of the class. Arrive early on the first day of class and sit in one of the first three rows. The closer to the center, the better. That may become your permanent seat.

When you sit in the front, you're able to see what is written or displayed, hear what is spoken, and you send a positive message to your instructor. Students in the front seldom talk to one another, text, chat, tweet, doze off, or walk in late, so there are also fewer distractions.

Be a good group member. Whether you're working on a class project, involved in an extracurricular activity, or working at a job, you need to be able to work and get along with the other members of the group.

When you're involved in a group project 1) do your share of the work and do it well; 2) have a positive attitude; 3) support the other members of the group; and 4) be open to new ideas.

Be on time to each class. Whenever possible, arrive early for class. You'll be more relaxed, and you'll have a few minutes to look over your notes, talk to classmates, or speak with your instructor.

Students who are late to class miss announcements and introductory remarks. Their tardiness also tells their instructor that being on time to their class is not a priority for them.

During the last 5-10 minutes of class, instructors often summarize the lecture or discuss assignments. It is, therefore, important not to leave class early. If you're in a small class and you must leave early, let your instructor know before class begins.

Participate in class. When there's a class discussion, be an active participant. The class will be more interesting and you'll learn more. You will also demonstrate to your instructor that you know the material.

Communicate with your instructors. Most instructors will give you their office hours, phone number, and email address at the beginning of the term. Don't hesitate to contact an instructor whenever you have a question, concern, or problem. While most instructors are happy to help you, you must initiate the contact.

Be sure to respect your instructors' privacy and personal time. Talk to your instructors after class, see them during office hours, or use email.

STEP FOUR REVIEW

Be Successful in Class

- ▶ Do every class assignment.
- ▶ Learn how to adapt to different instructors.
- ▶ Sit in the front of the class.
 - ▶ Be a good group member.
 - ▶ Be on time to each class.
 - ▶ Participate in class.
 - ▶ Communicate with your instructors.



STEP FIVE

Take Good Notes

Tests usually cover material that's been presented in class. It is, therefore, important to have good classroom notes from which to study.

Be an active listener. In order to take good notes, you must focus on the speaker and actively listen to what's being said.

Kylie is listening to the radio while she's getting ready for class. The DJ plays several songs, and then he announces that he's going to play a new release by Kylie's favorite artist. As soon as she hears this, Kylie stops getting ready and listens intently to the song on the radio. She tries to hear every word so that she can understand the meaning of the lyrics.

In this scenario, Kylie went from passive listening to active listening. When you're actively listening in class, you're not just hearing the words the instructor is saying, you are also thinking about and trying to understand the information that's being presented.

Take notes to help you pay attention. You can think much faster than anyone can talk. This is one of the reasons your mind sometimes wanders when you're listening to a lecture. When you take notes, however, your mind has something additional to do, and you don't have time to think about anything else. Taking notes helps you pay attention and stay focused.

Take notes that are easy to read.

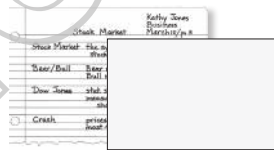
- ▶ Put the subject of your notes, the name of the class, the date, and the page number at the top of each page of notes.
- ▶ Don't worry about grammar or punctuation.
- ▶ Write on only one side of the paper. When you're studying for a test, you can then spread everything out and see all of your notes, without having to flip the pages back and forth.
- ▶ Leave extra space between ideas and topics. Your notes will be much easier to read and understand.

- Use symbols and abbreviations whenever possible. These symbols will help you take notes faster.

= same or equal	↑ up or increasing	w with
≠ not equal	↓ down or decreasing	w/o without
> greater than	→ resulting in	w/in within
< less than	* most importantly	b/c because
~ approximately	eg for example	v very
∴ therefore	ie that is	esp especially

- Underline or put a star beside the most important information. You'll then know to give it special attention when you're studying later.
- Leave a wide margin on the left side of each page. As you listen to a lecture, identify the **key words**, and write them in the margin. Key words (main topics, names of people, places, etc.) help you organize your thoughts, and they make your notes easier to understand.

Key words can also be helpful when you're studying for a test. Just cover up your notes and see what you can remember about each key word.



Key Words

Kathy Jones
Business
March 10/p 3

	Stock Market
	Stock Market the system of buying & selling stocks and shares
	Bear/Bull Bear market - stock market ↓ Bull market - " " ↑
	Dow Jones stat. showing state of NY St. Ex measures change in price of shares of 30 maj. US corp
○	Crash prices of stocks ↓ → bankruptcies most famous crash - Wall St. Crash

Recognize important information. You can usually tell when an instructor is saying something that's important for you to know. Instructors often speak louder or slower, or they repeat information. They also give clues by saying things like "the main point," "the most important outcome," or "the biggest reason." Of course, anything an instructor writes on the board or overhead should be considered important.

Go over your notes as soon as possible. While the information is still fresh in your mind, take a few minutes to go over your class notes. Clarify anything that's confusing, highlight the important points, and put a question mark by anything you don't understand. Also, make sure that your key words are written in the left-hand margins. Taking a few minutes to correct and edit your notes will make them much easier to study from later.

While you're going over your notes and editing them, you are also "locking" this information in your memory. Studies show that without review, 47% of what a person learns is forgotten in the first 20 minutes. *Editing and reviewing are the most important parts of note-taking!*

Get lecture notes if you miss a class. When you miss a class, it's your responsibility to find out what you've missed. Get copies of the class notes as soon as possible and put them in your notebook.

STEP FIVE REVIEW

Take Good Notes

- ▶ **Be an active listener.**
- ▶ **Take notes to help you pay attention.**
- ▶ **Take notes that are easy to read.**
- ▶ **Recognize important information.**
- ▶ **Go over your notes as soon as possible.**
- ▶ **Get lecture notes if you miss a class.**

"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out." Robert Collier



STEP SIX

Read for Comprehension

When you know how to read a textbook, you're able to comprehend and remember what you read.

Textbook authors have already done a lot of your work for you. They've inserted bold-faced section headings that tell you exactly what you're going to be reading about. They've put all of the important words in **bold** or *italic* print, and they've added pictures, charts, graphs, lists of vocabulary words, summaries, and review questions. Textbook authors provide all of these "learning tools" to make it easier for you to learn and retain the information they are presenting.

In this section, you will discover how to use these learning tools. You will also learn how to **Survey, Read,** and **Review**. Knowing how to survey, read, and review will make it much easier for you to understand and remember what you read.

SURVEY. Surveying gives you a quick overview of the material you're going to be reading. To survey, read the title, the section headings, and everything in **bold** and *italic* print. Look at the pictures, charts and graphs, and read the introduction, summary, and review questions.

On the following page you'll find a music history textbook chapter on The Beatles. If you were to survey this page, you would read the title and each of the section headings: **The Beatles dominate the music industry, The Beatles get their start in Liverpool, The Beatles change their image, The Beatles find success in the U.S.,** and **The Beatles go their separate ways**. You would then read everything in **bold** or *italic* print, look at the chart, and read the **Review Questions**.

Surveying provides you with a great deal of information in a very short amount of time. (Look at how much you learn about The Beatles just from reading the section headings.) In addition to providing you with an excellent overview of the text, surveying also provides you with a kind of "information framework." Having this framework of topics and main ideas will make it much easier for you to read, understand, and remember the more detailed information.

The Beatles



The Beatles dominate the music industry
The Beatles were a British rock group that dominated the rock and roll industry during the 1960's. The Beatles had an enormous impact on music. They were, in fact, the single most important component in the creation of the modern day "pop" culture.

The four members of this dynamic group were **Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, George Harrison and John Lennon**. Their playful, yet irreverent public image captured the imagination of an entire generation.

The Beatles get their start in Liverpool
In the summer of 1957, John Lennon and Paul McCartney began playing together in Liverpool, England. Later that year, Paul invited guitar player George Harrison to join the group. The band was becoming popular around the area and was booked to play a series of concerts in Hamburg, Germany. The group perfected their musical skills in the Hamburg beerhalls playing standard American rock and roll songs.

The Beatles change their image
On returning from Hamburg, The Beatles were discovered by **Brian Epstein**. As their manager, Epstein changed the image of the group by exchanging their black leather jackets and tight jeans for collarless suits. He also gave them a new style of haircut. In 1962, Epstein got The Beatles their first recording contract.

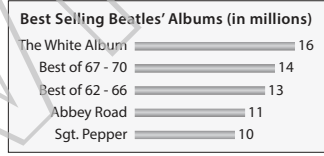
Shortly before entering the studio, drummer Ringo Starr was added to the group. The early Beatles recordings were instantly successful, and soon the band was headlining tours.

The Beatles find success in the U.S.
In 1964, The Beatles' music was released in the United States. The sales were tremendous, breaking all previous records. The band came to New York in April, where screaming fans met them at the airport, and 70 million people watched them on the Ed Sullivan Show.

Throughout the 1960's The Beatles' popularity grew. Their Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band album was released in 1967 to unprecedented critical acclaim. A series of creative, commercially successful albums followed.

The Beatles go their separate ways
By the end of 1968, the members of the group had begun to go in different directions. Paul McCartney continued to write "pop" melodies while George Harrison immersed himself in eastern spirituality. John Lennon grew more distant from the band as he grew closer to his wife, Yoko Ono. In April of 1970, McCartney released his first solo album and announced the end of The Beatles.

Throughout the 1970's, The Beatles' music continued to be popular, and they were constantly encouraged to reunite. Lennon's death in 1980 put an end to any hope of a reunion. The Beatles were inducted into the **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame** in 1988.



- Review Questions**
- 1) Who discovered The Beatles?
 - 2) What year did The Beatles start their recording career? When did they break up?
 - 3) After their break up, did The Beatles ever reunite? Why or why not?

READ. When your reading has purpose, you have a reason to stay focused and your comprehension improves.

To give your reading purpose, try turning each section heading into a question. For example, you could turn the heading, **The Beatles change their image**, into the question, "How did The Beatles change their image?" Keep your question in mind as you read, and at the end of the section, see if you can answer it. Questions give you something specific to look for, and they help keep your mind from wandering. You are, therefore, able to remember more of what you read.

Before you start to read a section, look to see if there are any vocabulary words, names, places, or events in **bold** or *italic* print, and then ask yourself, “Why is this word, person, place, or event important?” You should, of course, have an answer to that question when you finish reading the section. For example, after reading *The Beatles change their image* section, you should know who Brian Epstein is.



When you have completely finished your reading, you should also be able to answer all the Review Questions.

REVIEW. Most students, after having surveyed and read an assignment, will think, “I’m done,” and close their book. Taking a few extra minutes for review, however, will make a huge difference in what you’re able to remember later. When you review, you lock the information into your brain, before it has a chance to evaporate.

To review, first ask yourself, “What is the main idea the author is trying to get across?” Then go back to the beginning and go through the same process you did when you surveyed the material. This time, as you read the section headings, briefly restate the purpose or point of each section using your own words. As you look at the vocabulary words and the words in **bold** and *italic* print, think about what they mean and why they are significant.

If you really want to lock the information into your brain, review everything again a day or two later. When you sit down to study for the test, you’ll be amazed at how well you already know the material.

While it may take a little practice to get the **Survey, Read, and Review** process down, you’ll soon realize that this process doesn’t mean more work. It just means better grades.

STEP SIX REVIEW

Read for Comprehension

- ▶ **SURVEY** the assignment to get an overview.
- ▶ **READ** with a purpose.
- ▶ **REVIEW** to check your comprehension.



STEP SEVEN

Study Smart

Students who “study smart” find that they spend less time studying, and yet they get better grades.

Find a good place to study. Although it’s best to have a regular place to study, it doesn’t matter where you study as long as it’s comfortable, well lit, and it has a surface for writing.

Make sure your study area is free of distractions, and silence your phone. Don’t study with friends, and if you’re living in a dorm, go to the library or to your dorm’s study area. Finding a quiet place where you can concentrate will help you make the most of your study time.

Get started. Getting started on your studying is often the hardest part. Don’t put your studying off until “later,” don’t make excuses, and don’t wait until you’re “in the mood.” Procrastinating just wastes valuable time and energy. If you have trouble getting started, begin with something you can finish quickly or a subject you like.

Vary your studying. To make your study time more effective and less tedious, use study strategies that engage multiple senses (visual, auditory, and tactile).

- ▶ Put important information on flash cards or create a PowerPoint with colors and pictures. Creating these will not only help you learn and remember the material—you’ll have great study tools for later. You can also try mapping out concepts to figure out how ideas connect to one another by drawing a flow chart or diagram.
- ▶ Record yourself reading material out loud and listen to these recordings while taking a walk or doing chores.
- ▶ Move around when you study, use objects whenever possible, and role play ideas and concepts.

As a general rule, the more senses you involve and the wider variety of methods you use while studying, the more you remember. William Glasser, an expert in the field of education, stated:

“Students learn 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they see and hear, 70% of what is discussed with others, 80% of what they experience personally, and 95% of what they teach to someone else.”

Organize your study time.

- ▶ Before you start to study, make a plan. Decide exactly what you want to get done and the order in which you'll do it. Make sure that your plan is both realistic and specific. For example, instead of saying, “study history,” say that you will “read pages 125-150 and do the review questions at the end of the chapter.”
- ▶ Always allow more time than you think you'll need.
- ▶ Prioritize your work to make sure that you have enough time for the things that are the most important.
- ▶ If you have something that seems overwhelming, break it down into smaller parts.
- ▶ Focus on one task at a time.
- ▶ Alternate types of assignments (read English, do math, read history).
- ▶ If you have something to memorize, work on that first. Then go over it again at the end of your study session.
- ▶ Do difficult assignments first, while you're still fresh and alert.
- ▶ Take regular short breaks. Get a drink, get up and stretch, or go for a short walk.
- ▶ Some students like to study at night; others are more focused in the morning. Know when you study best, and organize your day so that you're able to study when you are the most alert and productive.
- ▶ Identify anything that could interrupt your study session and figure out how to eliminate or avoid it.



Know how to study for tests.



- ▶ Test questions most often come from material that's been presented in class. Study your notes thoroughly.
- ▶ Pay close attention during the class before a test. This is when instructors often go over information you need to know.
- ▶ Know what kind of test it will be. For essay tests, understand the big picture and know main points and key facts. For multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank tests, you need to know more detailed information.
- ▶ If an instructor gives you a review sheet or study guide, study it until you know everything on it. Then use it to come up with questions that could be on the test.
- ▶ Have all required reading done ahead of time. When it's time to study for the test, you can then just skim and review.
- ▶ If your textbook has chapter review questions, know the answers to all of them. Also, go through your textbook to make sure you know the meanings of all the words in **bold** and *italic* print.
- ▶ You really know something if you can explain it in your own words. Try teaching material to yourself in front of a mirror.
- ▶ Form a study group with a few students who are doing at least as well as you are in the class. Review important concepts, formulas, and ideas. Ask each other questions, share notes, and go over difficult material.
- ▶ When studying for an exam, go over old tests and quizzes.
- ▶ Write down any names, dates, formulas, or facts you need to remember on index cards. Take these cards with you the day of the test and go over them as often as you can before the test.

Know how to memorize and remember information.

- ▶ Write down what you want to memorize and stare at it. Close your eyes and try to see it in your mind. Say it, and then look at it again.

- ▶ Use flashcards to memorize terms, facts, formulas, and lists.
- ▶ Use as many senses as possible. For example, if you write out what you want to remember, and at the same time, say it out loud, you are simultaneously hearing, seeing, and writing it. You are using your visual, auditory, and kinesthetic senses.
- ▶ Information is easier to remember if it's grouped or categorized. Use lists and diagrams to group related terms, facts, and ideas.
- ▶ Before you go to sleep, review any information you want to remember. Your brain will process this information and commit it to memory while you sleep.
- ▶ Use acronyms to help you memorize information. For example, the acronym HOMES can help you remember the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior).
- ▶ Use the first letter of the words you want to remember to make up a silly sentence. For example, to remember the parts of a cell (mitochondria, Golgi, lysosomes, ribosomes, membrane, vacuoles, nucleus, cytoplasm), make up a sentence like, "My grandmother's llama ruined my valuable new carpet." When you get your test, write MGLRMVNC at the top of the test. This will be your memory cue.
- ▶ Look for a logical or simple connection. For example, to help you remember that Homer wrote *The Odyssey*, just think to yourself, "Homer is an odd name."
- ▶ Use silly associations and ridiculous visual images to help trigger your memory. For example, a ridiculous image could help you remember that Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter*. Just visualize a red letter A with a thorn sticking in it saying "Ha!"
- ▶ Be sure you understand the material you're trying to remember. It is very difficult to remember something you don't understand.
- ▶ Review often. When you review, you move information from your short-term memory into your long-term memory. Review is the key to learning and remembering anything.



Learn computer applications. Know how to use Word's short cuts and features. Also, get as much experience as possible in the computer applications currently being used in your field of study. Get help if you need it.

Develop your public speaking skills.

- ▶ Effective speakers make eye contact with those in their audience. If you find this difficult to do, look at their foreheads instead.
- ▶ To help add energy and enthusiasm to your voice, pretend that you are telling your best friend something really important.
- ▶ Use props whenever possible. Props (posters, books, pictures) give you something to look at and something to do with your hands. You can also put notes on the back of your props.

Know how to write a good paper. The key to writing a good paper is to make sure that you have enough time to plan, write, and revise it. Writing a paper is a process, not a one-time event.

The Writing Process

- 1) Choose a topic.
- 2) Gather supporting information.
- 3) Determine a thesis statement.
- 4) Make an outline of supporting ideas.
- 5) Write the first draft.
- 6) Rethink, revise, and rewrite.



If you're given a choice, choose a topic you're familiar with and want to learn more about. Also make sure your topic isn't too broad, and that there's plenty of information available on the topic you've chosen. (Librarians can be very helpful when you need to find information.) Once you have your topic, determine whether the purpose of your paper is to persuade, inform, or explain.

During the writing process, put your paper away at least once or twice. When you take it out and read it again, you'll see things that you didn't notice before. Also, read your paper out loud to see how it flows.

After you've done everything you can to improve your paper, have someone else check it for errors and readability.

When writing a paper, do the following:

- ▶ Make sure that your paper fulfills the assignment.
- ▶ Have a strong opening paragraph that includes a bold statement, notable quote, statistic, or interesting example.
- ▶ Use clear, concise sentences throughout your paper.
- ▶ End with a strong closing paragraph that restates or summarizes the main idea (thesis).
- ▶ Identify another person's words or ideas within your paper by using quotation marks, footnotes, or by including a Works Cited page. (Your instructor should tell you which style he/she prefers.) If you present another person's words or ideas as your own, it's plagiarism, and you may find yourself in serious trouble.
- ▶ Correct all spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.
- ▶ Turn in a paper that's neat, clean, and professional looking.
- ▶ Turn in your paper on time.



STEP SEVEN REVIEW

Study Smart

- ▶ **Find a good place to study.**
- ▶ **Get started.**
- ▶ **Vary your studying.**
- ▶ **Organize your study time.**
- ▶ **Know how to study for tests.**
- ▶ **Know how to memorize and remember information.**
- ▶ **Learn computer applications.**
- ▶ **Develop your public speaking skills.**
- ▶ **Know how to write a good paper.**



STEP EIGHT

Be a Good Test Taker

In order to do well on any test or exam, you must study hard and be prepared. Having done that, you can further improve your test performance by using these test-taking tips.

Get off to a good start. Have everything you need and get to the test early. As soon as you get your test, write anything you need to remember (facts, dates, equations, memory cues) at the top of the test. Listen closely to any verbal instructions, and read the test directions carefully.

Develop a plan. Before you begin, quickly look over the entire test and make a plan. For example, if a one-hour test has 25 multiple-choice questions and 2 essay questions, you could plan to spend 10 minutes on the multiple-choice questions, 20 minutes on each essay question, and 10 minutes checking over your answers.

Mark the questions you want to return to. Put a check mark or dot by any answer you're not sure of. After you've gone through all of the questions, go back to the ones you've marked and try them again. If you're not sure of an answer, go with your first instinct.

Don't spend a lot of time on difficult questions, and don't panic if you don't know the answers to the first few questions. Sometimes it takes a few minutes for your brain to get in gear.

Increase your odds on multiple-choice questions.

- ▶ When you read a multiple-choice question, try to come up with the answer in your head before you look at the answer choices.
- ▶ Read all of the answer choices. Don't be tempted to mark the first one that sounds good.
- ▶ If you have no idea which choice is the correct answer, go with one of the middle choices.
- ▶ If two of the choices are similar or opposite, one of them is probably the correct answer.

Know how to approach essay questions.

- ▶ Read each essay question and then start with the easiest one. This will help you gain confidence, and it will give you time to think about how to answer the harder questions. Be sure to note how many points each essay question is worth and adjust your time accordingly.
- ▶ Before you do any writing, brainstorm. Jot down key words and ideas, along with the points you want to include in your answer. If you have time, organize these ideas and points into a simple outline. If not, number them in the order you want to present them.
- ▶ Write legibly, and use clear, concise, complete sentences. In your opening paragraph, introduce your topic and tell the reader what he/she can expect to learn from your essay. In the middle paragraphs, present supporting ideas along with facts, examples, and details. In your final paragraph, summarize the main points, give a brief analysis, or draw conclusions. Finally, reread your entire essay and make any necessary corrections.
- ▶ If you don't know the answer to an essay question, take a couple of minutes to write what you can about the subject. You might hit on something and get partial credit. If you don't have time to finish an essay, briefly list the points you would have covered.

Look for key words in True / False questions.

Statements containing absolute words such as all, always, never, every, and none are usually false. Statements with words such as usually, often, most, sometimes, and many in them are more likely to be true. Read True/False questions very carefully. One word will often determine whether a statement is True or False. If you have no idea what the correct answer is, choose True. Research shows that True is correct more often than False.



Be prepared for open book tests.

The following tips will help you locate information quickly during an open book test. 1) Go through your notes and highlight the most important information. 2) Write down all the information you know you're going to need on one sheet of paper. 3) Put self-stick notes in your textbook to help you locate specific information.

Improve your math test scores.

- ▶ As soon as you get your test, write any formulas or equations that you need to remember at the top of your test.
- ▶ Before you start to solve a problem, try to estimate what the answer will be.
- ▶ If you're having difficulty with a problem, try drawing a picture or diagram.
- ▶ Don't spend too much time on any one problem.
- ▶ Show all of your work. Even if you get the wrong answer, you may get partial credit if you were on the right track.



Check your answers. Check all of your answers, even the ones you know are correct. You may have read a question wrong or made a careless mistake. If you're unsure, do not change your answer.

Go over all returned tests. As soon as a test is returned to you, go over each question you missed, and when possible, write in the correct answer. Check to make sure that your test was graded correctly, and keep a record of your test scores. Keep all returned tests in a file or folder.

STEP EIGHT REVIEW

Be a Good Test Taker

- ▶ **Get off to a good start.**
- ▶ **Develop a plan.**
- ▶ **Mark the questions you want to return to.**
- ▶ **Increase your odds on multiple-choice questions.**
- ▶ **Know how to approach essay questions.**
- ▶ **Look for key words in True/False questions.**
- ▶ **Be prepared for open book tests.**
- ▶ **Improve your math test scores.**
- ▶ **Check your answers.**
- ▶ **Go over all returned tests.**



STEP NINE

Reduce Test Anxiety

A little nervousness before a test can improve your alertness. Excessive worry, or test anxiety, however, can lower your test score.

It's possible for students with test anxiety to get themselves so worked up that they can't think clearly. The brain, like a computer, contains a great deal of information. This information is useless, however, if you can't access it when you need it. Having test anxiety is like not having the password to your computer. The information is there, but you can't get to it.

To reduce test anxiety, study enough to feel confident that you know the material. Then try to replace the worry and negative thinking with thoughts that are positive and relaxing. These suggestions may help.

- ▶ Start studying early. The night before a test, review the material and get a good night's sleep. Cramming only increases test anxiety.
- ▶ Mentally practice going through the testing experience. Close your eyes and see yourself walking confidently into the test, answering the questions correctly, and receiving the grade you want.
- ▶ Walk into the test with your head up and your shoulders back. If you act confident, you just may find that you feel more confident.
- ▶ Try these relaxation techniques:
 - 1) Take a deep breath. Then slowly release your breath, along with any tension. Do this until you feel your body relax.
 - 2) Starting at the top of your head, flex, and then relax each part of your body.
 - 3) Close your eyes and visualize warm sunshine washing over you, melting away the tension and relaxing all of your muscles.
 - 4) Think of a place where you feel very relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being in that place.

The more you practice positive thinking and relaxation techniques, the better you'll get at using them. If you continue to have problems with test anxiety, talk to your advisor or to a counselor. Libraries and bookstores also have materials that may be helpful.



STEP TEN

Use Available Services

Colleges provide a wide variety of services in order to help students get the most out of their college experience. Check your college's website or catalog to learn about the services available at your college. These are some of the most common services found on college campuses.

Academic Advisor – Advisors help students choose their major, select courses, and plan their program. Students should see their advisor at least once each term.

Career Services – Most colleges have Career Services to help students plan and prepare for a career, locate internships, and obtain full-time jobs upon graduation. If you need information about a specific career, or if you need help determining which career or major would be best for you, visit your college's career center.

Clubs / Activities – A variety of clubs, programs, and activities can be found on most college campuses. These include social organizations, student government organizations, and a wide variety of special interest groups. If you have time, get involved in one or more campus activities.

Computer Labs – Most colleges have computer labs staffed with trained assistants. These assistants help students with their online, software, and hardware concerns. Many departments also have their own computer labs.

Cooperative Education/Internships – Many colleges have co-op and internship programs. These programs give students the opportunity to get relevant work experience while they're still in college. When students graduate, they not only have a degree, they have valuable work experience in their field of study.

Counseling Services – Most colleges provide free, professional counseling. If you have a personal problem or concern, talk to a counselor. The information you share will be kept in strict confidence.

Disability Services – If you have a physical or learning disability, contact the disability services office as soon as possible. They will help you get the assistance you need.

Financial Aid – The Financial Aid Office helps students explore their financial aid options (grants, scholarships, work-study, and loans). If you need help paying for college, go to the Financial Aid Office and talk to a counselor.

Health Services – Colleges offer varying levels of health care services. Some colleges offer only emergency health care; others have clinics with a wide range of medical services.

Honors Programs/Scholars Programs – Many colleges have Honors or Scholars Programs for academically outstanding students. These programs offer a variety of unique opportunities for those who qualify (priority scheduling, access to honors courses, honors housing, etc.).

Learning Centers – These centers provide academic support programs to promote student achievement. Their staff assists students with class assignments, notetaking, and more. They may also offer tutoring and conduct workshops on study skills and test preparation.

Libraries – In addition to housing books, reference materials, and periodicals, libraries also have computers with access to a network of information resources. Librarians can also be very helpful in locating information.

Recreation Centers – These centers offer a variety of exercise equipment, classes, and programs to help students stay in shape and have fun.

Registration and Records – The Registration and Records Office provides and maintains student records. They also may be able to help students with course registration and schedule changes.

Student Services/Affairs – Many of the services listed here fall under the umbrella of Student Services or Student Affairs. If you have a concern or question and aren't sure where to go, this is a good place to start.



College Terms

Every college student should know the terms listed below.

Academic Probation – Students are placed on probation when they are in danger of being dismissed from school because of low grades. Many colleges put students on academic probation if their GPA is below 2.0.

Accreditation – If a school is accredited, it means that the school has met the accrediting organization’s competency requirements.

Articulation Agreement – This is an agreement between two schools regarding the transferring of credits.

Associate’s Degree – Students who complete a two-year program receive an associate’s degree.

Bachelor’s Degree – Students who complete a four or five-year program receive a bachelor’s degree.

Bursar/Financial Services – They collect money for tuition, fees, etc.

Course Numbers – Most colleges use 3-digit course numbers ranging from 100 to 400. Courses in the 100 series are usually for first-year students; courses in the 200 series are generally for second-year students. A first-year student, for example, might take English 101 first semester and English 102 second semester.

Credit Hour – As a general rule, the number of credit hours assigned to a course also indicates the number of hours the class meets per week. A three-hour course, for example, usually meets three hours a week. Lab classes are the exception; they generally meet for longer time periods.

Drop/Add – Students who want to drop or add a course must complete the required form(s) before the drop/add deadline.

Elective – All students must take a certain number of required courses. Elective courses are those that students choose, or “elect,” to take.

Full-Time Student – A student must generally be enrolled in at least 12 credit hours to be considered a full-time student.

Liberal Arts – While some colleges and majors focus on preparing students for specific careers, a liberal arts education focuses on developing intellectual skills, general knowledge, and reasoning abilities.

Major – This is the academic area a student chooses to study in-depth.

Prerequisite – When students must take one course before they're allowed to take another, the first course is a prerequisite. Math 101, for example, might be a prerequisite for Math 102.

Quarter/Semester – Colleges on quarters divide their year into three academic terms of about 12 weeks each. Colleges on semesters divide their school year into two equal periods.

Registrar – The registrar's office is responsible for maintaining academic records and registering students for classes.

Registration – Before the beginning of each term, students must pay their fees and sign up (register) for classes.

Room and Board – "Room and board" refers to the amount that students who live on campus must pay for housing (room) and meals (board).

Transcript – A transcript is a copy of a student's official academic record. It lists all courses taken, and all grades and credits earned. Transcripts can be obtained from the registrar's office.

Transfer of Credits – Credits earned at an accredited college can usually be transferred to another college. The college to which the student is transferring, however, decides which credits it will accept.

Tuition – Tuition is the amount charged for academic instruction.

Undeclared – A student who has not yet decided on a field of study has an undeclared major.

Undergraduate – A student who hasn't yet received a bachelor's degree is considered an undergraduate.

How To Get
GOOD
GRADES
In College

by Linda O'Brien

Helpful advice and practical
tips that show students
how to succeed in college



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