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# **51 TIPS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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**COLLEGE EDITION**

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## Introduction

Your college years are among the most formative and challenging years of your life. College offers many opportunities for personal and intellectual growth. It is a period of self-discovery, and a time for taking charge of your life.

**Of course, first and foremost, you are attending college to pursue academic studies and prepare for a career—so succeeding in your classes must be your top priority.**

This book will provide you with numerous tips, hints, and recommendations on how to make wise academic decisions, study effectively, and be successful in your classes.

*College is an investment in your future.  
Have fun, work hard, and make the most of it!*

Preview

*“Success is the sum of small efforts,  
repeated day in and day out.”*

Robert Collier

# TIP 1

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## ATTEND ALL CLASSES

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*“If I could give freshmen one piece of advice, it would be to go to every class.”*

BRAD, MATH MAJOR

## **The importance of regular class attendance cannot be overemphasized.**

When you skip classes, you miss out on lectures, notes, explanations of assignments, class discussions, tips on what may appear on exams, and changes to the syllabus.

Sure, it's tempting to skip a class now and then, particularly when you have an instructor who doesn't seem to notice whether or not you're there. But don't kid yourself into thinking that missing a class won't make a difference, or that it's okay as long as you get copies of the notes (which may or may not be any good).

*In some cases, your grade may be partially based on your attendance. And even if it's not, a professor isn't likely to cut you any slack if you're often a "no show."*

## TIP 2

# SIT UP FRONT IN CLASS

*“I like sitting in the back, but I get better grades when I sit up front.”*

MARIA, BUSINESS MAJOR



**Arrive early on the first day of class and sit in one of the first three rows near the center.**

*This may become your permanent seat.*

When you sit in the front, you're able to see what's written or displayed, and hear what's spoken. You also send a positive message to your professor—you're there to learn.

Students sitting up front seldom talk to one another, browse the web, text, Snapchat, doze off, walk in late, or engage in other activities that are distracting and annoying.

*When you sit up front, you get more out of your classes, and you have less to learn on your own.*

## TIP 3

# MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR STUDY TIME

*“Do what you can, with what you have,  
where you are.”* THEODORE ROOSEVELT

*As you have undoubtedly heard, you should study two (or more) hours for each hour in class.*

## **But the key to success is not studying a lot—it's studying well.**

- ▶ Combat fatigue by organizing your studying into 30–45 minute increments followed by 5–10 minute breaks.
- ▶ Decide exactly what you want to get done and the order in which you'll do it.
- ▶ Avoid marathon cramming sessions and all-nighters. Prepare for exams over the course of several days.
- ▶ Study the most difficult material when you're the freshest and most alert.
- ▶ Take advantage of extra-help sessions.
- ▶ If you find group learning beneficial, participate in study partnerships or study groups.

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

## TIP 4

# MEET WITH YOUR ACADEMIC ADVISOR

*“You are never strong enough that  
you don’t need help.”* CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

**Your academic advisor can assist you with course selection, graduation requirements, and program planning. Make use of this valuable resource!**

When you meet with your advisor, bring a hard copy of your online degree audit (e.g., DARS) and a printed list of any questions you have regarding the following:

- ▶ general education requirements
- ▶ requirements for your major
- ▶ prerequisites and electives
- ▶ registration procedures
- ▶ taking courses pass/fail, online, or during the summer (or intersession)
- ▶ withdrawing from a course
- ▶ studying abroad

*Schedule an appointment with your academic advisor early each semester.*

## TIP 5

# COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS EARLY

*“Never leave till tomorrow that which you can do today.”* BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

## **Make it a practice to finish your assignments days before they are due.**

This allows you time to review and revise your work, get input from others, and avoid silly last-minute mistakes.

The same applies to applications for on-campus jobs, internships, scholarships, and the like. Complete and review all of these long before they are due.

*Panic-driven, eleventh hour work tends to be shoddy. Don't just meet deadlines—beat deadlines.*

## TIP 6

# GET ENOUGH SLEEP

*"A good laugh and a long sleep are  
the two best cures for anything."*

IRISH PROVERB



## **Success in college requires taking care of both mind and body.**

Chronic fatigue (from insufficient sleep) contributes to illness and the inability to concentrate—which invariably results in academic underperformance. *You simply will not perform at your best if you are sleep-deprived.*

Over-reliance on stimulants (in the form of caffeine, nicotine, over-the-counter drugs, or illegal substances) will never substitute for a good night's sleep.

*Combine getting enough sleep with a regimen of healthy eating and regular exercise—you will feel better, look better, and perform better.*

## TIP 7

# ALWAYS FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS

*“The two best tips I got when I started college were 1) go to every class and 2) follow instructions.”* LOGAN, ART MAJOR

## **Much of college success boils down to simply following instructions.**

You have a lot more autonomy and freedom in college. But like it or not, college life requires that you jump through quite a few hoops—and that you pay close attention to instructions.

For example, you might encounter instructions such as these: answer two of the three essay questions; submit your report to your professor's email address before midnight; write a three-page paper, double spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font. *Not following these instructions will most certainly result in lower grades.*

*You'll be amazed at how much success you will have by simply following instructions.*

## TIP 8

# STRENGTHEN YOUR COMPUTER SKILLS

*“The computer is the equivalent of  
a bicycle for our minds.”* STEVE JOBS

**You may not be a computer science major and you may never write a line of code, but you will be using computers throughout college and beyond.**

Now is the time to learn the most popular programs (spreadsheets, graphic design, web development), as well as the programs used in your chosen career field.

Also become proficient in Microsoft Word, the standard in word processing. Familiarity with Word's shortcuts and special features will save you countless hours over the course of your college career.

*To enhance your computer skills, check for computer courses and IT department workshops offered by your college. For online tutorials and courses, visit [linkedin.com/learning](https://www.linkedin.com/learning).*

## TIP 9

# USE AN ACADEMIC PLANNER

*“For every minute spent organizing,  
an hour is earned.”* BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

**In college, no one is there to remind you of what you need to do. You and your academic planner assume that role.**

Keep your planner near you at all times. Write your name and contact information in it (in case it gets misplaced) and offer \$10 for its return.

Pencil in class and study times, activities, appointments, events, and project deadlines.

*Using a calendar on your phone or computer is fine, if you actually use it. Don't rely on your memory. Write everything down.*

# TIP 10

## ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN CLASS

*“If I zone out, a class can seem like it takes forever. When I participate, the time goes a lot faster.”* ADA, MUSIC MAJOR



*It's perfectly okay to spend time texting, napping, or using on social media—just not during class.*

**You'll derive the most benefit from your educational investment by spending your time in class doing the following:**

- ▶ listening
- ▶ taking notes
- ▶ asking for clarification
- ▶ responding to professors' questions
- ▶ offering your opinion

Your goal is not to impress your professor or classmates (although you certainly may), but to maximize your comprehension of the material.

*To help ensure that you stay focused, put your phone away and stay off your laptop (unless it's being used with the professor's blessing in conjunction with the lecture).*

# TIP 11

## ENROLL IN FIRST-YEAR COURSES

*“I didn’t think this course would be worth my time, but I’ll be a better student because of what I learned.”* JOHN, CHEMISTRY MAJOR

## **Colleges want their students to succeed, and many have developed first-year programs to facilitate student success.**

College success programs vary in length and go by a variety of names such as *First-Year Seminar*, *UNIV 101*, and *Academic Strategies*.

If this type of course or seminar is available at your college, enroll in it—even if it's not for credit. You'll learn how to navigate your college world, and you'll be given lots of helpful college success tips.

*Research shows that students who participate in “first-year” programs have higher GPAs and graduation rates than non-participants.*

# TIP 12

## USE WASTED TIMES

*“If you want to make good use of your time, you’ve got to know what’s most important and then give it all you’ve got.”* LEE IACocca

## **Time is a precious commodity in college, and successful students manage their time effectively.**

Look for chunks of time that are wasted and use these times to study, review class notes, update your to-do list, or meet with a professor.

Also, look for ways to combine tasks.

- ▶ Exercise by jogging to the library.
- ▶ Review class notes while waiting for a friend or riding on the bus.
- ▶ Practice a presentation while cleaning your room.

*15 minutes here and there add up—and using these snippets of time wisely frees up time in the evenings for socializing and chilling out.*

# TIP 13

## SEEK ACADEMIC HELP

*“Be strong enough to stand alone, smart enough to know when you need help, and brave enough to ask for it.”* ZIAD ABDELNOUR

**College courses can be demanding and challenging, but there's lots of help available.**

Reach out for help at the very first sign you may need assistance. Don't wait until it's too late to get extra help, or until your grade in a course is beyond improvement.

Check with your professor, TA (teaching assistant), and academic department about tutors, extra-help sessions, and campus learning centers. Find a study partner, or look into joining a study group.

*With so many people and resources to assist you in college, there's absolutely no reason to go it alone.*

# TIP 14

## ACE THE EASY CLASSES

*“Whenever I have an elective, I look for a class that’s interesting and fun. And I usually end up getting an A.”* SOPHIA, ECONOMICS MAJOR



**There aren't many "cake" classes in college. But when you do encounter one—ace it.**

Your GPA isn't weighted according to course difficulty—an A in an easy course affects your cumulative GPA the same as an A in a difficult one.

You want to challenge yourself in college, but there's no shame in enrolling in the occasional "less difficult" elective class.

*Taking an easier class now and then will help your GPA, and perhaps free up some time to study for that calculus class.*

# TIP 15

## ACTIVELY READ ASSIGNMENTS

*“Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.”* JOSEPH ADDISON

## To help you learn and remember what you read, preview the material, read with a purpose, and review.

**Preview the material.** Before you begin, read the introduction, section headings, and chapter summaries.

**Read with a purpose.** Before reading a section, turn the section heading into a question—and don't proceed to the next section until you can answer your question.

**Review.** When you're finished reading, quickly go back over the assignment and restate the main points of each section.

**Tip:** Take notes as you read and organize the main ideas into an outline—or use your notes to write a brief summary.

*Don't bother trying to read when you're fatigued or distracted. Do your reading when you're alert and motivated to learn.*

# TIP 16

## UNDERSTAND DROP, ADD, & INCOMPLETE POLICIES

*“My math class was too hard for me, but when I went to drop it, I found out that I was too late. I was stuck.”* TJ, BOTANY MAJOR

## **The best time to learn these policies is long before you're considering a drop (withdrawal), add, or incomplete.**

Why? Because there are restrictions and deadlines that differ across departments and courses.

- ▶ If you withdraw after a certain deadline, you may lose some or all of your tuition.
- ▶ There may be limits to the number of Ws and Is you can have.
- ▶ A grade in a course you've retaken may either replace your initial grade or be averaged into your GPA.

And the list goes on. So before the semester begins, review your college's policies, and if you have questions, speak to your academic advisor.

*Note: Even with a high GPA, a transcript full of Ws and Is may hurt your prospects for graduate or professional school admission.*

## TIP 17

# KNOW HOW GRADES ARE DETERMINED

*“In my Lit class, I did fine on the tests, but because I missed some classes, I got a lower grade.”* STEVIE, ENGLISH MAJOR

## Every course is graded differently.

Grading criteria may include exams, quizzes, assignments, group projects, lab reports, class attendance, presentations, class participation, and extra credit assignments. *(The latter is a no-brainer—always complete extra credit assignments.)*

Review the syllabus, identify how grades are determined, and devote your efforts accordingly. For example, don't spend 70% of your time on a project that only counts for 20% of your grade.

*Do everything possible to keep up with assignments early in the semester. Playing catch-up becomes increasingly difficult as the semester progresses.*

# TIP 18

## SCHEDULE CLASSES WISELY

*“I’m a night owl, and I have an 8:00 class across campus—with a prof who likes to give pop quizzes. It’s brutal.”* NICK, HISTORY MAJOR



## Selecting the right courses is important—but so is the way your courses are scheduled.

Let's face it—most college students (especially freshmen) stay up way too late. So unless you're that rare breed of "morning person" who can function well on less than seven hours of sleep, you may want to avoid early morning classes.

Also, think about how you want to space out your classes. While scheduling classes back-to-back gives you more uninterrupted non-class time, when your classes are spaced out, you have time between them to review your notes, grab a bite to eat, and prepare for the next class.

*If possible, avoid taking two challenging, time-consuming classes during the same semester. Spread out your most difficult classes.*

# TIP 19

## **BEFRIEND LIKE-MINDED STUDENTS**

*“You become who you hang around.”*

JEFF MILLER

## **The crowd you hang out with plays a major role in your adjustment to and success in college life.**

Whether your school's enrollment is 1,000 or 30,000, you'll spend most of your time with a few dozen students during your college years. Select friends who share your values, interests, sense of humor, and commitment to academic success.

Make college an even richer experience by having an open mind and challenging yourself to meet people who are different from your regular social crowd.

*One of the beauties of college is the opportunity to broaden your world view by meeting people from different cultures, ethnicities, and lifestyles.*

# TIP 20

## STRENGTHEN YOUR WRITING SKILLS

*“The ability to express an idea is well  
nigh as important as the idea itself.”*

BERNARD BARUCH

College is writing-intensive; however, the informality of texting and posting has hampered the academic writing of many students.

**If you feel that your academic writing skills could use improving, now is the time to take action.**

- ▶ Enroll in a writing seminar or visit the college writing center for assistance.
- ▶ View online tutorials on basic grammar and writing rules.
- ▶ Visit the “Grammar Girl” website for helpful tips.

You are judged by your writing, whether it’s exam essays and short-answer responses, internship and job cover letters, scholarship and graduate school applications, or social networking posts.

*The key to writing is to have enough time to plan, write, and revise.*

# TIP 21

## COME PREPARED FOR CLASS

*“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.”* ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL

**In college, you can't just study for exams—you need to prepare for each class by reviewing your notes and completing the assigned work.**

When you come to class prepared, you get more out of the lecture, you know what the professor is talking about, and you're able to contribute to the class discussion.

Preparing for each class also helps you keep up with the coursework, and it ensures that you don't fall behind in any of your classes.

*To keep on top of things, constantly refer to the course syllabus. If you're covering Chapter 4 on Thursday, read Chapter 4 in advance.*

## TIP 22

# SET YOUR PRIORITIES

*“Be assured that you’ll always have time  
for the things you put first.”* LIANE STEELE



## **In college, it is easy to feel overwhelmed.**

*During a particular week, you may have a presentation to make, a five-page paper and group project due, a quiz, and an essay exam.*

To deal with situations like this, draw up a timeline that divides tasks into discrete, bite-sized components. Prioritize these tasks, taking into consideration due dates and the amount of work involved.

Reward yourself after you've completed a difficult task—stroll across campus, work out at the rec center, or text a friend. Then move on to the next task.

*There will always be competition for your time. It's about making the right choices.*

# TIP 23

## REVIEW AND REVISE NOTES

*“I’ve found that my notes usually contain most of what I need to know for the test.”* DARIUS, PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR

**Take 10 minutes after class to go over your notes, while the information is still fresh in your mind.**

Clarify anything in your notes that's confusing, highlight the important points, and put a question mark by anything you don't understand.

Taking a few minutes to correct and edit your notes will make them much easier to study from later.

When you review and edit your notes, you also "lock" the information in your memory. Studies show that without review, almost half of what a person learns is forgotten in the first 20 minutes.

*Editing and reviewing are the most important parts of notetaking!*

# TIP 24

## MANAGE TEST ANXIETY

*“Always remember, you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.”* CHRISTOPHER ROBIN

## All students experience some degree of test anxiety. It's normal.

*Good study practices and thorough test preparation are the best antidotes for test anxiety.*

If test anxiety is interfering with your test performance, try the following:

- ▶ Replace irrational thoughts (*I have to ace this test*) and negative thoughts (*I'll never pass this exam*) with thoughts that are realistic and positive (*I've studied hard. I'll do fine*).
- ▶ Reduce physical symptoms of stress (muscle tension, rapid heartbeat) with deep breathing, meditation, and exercise.
- ▶ Get a good night's sleep, have a healthy breakfast, and arrive to class a few minutes early.

*Health & wellness and counseling centers can offer additional tips for combating test anxiety.*

# TIP 25

## BACK UP ALL COMPUTER FILES

*“Information is eternal, computers  
are ephemeral, backup is the savior.”*

WILLIAM R. STANEK

## **Computers can crash, or be lost or stolen. Hard drives fail.**

Every student's worst nightmare is lost or corrupted assignments, papers, or projects. When your 10-page paper disappears, telling your professor that your computer crashed simply won't cut it.

Play it safe and create a back-up system. Save your files on a free cloud system like Google Drive, Media File, or Dropbox—or purchase an online backup system like Carbonite or iDrive. At the very least, email all documents to yourself as attachments, and save them to an email folder.

*When you spill coffee on your laptop, or your device mysteriously disappears from your room, you'll be glad you created a back-up system!*

# TIP 26

## USE LIBRARY RESOURCES

*“A university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library.”* SHELBY FOOTE



## **Your college library offers more than your typical high school or public library.**

- ▶ Check your library's website for student orientation sessions.
- ▶ Learn about inter-library loans, online databases, and reference sites.
- ▶ Find quiet areas in the library that are conducive to uninterrupted study.
- ▶ Get to know the reference librarians. They'll offer suggestions for resources you'd never find on your own (or didn't even know to look for).

*Your library is the knowledge hub of your university. Take advantage of all it has to offer.*

# TIP 27

## ARRIVE TO CLASS EARLY

*“Better three hours too soon than  
a minute too late.”* SHAKESPEARE

## **Make a practice of arriving to class a few minutes early.**

When you get to class early, you're more relaxed, and you have time to talk to classmates, check the syllabus, or review your notes.

Walking in late is not only distracting and rude, it sends the wrong message to your professor. Plus you'll miss announcements and introductory remarks.

And don't leave class early. Professors often summarize the lecture or discuss future assignments or exams at the end of class. You may also be able to catch your professor with any questions before they leave.

*If it's a small class and you must leave early, inform the professor before class begins.*

# TIP 28

**JUST  
SAY  
NO**

*“We are created by the choices we  
make every day.”* BERNIE SIEGEL

## **There's plenty of opportunity for fun and games at college, but...**

There will be times when you'll simply have to turn down invitations and requests to go places and do things.

Of course you want to be liked and accepted, but not at the expense of your academic success or personal integrity. "Just saying no" is all about behaving in accordance with your values, being true to yourself, and keeping your priorities in order.

*True friends will understand that sometimes you have to hit the books, or just get some rest.*

# TIP 29

## UNDERSTAND COURSE REGISTRATION

*“Registration can be a jungle. Know your registration eligibility date and register as early as possible.”* LIZ BAKER, REGISTRAR

## These tips will help ensure that you get the classes you want.

- ▶ Schedule an appointment with your academic advisor to discuss course selection. Meet with your advisor months before you need to register, and have a list of questions ready.
- ▶ Review the course catalog and create a list of first-choice classes, along with a list of alternate course selections.
- ▶ Get core requirements completed as early as possible.
- ▶ Schedule a good mix of classes.
- ▶ Clear up any holds on your account before registration.
- ▶ If wait-listed, plead your case with the professor during their office hours.

*Talk to a few juniors and seniors—they're bound to have some additional registration tips and advice.*

# TIP 30

## PARTICIPATE IN STUDY GROUPS

*“Most great learning happens in groups.  
Collaboration is the stuff of growth.”*

SIR KEN ROBINSON



**Study groups provide a forum for questions, explanations, clarifications, and study tips in a non-threatening and supportive environment.**

When looking for a study group, avoid groups where all the members are struggling. You want a motivated, academically-oriented group that will challenge itself.

If there is no study group available, take the initiative to form one yourself. Ask your professor if you can make an announcement in class or pass around a sign-up sheet.

*Limit your group to 4–6 members. Reserve a room somewhere quiet, bring snacks, create a study agenda, and have at it.*

# TIP 31

## SCOUT OUT NEXT SEMESTER'S CLASSES

*“Before everything else, getting ready  
is the secret of success.”* HENRY FORD

## Be a wise consumer.

If you have questions or concerns about a course you're considering, check it out by doing the following:

- ▶ Review the class syllabus.
- ▶ Leaf through the textbook at the bookstore.
- ▶ Review teacher ratings on [ratemyprofessor.com](http://ratemyprofessor.com).
- ▶ Visit the professor during office hours to discuss the class.
- ▶ If several sections of a course are offered, determine which professor and class time work best for you.

*Sit in on a course you're considering taking. Before or after class, ask a few students what they think of the course and the professor.*

# TIP 32

## STUDY IN A QUIET PLACE

*“Work hard in silence. Let success  
be your noise.”* FRANK OCEAN

**Locate one or more quiet, well-lit, distraction-free spaces where all you can do is study.**

Avoid friends, TV, music, non-academic web browsing, and mute your cell phone. By eliminating all distractions, you force yourself to do one thing only—study.

Scope out residence hall study lounges, unoccupied classrooms, and different floors of the library. For a change of pace, consider off-campus locations such as coffee shops, bookstores, or public libraries. For most students, the absolute worst place to study is their dorm room or apartment.

*If your college has a law, medical, or other professional school library, check it out.*

*They're quieter than undergraduate libraries, which makes them great places to study.*

# TIP 33

## UNDERSTAND ACADEMIC POLICIES

*“Claiming ‘I didn’t know’ won’t cut it in college.”* ROB KING, STUDENT SERVICES

## Do yourself a big favor... carefully review your college and department's academic policies.

Failure to do so can cost you time and money—and cause you a lot of aggravation. Here is a partial list of things to check out:

- ▶ **Academic requirements**

- General education requirements
  - Undergraduate degree requirements
  - Major and minor requirements

- ▶ **Academic workload**

- Dropping under a certain number of credits may affect your scholarship or work-study eligibility.

- ▶ **Articulation agreements**

- Which courses will and will not transfer from other schools

- ▶ **Double majors, double degrees, and eligibility for honors programs**

*Visit the academic policies section on your college's website, and meet with your academic advisor with questions or concerns.*

# TIP 34

## GET TO KNOW YOUR PROFESSORS

*“Developing positive relationships with faculty is one way you can directly influence the quality of your education.”* DR. ALAN FARBER



**There is nothing a professor likes more than a student who is genuinely motivated and engaged in the classroom experience. Be that student!**

Sit up front in class, make eye contact, and ask and answer questions. Visit your professors during office hours to introduce yourself, inquire about extra help, or request career guidance.

Address professors with Dr., Mr., or Ms. When writing emails, have a clear subject line and specify which class section you are in. Be polite and use proper grammar (no slang, abbreviations, or emojis).

*And if you're enjoying a class, let the professor know. It will make their day.*

# TIP 35

## STAY BUSY BUT NOT OVERWHELMED

*“Success usually comes to those who  
are too busy to be looking for it.”*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

**There's a saying: "If you want something done, give it to a busy person."**

Students with too much time on their hands tend to squander it with social media, TV viewing, partying, playing video games, and other time killers that do nothing to help them achieve their academic and personal goals.

It's best to have a full but manageable slate of academic, social, and volunteer activities. Staying comfortably busy teaches important life skills in time management, multi-tasking, and prioritization.

*Be sure to make time for rest and relaxation. Even the busiest person needs to find time to care for mind, body, and spirit.*

# TIP 36

## KNOW YOUR LEARNING STYLE

*“I record myself reading an assignment and then I listen to it while I’m walking to class.”* WHITNEY, FRENCH MAJOR

## Savvy students know how they learn most effectively—and they study accordingly.

- ▶ **Visual learners** rely on the written word, PowerPoints, and videos to comprehend lessons.
- ▶ **Auditory learners** record and replay lectures, listen to podcasts, and recite material aloud.
- ▶ **Tactile learners** take notes, use tools, and create graphs, charts, and outlines.
- ▶ **Independent learners** work best alone, while **group learners** benefit from study partners and groups.
- ▶ **Early birds** study best in the morning, whereas **night owls** may prefer hitting the books after sundown.

*Identify your learning style and create a plan of attack that plays to your learning strengths.*

## TIP 37

# BE AWARE OF COURSE LOAD DIFFICULTY

*“I’ve learned to space out my lab classes. One semester I took three lab classes and I literally had no free time.”* IAN, PHYSICS MAJOR

*Taking 15 hours a semester is typical, but some semesters you may want to take more or less than 15 hours.*

When taking a particularly difficult class, you may want to lighten your load and catch up later with a summer or intersession course. Or you may decide to take more than 15 hours if you're enrolled in an easy class.

**Only overload your schedule when you're 100% confident that you'll be able to devote the time and effort necessary to excel in all of your classes.**

*Know the deadline for dropping a course, just in case you've taken on too much.*

# TIP 38

## TAKE ORGANIZED NOTES

*“Taking notes helps keep me focused.”*

TYLER, POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJOR



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

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Write on only one side of the paper—you can then spread everything out face up when studying.
- ▶ When taking notes, leave an extra space between topics, and create an extra wide left-hand margin for key words.
- ▶ As you listen to a lecture, write key words (main topics, people, places, events, etc.) in your left-hand margin. *Key words will help you organize your thoughts—and make your notes easier to understand.*
- ▶ Underline or highlight the most important information.

*Taking good notes make test prep much less stressful.*

# TIP 39

## BE A GOOD GROUP MEMBER

*“Alone we can do so little, together  
we can do so much.”* HELEN KELLER

## **College is first and foremost a social environment.**

Living and working among a diverse group of fellow students is one of the biggest challenges and greatest joys of college life.

- ▶ Treat classmates and dorm residents the way you'd like to be treated.
- ▶ Always pull your weight when working on team projects.
- ▶ Join student organizations and volunteer for committees, group tasks, and leadership roles.

*Recruiters and graduate schools seek candidates who can communicate clearly, solve problems, and work in collaboration with others. These are skills you can easily develop during your college years by actively participating in different kinds of groups.*

# TIP 40

## KEEP METICULOUS RECORDS

*“I’ve lost or deleted too many documents. Now I keep a hard copy of anything that is important.”* JING, FINANCE MAJOR

## **Develop a system to organize and access both printed and online documents and records.**

For “hard copies,” create and maintain a file of all your important academic, personal, and financial documents. You want a “paper trail” in the event that documents are needed at a later date.

Include the following in your file: grade reports, standardized test scores, class notes, and handouts. Also keep canceled checks, bills, receipts, financial aid paperwork, letters of recommendation, and anything else you may need in the future.

Tip: Scan and save your most important documents online.

*To avoid the possibility of loss or corruption, organize online and word processing documents by category, and save them to a cloud file storage program such as Dropbox or Google Drive.*

# TIP 41

## STRENGTHEN YOUR VERBAL SKILLS

*“There are two kinds of speakers.  
Those that are nervous and those  
that are liars.”* MARK TWAIN

## **Verbal communication is a valuable skill that will serve you well in college and beyond.**

*Speaking well is not to be confused with talking a lot. This is about quality, not quantity.*

Here are a few tips:

- ▶ Watch effective speakers (in person or online) and note how they modulate and project their voice, pace their speech, exude confidence, and connect with their audiences.
- ▶ Practice speaking without unnecessary filler words (*uh, like, really, you know*).
- ▶ Enroll in a public speaking class.
- ▶ Make a point of speaking up in each class.

*With practice and increased confidence, you'll find that public speaking can actually be fun.*

## TIP 42

# LEARN TO RELAX AND MANAGE STRESS

*“Taking time out each day to relax  
and renew is essential to living well.”*

JUDITH HANSON LASATER



## **College stress comes at you fast—new surroundings, new people, new demands, and new expectations.**

Combat physical stress with relaxation exercises, stretching, deep breathing, yoga, tai chi, or meditation. Check with the health & wellness program and/or recreation center for relaxation-related programs and offerings.

Reduce emotional stress by confiding in others—friends, family, spiritual leaders, or professionals at the counseling center. When you're stressed, it's much healthier and more effective to share your problems than it is to go it alone.

*Seeking help is not an indication of weakness—it is a sign of wisdom.*

# TIP 43

## USE COLLEGE SUCCESS APPS AND WEBSITES

*“You must accept that if the computer is a tool, it is the job of the tool user to know what to use it for.”* PETER DRUCKER

*Productivity software and smartphone apps can help you be more successful—and save you time.*

## **Go online and search for “best apps for college students.”**

You'll find dozens of terrific programs to help you manage your time, studies, money, and more.

Here are just a few of your many options.

- ▶ Flashcards: Studies, Flashcards+
- ▶ Study Assistance: Chegg Study
- ▶ Language Translation: iTranslate
- ▶ Literature Search: Google Scholar
- ▶ Tutorial Sites: LinkedIn Learning, Khan Academy
- ▶ Textbook Rentals: Amazon, My College Bookstore
- ▶ Apps to Record Lectures: Voice Recorder

*And when you want to be entertained, inspired, and enlightened, watch TED Talks.*

# TIP 44

## **STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE (NOT PERFECTION)**

*“Excellence is the gradual result of  
always striving to do better.”* PAT RILEY

## **Do you know what happens when you feel the need to be perfect?**

You're constantly stressed out. You always compare yourself to others, and you feel like you're not good enough. It's as if there's a yardstick against which you compare yourself always dangling over your head.

A healthier approach involves striving for improvement, which sets you on the path to excellence.

Pat yourself on the back when you succeed, learn from your mistakes when you fall short, and accept the fact that you can't be great at everything.

*You can't always be the best, but you can always strive to do your best.*

# TIP 45

## ACE THE TEST

*“Proper preparation prevents poor performance.”* STEPHEN KEAGUE

## You test well by preparing well.

- ▶ Start studying at least a week in advance.
- ▶ Pay close attention in the class before the test. This is when important information is likely to be given.
- ▶ Because most test questions come from information that's been presented in class, study your notes carefully.
- ▶ Create flashcards.
- ▶ Stand in front of a mirror and "teach yourself" what you need to know.
- ▶ Come up with questions you think will be on the test.
- ▶ Practice visualization. Imagine yourself confidently taking the test and answering questions correctly.
- ▶ Get a good night's sleep, and get up in time to have a healthy breakfast.

*Walk into the classroom with your head up and your shoulders back. When you act confident, you feel more confident—and you perform better.*

# TIP 46

## CREATE TO-DO LISTS

*“Trust me—you can’t just wing it in college. You need to plan out your days and create to-do lists.”* ALYSSA, ART MAJOR



*There's a lot to keep track of in college!*

**Don't rely on your memory for your daily and weekly tasks—create and use to-do lists.**

Keep a to-do list in your academic planner. Rate each item as an A (must do today), B (should do today), or C (would like to do today, but it can wait). Check off completed items and add new ones as they arise.

Your 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—and wondering what you may have forgotten.

*At the end of the day, take the tasks that didn't get done and put them on the next day's list.*

## TIP 47

# TAKE ADVANTAGE OF STUDENT SERVICES

*“Once I made the effort, I found that my college offers all kinds of services.”*

CHRIS, EDUCATION MAJOR

## Your college offers an array of services designed to keep you happy, healthy, and successful.

*Participation is voluntary, so it's up to you to seek the assistance you need.*

Visit your college's website for a full listing of the services available at your school.

Here are a few you're likely to find

**Learning centers** – provide assistance with writing, math, and study skills

**IT help desk** – assists with technical concerns

**Financial aid** – helps with scholarships, grants, and loans

**And more** – counseling center, health services, recreation center, disability services, and campus ministry

*Your tuition dollars pay for these services—so why not take advantage of them?*

# TIP 48

## LOOK FOR WAYS TO CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*“If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves.”* THOMAS EDISON

## **Your college years are a time to broaden your horizons and take measured risks.**

For example, consider doing one of the following:

- ▶ Take an elective course on a topic of particular interest.
- ▶ Create a website or blog.
- ▶ Study abroad.
- ▶ Assume a leadership role in a campus organization.
- ▶ Volunteer to help a professor with their research.
- ▶ Do something you've never considered doing—tai chi, auditioning for a play, joining a political organization, or learning to dance.

*Go beyond your comfort zone! You will never have more opportunities within easy reach than you do right now.*

## TIP 49

# TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR WORK (DON'T CHEAT)

*“Honesty is the best policy. If I lose mine honor, I lose myself.”* SHAKESPEARE

## **Unfortunately, cheating occurs on every college campus.**

Students submit papers done by others, copy material without proper citation, and use notes or copy off other students when taking exams. A clear-cut violation of the academic conduct code, cheating can result in a failing grade or expulsion from school.

Don't subvert the value of your hard-earned college education through dishonesty and shortcuts. You will derive far greater satisfaction through hard work and perseverance—qualities that will serve you well throughout your lifetime.

*Students who cheat are unfair to honest students, and are ultimately cheating themselves.*

# TIP 50

## VISIT THE CAREER CENTER

*“The future depends on what you  
do today.”* MAHATMA GANDHI



## Take advantage of all the services and resources your career center offers.

Schedule an appointment with a career counselor as early in your college career as possible. Their services may include:

- ▶ inventories to help you identify your career interests, values, and skills.
- ▶ assistance selecting majors and minors.
- ▶ advice regarding internships, part-time jobs, and other activities that will enhance your career prospects.
- ▶ readings, websites, and shadowing opportunities to acquaint you with various careers of interest.
- ▶ planning for admission to graduate or professional school.
- ▶ help with writing resumes, cover letters, and graduate school applications.

*Your career center helps you examine and pursue what is meaningful and valuable in your life—today and in years to come.*

# TIP 51

## PLAN YOUR SUMMERS WELL IN ADVANCE

*“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”* BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

## **To make the most of your summers, consider the following:**

### **Take summer courses**

Taking one or two courses at a college near your home is a great way to pick up some extra credits. Just make sure to confirm with your academic advisor that they'll transfer.

### **Participate in community service**

Check with your college's service learning office about summer volunteer opportunities.

### **Get an internship or job**

Visit career services in October/November to discuss summer internships, or contact local businesses in January/February regarding summer jobs.

*Don't wait until spring to plan your summer—courses, internships, volunteer opportunities, and jobs may be long gone by then.*

# 51 TIP REVIEW

Check off any item that you need to do, or want to work on. Let these check marks be a reminder of what you can do to increase your academic success.

- TIP 1 Attend All Classes
- TIP 2 Sit Up Front in Class
- TIP 3 Make the Most of Your Study Time
- TIP 4 Meet with Your Academic Advisor
- TIP 5 Complete Assignments Early
- TIP 6 Get Enough Sleep
- TIP 7 Always Follow Instructions
- TIP 8 Strengthen Your Computer Skills
- TIP 9 Use an Academic Planner
- TIP 10 Actively Participate in Class
- TIP 11 Enroll in First-Year Courses
- TIP 12 Use Wasted Times
- TIP 13 Seek Academic Help
- TIP 14 Ace the Easy Classes

- TIP 15 Actively Read Assignments
- TIP 16 Understand Drop, Add, & Incomplete Policies
- TIP 17 Know How Grades are Determined
- TIP 18 Schedule Classes Wisely
- TIP 19 Befriend Like-Minded Students
- TIP 20 Strengthen Your Writing Skills
- TIP 21 Come Prepared for Class
- TIP 22 Set Your Priorities
- TIP 23 Review and Revise Notes
- TIP 24 Manage Test Anxiety
- TIP 25 Back Up All Computer Files
- TIP 26 Use Library Resources
- TIP 27 Arrive to Class Early
- TIP 28 Just Say No
- TIP 29 Understand Course Registration
- TIP 30 Participate in Study Groups
- TIP 31 Scout Out Next Semester's Classes
- TIP 32 Study in a Quiet Place
- TIP 33 Understand Academic Policies

- TIP 34 Get to Know Your Professors
- TIP 35 Stay Busy But Not Overwhelmed
- TIP 36 Know Your Learning Style
- TIP 37 Be Aware of Course Load Difficulty
- TIP 38 Take Organized Notes
- TIP 39 Be a Good Group Member
- TIP 40 Keep Meticulous Records
- TIP 41 Strengthen Your Verbal Skills
- TIP 42 Learn to Relax and Manage Stress
- TIP 43 Use College Success Apps and Websites
- TIP 44 Strive for Excellence (Not Perfection)
- TIP 45 Ace the Test
- TIP 46 Create To-Do Lists
- TIP 47 Take Advantage of Student Services
- TIP 48 Look for Ways to Challenge Yourself
- TIP 49 Take Pride in Your Work (Don't Cheat)
- TIP 50 Visit the Career Center
- TIP 51 Plan Your Summers Well in Advance

*“What lies behind us, and what lies  
before us, are tiny matters compared to  
what lies within us.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## About the Authors

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Dr. Farber completed his Ph.D. in Counseling at Michigan State University. He has a Master's degree in Counseling from Ball State University and a B.A. in Psychology from Marietta College.

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