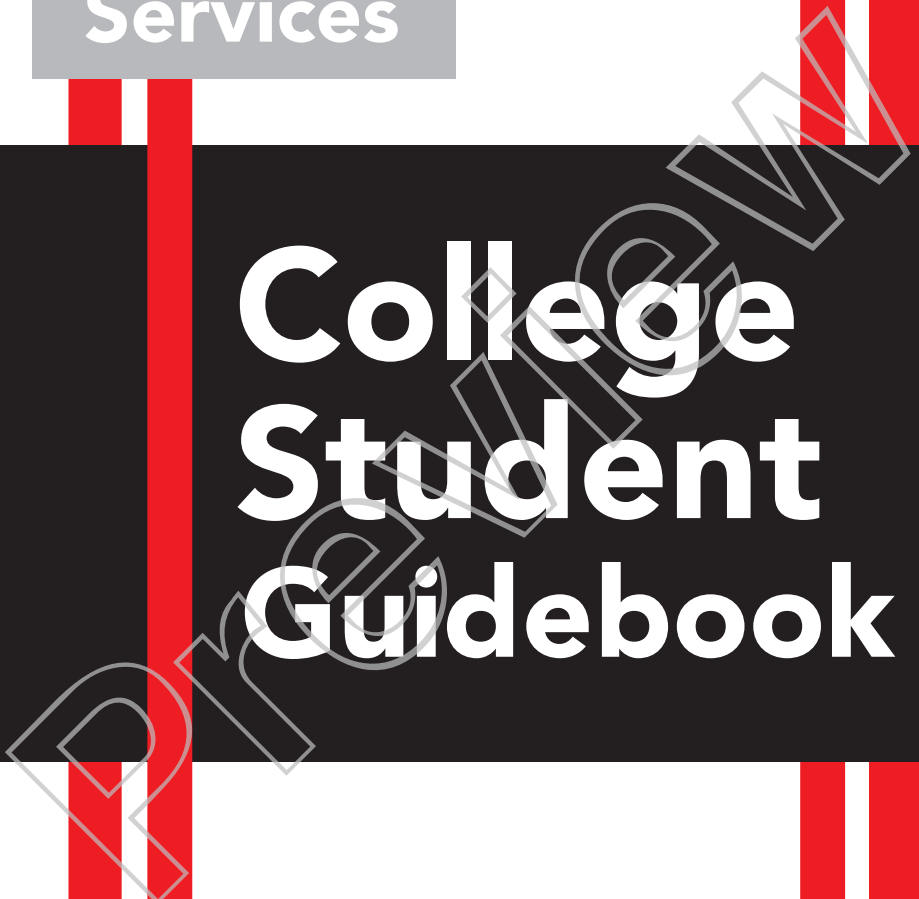




**Student  
Support  
Services**

**College  
Student  
Guidebook**





**Dear Student,**

**Congratulations on making the decision to further your education. You are embarking on an adventure that's certain to benefit your future!**

**As a college student, you will assume new responsibilities and overcome new obstacles. And as an SSS student, you will have the support you need to get you to the finish line.**

**This book will give you tips and advice on how to succeed in college. It will also help you think about and plan for your future. Let's get started!**

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# Take charge of your education



Graduating from college takes a lot of hard work and perseverance. SSS is there to support you, but your education is your responsibility. Here's are some things you can do to take charge of your education.

## Get familiar with the campus

If you haven't already, take time to explore the campus. You'll likely discover fitness facilities, libraries, cafes, and computer labs. As you explore, look for study lounges, coffee shops, and other quiet places to study.

## Know the LMS

From scheduling to class announcements, you will be using your college's learning management system (LMS) a lot. Review the system's features and tools, and make sure your settings allow email and text notifications.

## Take responsibility for your academic progress

For every hour you spend in class, plan to spend two hours reading, studying, and completing assignments. Also, understand that no one is monitoring your progress or checking to see if you're going to class. You are responsible for your own academic progress.

**Some professors regularly post grades for students to monitor and some don't. Always keep track of your grades so you know where you stand.**

## Understand the policies and procedures

Make sure that you understand things like drop/add policies and registration procedures. It's often assumed that you already know most of these things, so it's up to you to get clarification when you don't understand something.

## Use available services

Your tuition dollars help colleges provide lots of valuable services, but it's up to you to take advantage of them.

**Undecided about your major or career?** Schedule an appointment with career services.

**Money concerns?** Check with the financial aid office about loans, grants, scholarships, and/or campus job opportunities.

**Dorm issues?** Speak to your RA or visit the residence life office.

**Medical, nutrition, or sexual issues?** Visit the student health center.

**Personal, emotional, or substance abuse problems?** Visit the counseling center.

**Computer or phone issues?** Visit or call the IT help desk.

*If you have a problem, question, or concern but don't know where to go, an SSS advisor can always point you in the right direction.*

## First-generation college student?

**It's not uncommon for first-generation students to feel a bit isolated, especially if it feels like no one on campus shares their background or experiences. Just know that you have worked hard, earned your spot, and that you belong there as much as anyone else.**

**Some first-generation college students also might feel extra pressure—like their family is depending on them to do well. This can cause a lot of stress. If you ever feel this way, know that your family is proud of you, and just do your best.**

Choosing your classes is one of the most important things you'll do in college. And while your academic and SSS advisors can offer suggestions, the decision about which classes to take and when to take them is up to you.

## Understand registration

Colleges generally assign a registration date (or range of dates) according to the number of hours students have completed. Know the date and time you've been assigned to register. Be ready as soon as it opens! Some classes fill up quickly, so always register at the earliest possible time.

## Choose your classes wisely

- ▶ Months before you need to register, schedule an appointment with your academic advisor to discuss the courses you're considering.
- ▶ Create a list of first-choice classes, along with a list of alternate course selections.
- ▶ Get all core requirements and prerequisites completed early.
- ▶ Know which courses are required for your major, which courses must be taken in sequence, and which ones have a prerequisite.

## Spread out difficult courses

When you're taking a particularly difficult class, you may need to devote twice the amount of study time to it. If possible, avoid taking more than one time-consuming, challenging class in the same semester.

Many classes include a lab, which is a separate class session. Taking too many classes with required labs in the same semester can leave you with very little free time. You might also consider taking a difficult class during the summer, when you have fewer or no competing classes.



# Be successful in your classes

How you spend your time in class will have a direct impact on your success in college.

## Communicate with your instructors

Don't hesitate to contact an instructor whenever you have a question, concern, or problem. Asking for help means that you're smart and mature enough to take control of your success. While most instructors are happy to help, you must initiate the contact.

## Participate in class

Ask questions and participate in discussions. Classes will be more interesting, time will pass more quickly, and your instructors will see that you know the material.

## Eliminate distractions

Silence your phone and put it away. Use an app like Freedom or SelfControl that can block the internet and other apps for a time.

## Take notes

Taking notes helps you stay focused in your classes—when you're taking notes, your mind doesn't have time to think about anything else. *Class notes are your best test prep resource, so having good notes to study from will help you get higher test grades.*

## Have contact information for classmates

If you miss a class, you'll want to contact a classmate to get a copy of any notes or handouts—and to find out if any assignments were given.



## Attendance matters!

**The importance of class attendance cannot be overestimated. If you want to get good grades in college you need attend every class—whether the professor takes attendance or not.**

Academic success isn't about studying a lot, it's about studying smart. Here are some tips to help you study smart.

## Study in a quiet place

Locate a quiet, well-lit space where all you can do is study. By eliminating all distractions, you force yourself to do one thing only—study.

## 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.

## Study the "worst first"

Study the more difficult and less interesting material while you're still fresh.

## Turn off your phone when you're studying

Nothing wastes time more than cell phone usage. Don't let overuse of your phone sabotage your academic success.

## Save and back up computer files often

Avoid every student's nightmare of lost or corrupted assignments and papers. Use external hard drives and/or online back-up systems.

## Just say no

There's plenty of opportunity for socializing and fun during college, *but academics must come first*. Know what you need to do, and don't let anything get in the way of your schoolwork.

## Seek help early

At the first sign that you're struggling or falling behind in a class, speak to your instructor or academic advisor about the availability of extra help sessions or tutoring.





# Manage your time

In college, you are responsible for managing your own time and organizing your own affairs. Here are some tips to help you stay on top of all you need to do.

## Make to-do lists and prioritize tasks

Make a daily list of the things you need to do and rank them in order of importance. Focus on one task at a time. At the end of the day, take the tasks that didn't get done and put them on the next day's to-do list.

## Use an academic planner or homework app

To help you stay organized, regularly use an academic planner or a homework app such as myHomework or iHomework. *Don't rely on your memory—record everything you need to do and/or remember.*

## Make good use of the time between classes

Use this time to study, review notes, meet with professors, or prepare for upcoming classes. The more you get done during the day, the more time you'll have at night for other activities.

## Combine tasks

Study while doing laundry, get your exercise by jogging to the library, or go over your class notes while waiting for a friend.

## Control time wasters

Social media, TV, and video games can be huge time wasters. Schedule small chunks of time for these activities, and stick to your schedule.



## Do you have a job?

**Working while in college makes time management especially important. Use work breaks to do assigned reading or homework, and try not to overwhelm yourself by working too many hours.**

The financial decisions you make today can have a major impact (positive or negative) on your future. College is a great time to take control of your finances and learn about money management.

## Recognize wants vs. needs

Needs are things that are necessary for living, such as food, clothing, and shelter. Wants are things you don't have to have—they are the things you would like to have or do (like a larger TV, new phone, or concert tickets). *Think about the things you spend your money on and differentiate between wants and needs.*

Businesses work hard to convince you that you don't just want what they're selling—you *need* it. Smart consumers are aware of these sales tactics and don't let them influence their decisions.

## Be careful with plastic

A debit card is a much better option than a credit card. It will prevent you from overspending, and you won't get hit with high interest rate payments. If you do use a credit card, have one with a low limit and make every effort to pay your bill in full each month. Also, avoid credit cards, ATMs, and checking accounts that charge a fee.



## Have a weekly budget

A budget can help you decide how you're going to spend your money during a specific time period. There are college budget worksheets and lots of budgeting apps (such as Moneyfy and Mint) available online. Every time you make a purchase, withdraw cash, or make a deposit, you enter it on your worksheet or app.

*For tips on how to build a budget, watch this short video.*



## **Take advantage of free campus activities**

Most colleges offer free or inexpensive sporting events, concerts, films, café entertainment, theater productions, and speakers. College and local libraries also have free movie rentals.

## **Leave your car at home**

Walk, use public transportation, and/or ride a bicycle. You'll save thousands of dollars by not owning or driving a car. Insurance, gas, maintenance, and parking fees add up quickly.

## **Check out textbook options**

Comparison shop for textbooks and consider your options—rent vs. buy, electronic vs. print, used vs. new. Resell unwanted books immediately after final exams.

## **Eat well and wisely**

Research your options and only purchase the college meal plan you are going to use. If you're not on a meal plan, find discount grocers, buy in bulk, and cook most of your own meals.

## **Build good credit**

*Just like your GPA tells others how well you do in school, your credit record lets others know how well you manage your money.*

Before a bank or business will loan you money or give you credit, they want to feel reasonably certain that you'll make the agreed upon payments—so they check your credit record and/or credit score.

A good credit record can help you qualify for an apartment, home mortgage, car loan, and even get a better cell phone plan.

To build a good credit record, make all bill payments on time. Being late with just one or two payments can adversely affect your credit report. And if you have a credit card, pay off the balance each month.

*During your college years, it's essential that you be smart about your expenses and your spending habits. The alternative is to put yourself in a financial hole that can take decades to crawl out of.*

# Understand financial aid

Financial aid is money that is given, earned, or lent to help students pay for college. As a college student, it's important that you know what kinds of financial aid are available.

## Types of financial aid

**Grants** are funds given, usually because of financial need. Grants do not have to be paid back. The Pell Grant, for example, provides billions of dollars each year to income-eligible families.

*When students and parents submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), they automatically apply for a Pell Grant.*

**Scholarships** are generally awarded for academic achievement or an outstanding talent or skill. Scholarships do not need to be repaid.

**Loans** are borrowed from a lender (such as a bank, a college, or the federal government). Loans must be paid back. Over half of all financial aid awarded is in the form of a loan.

*Most students find that it is much more difficult to pay off their student loans than they expected. Smart students consider all financial aid opportunities and look for ways to cut college costs.*

**Work-study programs** provide college students who have financial need with part-time jobs to help fund their education.

*If you have questions or need help paying for college, talk to your TRIO advisor or visit the your college's financial aid office.*

## Fill out the FAFSA every year!

**Many students who could have gotten money for college didn't receive it because they didn't complete a FAFSA. Fill out the FAFSA every year, and if your financial situation changes between applications, talk to the financial aid office. Visit [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov).**

# Think about your future

The choices and connections you make in college can have a big impact on your future career. Here's what you can do now to put yourself on the path to a bright future.

## Visit career services

The career services office can help you choose a major, build a resume, prepare for a job interview, figure out what career will be a good fit for you, and much more. Visit them often throughout your college career.



## Land an internship

An internship enables you to obtain relevant work experience while you are in college. If you would like to get an internship, visit career services. They can help you find internship opportunities and get an internship that will help you develop skills relevant to your career goals. Also, check out internship opportunities online. Websites such as [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com), [internships.com](https://www.internships.com), and [glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) are great places to start.

## Network

All of the people you meet in college—professors, advisors, classmates, and mentors—are part of your network. Maintain these relationships as you advance in your college career. Also look for opportunities to make new connections whenever you're involved in activities, attending career fairs, or working at a job.

## Thinking about graduate school?

Graduate school is required in some professions, optional for others, and unnecessary in many fields. As you finalize your choice of major and identify a career path, talk to career services about the necessity or advisability of graduate school.

# Manage stress

Between new people, new demands, and new surroundings, college can be stressful. College students need to have healthy ways to deal with stress.

## Confide in those you trust

When you're stressed, talk to friends and family members. You can also drop in or make an appointment at the counseling center. Everything you discuss will be held in confidence.



## Make changes if you're feeling overwhelmed

If you're feeling overwhelmed, or think that you may have taken on too much, make a list of everything going on in your life and determine what can be modified, postponed, or eliminated.

## Take care of mind and body

Get plenty of sleep, eat healthy, and exercise. Also, make sure to take time every day to relax, recharge, and rejuvenate. Check with your college's counseling, health, and recreation centers about relaxation training, yoga, Pilates, or tai chi.

## If it's beyond your control, let it go

If you are stressed over things you can't change, let those worries go.

## Try meditation

Meditation can help you eliminate stress, relax, and feel more centered. You can meditate by sitting quietly and listening to your breathing, or by going for a walk, taking some deep breaths, and noticing what you see, feel, and hear. You can also try a guided meditation app like Calm, or stream guided meditations on Spotify or YouTube.

For some calming techniques, watch this quick video!



VIDEO

# Stay motivated

Graduating from college takes persistence—and you can count on Student Support Services to help keep you motivated and on track.

## Surround yourself with positive people

Choose to be around people who support and encourage you. These are the people who will help you achieve your goals and realize your dreams.



## Practice positive self-talk

You can help yourself stay positive and motivated just by changing your “self-talk.” Replace *“I’m terrible at math”* with *“I’m smart—I can do this.”* Changing how you think will change how you feel and act.

## Use motivating “self-notes”

Write motivating words, ideas, and/or quotes on sticky notes. Put these notes anywhere you’re likely to see them.

## Hit refresh

When you’re feeling overwhelmed, walk away. Listen to music or have lunch with a friend—then return ready to tackle your work.

## Figure out what motivates you

Turn what competes with your schoolwork into a motivator. For example, get a paper done early so you can hang out with friends, or reward yourself with video game time once your homework is done.

## Believe in yourself—and in your support team

College should be challenging, and you should expect it to be difficult at times. Just know that you can rise to the challenge! No matter what you need, you are never in it alone. Know that you have lots of supporters cheering you on—and that SSS is there to help.



**Student Support Services**

# **College Student Guidebook**

**This booklet is filled with helpful  
tips and expert advice on how  
you can succeed in college!**

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