

51

Tips

**First-Year
Students**

College Edition

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51 TIPS FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

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Introduction

College is a period of self-discovery, and a time for taking charge of your life. As a college student, you will assume new responsibilities and take on new challenges. You will also develop lifelong friendships and many fond memories.

This book provides 51 time-tested tips on how you can be a successful student and get the most out of your college experience. Enjoy this special time in your life!

Preview

*“Success doesn’t come to you.
You go to it.”*

Marva Collins

TIP 1

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

*“Give the world the best you have,
and the best will come back to you.”*

MADELINE BRIDGES

Do you know what you will remember most about your college years? The people!

Reach out to others and widen your circle of friends. Make an effort to strike up conversations with students in your classes, in your residence hall, and around campus.

- ▶ Arrive early or stay after class to mingle; introduce yourself to the students sitting near you in class.
- ▶ When walking around campus, rather than texting or looking at the ground, look up and make eye contact with other students.
- ▶ If you live in a dorm, keep the door to your room open when you're there.

Reach out to others and you're bound to meet students who share your personal, academic, and career interests.

TIP 2

GET TO KNOW YOUR SURROUNDINGS

“I’ve discovered so many great places on campus this year. I wish I would have known about them earlier.”

SOPHIA, SOPHOMORE ACCOUNTING MAJOR

College is your new home away from home. Take the time to really get to know it.

Grab a friend and walk the entire campus and neighboring community. Scout out locations to study and relax—libraries, bookstores, cafes, study lounges.

Check out buildings you don't have classes in. You may stumble upon an art gallery, theater, recreation facility, computer lab, or quiet study area.

Look for a place to “get away” when you need to study in private, or to just be alone with your thoughts.

TIP 3

PARTICIPATE IN FIRST-YEAR PROGRAMS

“Students who participate in first-year seminars achieve higher grades in college.”

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

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

The titles of first-year success programs vary: *First-year Experience*, *UNIV 101*, *Academic Strategies*.

These programs bring small groups of students together on a regular basis. They help first-year students connect with their college, and they provide lots of helpful college success tips.

If a first-year course or seminar is available at your college, enroll in it—even if it's not for credit.

TIP 4

GO TO EVERY CLASS

“If I could give first-year students one piece of advice, it would be to go to every class.”

RODRIGO, SENIOR ENGLISH MAJOR

The single most important thing you can do in college is to attend every class.

When you skip class, you miss out on lecture material, explanations of upcoming assignments, class discussions, changes to the syllabus, and tips on what may be covered on exams.

You also can't ask questions or hear the answers to questions posed by other students. And notes copied from another student are never an adequate substitute for your own.

In some classes, your grade may be partially based on 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 5

SET GROUND RULES WITH ROOMMATES

“A good roommate may be the single most important thing to have when one is away at school.” BARBARA DANA

Roommates need to make every effort to get along. That requires making compromises and setting ground rules right from the start.

To avoid roommate problems, have a discussion and reach an agreement on the following:

- ▶ quiet hours and time for lights out
- ▶ when it's okay to have friends over
- ▶ cleaning responsibilities
- ▶ room temperature
- ▶ borrowing items
- ▶ eating each other's food
- ▶ when the door should be open or closed, locked or unlocked
- ▶ illegal substances

The agreement between you and your roommates can be verbal or written. If problems arise, talk to your RA.

TIP 6

UNDERSTAND YOUR SCHOOL'S LMS

“A lot of my professors use Blackboard for homework. I watched some YouTube tutorials on how to use it, otherwise I'd be lost.” JACK, FRESHMAN UNDECIDED

Become an expert on your school's Learning Management System.

Learning Management Systems include Blackboard, Moodle, Canvas, Collaborate, and Sakai.

Carefully review your system's features, mobile tools, and third party applications. Set notifications for announcements and messages so they're received immediately (not once per day or week). Read every message right away to ensure that you don't miss new assignments, readings, or deadlines.

Speak with your professor or an upperclass student if you're confused about how to use your school's LMS to turn in assignments, view a syllabus, or keep track of your grades.

TIP 7

BE SMART AND STAY SAFE

“Bad things can happen in college, just like anywhere else. It’s all about staying in control and making good choices.”

JANA, SENIOR SPANISH MAJOR

College campuses, unfortunately, are not a safe haven from crime.

Exercise the same caution on campus that you would anywhere else.

- ▶ Never leave valuables unattended in a dining area, classroom, study lounge, or library.
- ▶ Lock your door and first-floor window when you leave your dorm room.
- ▶ Remain among groups of friends at social events and when walking at night.
- ▶ Avoid open cups/containers.
- ▶ Use your school's escort program, if available.

Program your phone with the Campus Security number and ICE (In Case of Emergency) numbers.

TIP 8

MEET WITH YOUR ACADEMIC ADVISOR

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

Academic advisors assist with course selection and graduation requirements. Make use of this valuable resource.

In high school, your counselor scheduled appointments with you. In college, you need to schedule the appointments

When meeting with your advisor, bring a hard copy of your online degree audit and a list of any questions you have on the following:

- ▶ general education requirements
- ▶ requirements for your major or minor
- ▶ prerequisites and electives
- ▶ registration procedures
- ▶ studying abroad

Schedule an appointment with your academic advisor early each semester. Don't wait until just before course registration when advisors are the busiest.

TIP 9

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, and 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 locations throughout the library. For a change of pace, consider off-campus locations such as cafes, bookstores, coffee shops, 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 10

LEARN TO RELAX AND MANAGE STRESS

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

JUDITH HANSON LASATER

**College can be stressful.
New people...new demands...
new surroundings.**

There are a number of ways to manage stress—relaxation exercises, yoga, tai chi, deep breathing, and meditation. Check out your college's health and wellness program and/or recreation center for relaxation related programs.

Reduce emotional stress by confiding in others—friends, family, spiritual leaders, or professionals at the campus counseling center. It's much healthier to share your problems than to go it alone.

If you 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, delayed, or dropped.

TIP 11

CREATE TO-DO LISTS

“I enter everything I have to do on Evernote. I couldn’t get through a day without it.”

MADISON, SOPHOMORE ANTHROPOLOGY MAJOR

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

Don't rely on your memory for daily and weekly tasks. Create to-do lists.

Keep your to-do list in your academic planner. Rate each task on your list 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. At the end of the day, add the tasks that didn't get done to the next day's to-do list.

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.

You can't just wing it in college. You need to plan out your days.

TIP 12

ANTICIPATE ACADEMIC STRUGGLES

“It’s important to have a good mix of classes each semester so that you don’t get burned out.” BRAD, JUNIOR BOTANY MAJOR

It's the rare college student who doesn't struggle in some classes.

College coursework should be demanding and challenging. An important component of navigating the college experience is learning how to manage time, set priorities, and cope with academic rigor.

Particularly challenging courses typically require extra time and effort, and may necessitate supplemental help (tutoring, study groups, extra help sessions).

Courses that require extra time or focus may be better taken during the summer, or during a semester when you have a lighter, less demanding course load.

If you're struggling in a class, take full advantage of all the academic guidance and support available to you.

TIP 13

USE STUDENT SERVICES

“When I started here I didn’t know what was available. Once I made the effort, I found that there are all kinds of services.”

CANDICE, JUNIOR EDUCATION MAJOR

Your college offers a number of services designed to keep you happy, healthy, and successful.

These services are totally voluntary, so it's up to you to seek them out.

Visit your college's website for a full listing of services. Here are a few you're likely to find.

- ▶ **Learning centers** – They offer tutoring in writing and math, and often provide workshops on study skills.
- ▶ **IT help desk** – Consultants assist with technical problems/questions.
- ▶ **Counseling center** – Professionals are available to help with personal and mental health concerns.
- ▶ **And more:** Other services include health services, recreation centers, financial aid, campus ministry, and disability services.

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

TIP 14

UNDERSTAND THAT HOMESICKNESS IS NORMAL

*“Home is where you feel more welcome...
This place can be any place, even away
from what you would normally call home.”*

BANGAMBIKI HABYARIMANA

When you're in a new place among a bunch of strangers, it's totally normal to feel a little adrift.

If you are missing your family and your old friends, or are concerned about how to handle all of your new responsibilities, it doesn't mean that you're not ready for college.

Transitions are scary, but learning to adjust to new situations is an important social skill you'll use for the rest of your life.

Reach out to other students and look for positive ways to get involved in campus life. And when you're feeling homesick, call your parents to talk, or catch up with a friend on social media.

You may feel like you're the only one struggling with homesickness, but you are not. Know that it will get better with time.

TIP 15

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, FRESHMAN HISTORY MAJOR

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

If possible, avoid taking two challenging, time-consuming classes during the same semester. Spread out your most difficult classes, and consider taking a particularly difficult class during the summer, when you can give it your full attention.

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

Register for classes as soon as possible so that you don't get closed out of the classes you want.

TIP 16

GET ENOUGH SLEEP

“Sleep is the best meditation.”

DALAI LAMA

With too little sleep, your grades, personal appearance, and health will all suffer.

Unless you want to look and feel like an extra from *The Walking Dead*, you need to get a decent night's sleep. Insufficient sleep leads to chronic fatigue, illness, and the inability to concentrate—and these all lead to poor grades. *You simply can't perform at your best when you're sleep deprived.*

Using stimulants like coffee, energy drinks, and soda to stay awake during the day will never be a substitute for a good night's sleep.

A regimen of sufficient sleep, healthy eating, and regular exercise will make you feel better, look better, and perform better in your classes.

TIP 17

LEAVE YOUR CAR AT HOME

*“Since I left my car at home, I get a
'resident student' insurance discount.”*

SAM, FRESHMAN BUSINESS MAJOR

First-year students rarely need a car on campus. A car is expensive, can cause you problems, and is generally unnecessary.

Between gas, maintenance, parking fees, insurance, and tickets, cars cost thousands of dollars a year to own and operate. Friends will ask to borrow your car, and you'll become everyone's favorite chauffeur.

Cars and alcohol don't mix, and many college students have had the unpleasant experience of getting a DUI. Drunk driving doesn't only endanger lives. A DUI is also expensive and can cause you to miss classes, lose scholarships, and/or do jail time. It may even jeopardize your future job prospects.

Do what most college students do—walk, bike, take a bus, and use ride-sharing services.

TIP 18

DON'T GET DISCOURAGED

“You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it.” MARGARET THATCHER

Many first-year students don't get the grades they're expecting during their first semester or two. Not to worry.

It can take a little while to get used to the college workload and your professors' expectations.

Try to keep a growth mindset. Remember that you have what it takes to succeed, and that *all* feedback (even when it's less than encouraging) is an opportunity to grow.

If you're concerned about being able to succeed in a particular class, talk to your professor or take advantage of your college's tutoring services.

TIP 19

GET TO KNOW YOUR RA

“I’ve enjoyed talking to my RA and hearing stories about his first year in college.”

VISHAL, FRESHMAN UNDECIDED

A resident assistant (RA) is a valuable resource for any student living in a dorm.

RAs do more than enforce the rules on their floor. They organize activities, make referrals to campus services, and provide support when the going gets tough.

Take advantage of your RA's knowledge of campus life. Chat with your RA (and also with RAs on different floors) about student organizations and campus services.

Resident assistants are successful students with above average GPAs. They're obviously doing something right.

TIP 20

PREPARE FOR EACH CLASS

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

Review your notes and complete the assigned reading prior to each class.

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

Coming to class prepared also ensures that you don't fall behind.

To keep on top of things, refer to the weekly schedule posted on the course syllabus and write all assignments in your planner.

TIP 21

LIMIT YOUR TIME ONLINE

“I downloaded an app that limits my use of other apps (social media, mostly). It’s really helped me stay focused.”

XIMENA, JUNIOR SOCIAL WORK MAJOR

Your devices allow you to communicate, plan, and be entertained, but spending too much time online can detract from your college experience.

Do any of these sound like you?

- ▶ You text, tweet, snap, or browse the web during class.
- ▶ You experience anxiety when your phone is muted or turned off.
- ▶ Social networking has interfered with or impaired your personal relationships.
- ▶ You constantly communicate with family members and friends back home.

Excessive online activity can waste time and diminish the joys and benefits of college life. As with everything else in life, you need to strike a healthy balance.

TIP 22

STAY ON CAMPUS ON THE WEEKENDS

“Things are more relaxed on the weekends. You can talk to people without making them late for something.” JESS, SENIOR PHYSICS MAJOR

Living away from home can be challenging. When you feel homesick or stressed out, it's only natural to want to return to the comforts of home.

Leaving campus too often deprives you of the people, activities, and environment that make college so special. Spend your weekends on campus and take full advantage of the college experience, especially during your first year.

Students who are actively engaged on campus tend to get better grades and enjoy college more.

TIP 23

COMPLETE EVERYTHING EARLY

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

Finish assignments and applications well before the due date or deadline.

Getting work done days in advance gives you time to review and revise your work, check spelling and grammar, get input from others, and avoid silly last minute mistakes.

The same applies to applications for internships, scholarships, and on-campus jobs. Complete and review all important documents long before they are due.

*Last minute work tends to be shoddy.
Don't just meet deadlines—beat deadlines.*

TIP 24

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU POST

“I know someone who lost an internship because of what she posted on social media. Stuff gets out.”

MICHELLE, SOPHOMORE BUSINESS MAJOR

You know this, but it bears repeating. Inappropriate, profane, or immature online posts and photos can sabotage your career and graduate school prospects.

According to a recent survey, more than 70% of recruiters check candidates out on social media sites, with more than half rejecting a candidate based on something they saw.

Students who post negative or inappropriate content often live to regret it. Remember, anything you post is permanent and can never be taken back.

If you wouldn't say it or show it to your grandmother, then don't post it.

TIP 25

UNDERSTAND REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

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

Registering for the correct classes is one of the most important things you do in college.

Prepare in advance by doing the following:

- ▶ Schedule an appointment with your academic advisor months in advance to discuss course selection.
- ▶ Review the course catalog and create a list of first-choice and alternate course selections.
- ▶ Get core requirements completed as early as possible.
- ▶ Schedule a good mix of classes.
- ▶ If waitlisted, visit the professor during office hours and plead your case.
- ▶ Talk to a few juniors and seniors—they're bound to have some registration tips.

If registration starts at 8:00 am, then log on at 8:00 am sharp.

TIP 26

GET TO KNOW YOUR PROFESSORS

“Developing positive relationships with faculty is one way that 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, be attentive, and ask and answer questions. Visit your professors during office hours to introduce yourself, inquire about extra help, or request academic/career guidance.

If you're enjoying your classes, let your professors know. It will make their day.

TIP 27

USE AN ACADEMIC PLANNER

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

In college, no one is there to remind you what to do. It's all up to you.

Get a planner from the college bookstore and keep it near you at all times. Write your name and contact info in it (in case it's misplaced) and offer \$10 for its return.

Pencil in class and study times, activities, appointments, assignment due dates, 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 28

SOCIALIZE IN MODERATION

“I slacked off my first year and now I don't have the minimum GPA that's required for the major I want.”

KARIS, SOPHOMORE UNDECLARED

Having fun and being with friends is an important aspect of college life.

There should be plenty of time in college for socializing. Just be sure to avoid any behavior that undermines your academic success.

Poor grades due to excessive socializing may come back to haunt you later as you pursue competitive majors, graduate school, or employment opportunities.

Give yourself permission to turn down social invitations when other priorities need to take precedence.

TIP 29

INVESTIGATE ALL AVAILABLE MAJORS

“80% of college students change their major at least once before they graduate.”

CHRIS JOHNSON, REGISTRAR

Many students go to college without having chosen a major.

If you haven't yet decided on your major, use your first year of college to take your general education courses (English, science, math), and to explore your major options. If there's a major you're considering, take a course in it to see if it's one you might enjoy.

Also use your first year to talk to your academic advisor and visit your college's career center. Learn about the majors offered at your college, their related career paths, and the required coursework.

Choosing your life's path is intimidating, but your college offers a lot of support and resources.

TIP 30

BE A MINDFUL LEARNER

*“I did then what I knew how to do.
Now that I know better, I do better.”*

MAYA ANGELOU

Pay attention to your learning habits.

How long does it take you to write a paper? What is your attention span when reading a history assignment? While studying, how long is it before you want to check your phone?

Knowing your learning habits will help you manage your time better. For example, if you know your attention span for history is short, you'll know to start reading your history assignments earlier.

Being aware of your learning habits will help you study more efficiently and identify the areas you need to work on.

TIP 31

UNDERSTAND DROP AND ADD POLICIES

“Last year I took a course that was too hard. By the time I realized I was in trouble, the drop date had passed and I was stuck.”

JAYDEN, JUNIOR COMMUNICATIONS MAJOR

The best time to learn about your college's drop and add policies is long before you need them.

Be aware that restrictions and deadlines differ across departments.

- ▶ If you withdraw from a class after a certain deadline, you may lose the money you paid for it.
- ▶ There are limits to the number of permitted Ws (withdrawals) and Is (incompletes).
- ▶ A grade in a retaken course may either replace your initial grade or be averaged into your GPA.
- ▶ Withdrawing from a course may affect your scholarship or work-study eligibility.

Review your college's policies, and speak to your academic advisor if you have questions.

If you plan to withdraw from a course, don't wait until the last minute. You may not get the paperwork completed on time.

TIP 32

BACK UP ALL COMPUTER FILES

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

WILLIAM R. STANEK

Computers can crash, and be corrupted, lost, or stolen.

It's every student's worst nightmare—assignments, papers, or projects that are lost or irretrievable. All that work, gone! And telling your professor that your computer crashed won't cut it.

Play it safe and create back-up systems. Save your files on a free cloud system such as Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, or Dropbox. You can also purchase an online backup system such as Carbonite or iDrive. At the very least, email all documents to yourself as attachments and save them to a folder titled "Important Documents."

When using word processing programs, make sure AutoRecover and AutoSave are turned on.

TIP 33

FIND WAYS TO STAY MOTIVATED

*"It is not the mountain we conquer,
but ourselves."* SIR EDMUND HILLARY

Sometimes, you just may not want to study or attend class.

In college, no one makes you get out of bed, go to class, or study. This is why it's important for you to figure out what motivates you.

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

There will always be competition for your time. What's important is making the right choices at the right times.

TIP 34

IMPROVE YOUR STUDY SKILLS

“Everyone I know has study techniques that work for them. I like to read aloud and I make my own flashcards.”

JACKSON, JUNIOR SOCIOLOGY MAJOR

Studying in college is different than it is in high school—you're dealing with more information and more complex concepts.

Experiment with different notetaking, reading, and test preparation strategies to find what works best for you.

- ▶ When taking class notes, try mapping the information instead of making a chronological outline.
- ▶ Ask roommates or friends if you can explain some concepts to them. If there is something you have trouble explaining, you'll know what you need to review.
- ▶ Turn class readings and handwritten notes into digital presentations to make exam review easier.

Visit your school's learning center or check out YouTube for more study tips.

TIP 35

TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY

“The treadmill at the rec center is my daily escape from classes and exams.”

LONNY, SENIOR MARKETING MAJOR

To be successful in college, you need to take care of yourself—eat well, exercise regularly, get enough sleep, and avoid dangerous behavior.

You know all this—it's just a matter of doing it.

- ▶ Eat a balanced diet that includes lots of fruit, vegetables, protein, and healthy grains.
- ▶ Drink plenty of water, and go easy on caffeinated and sugary beverages.
- ▶ Get an adequate amount of sleep.
- ▶ Avoid tobacco and e-cigarettes.
- ▶ Develop an enjoyable exercise regimen.

Alcohol and drugs? You know the dangers. Plenty of students abstain.

TIP 36

HANG OUT WITH STUDENTS WHO CARE

“My friends and I look out for one another and help keep each other on track.” CHRISTIE, JUNIOR NURSING MAJOR

The friends you hang out with influence your adjustment to and success in college.

Whether your school's enrollment is 1,000 or 40,000, you'll spend most of your time with 20 or fewer students. Select friends who share your values, interests, and commitment to academic success.

Make college an even richer experience by spending time with students who care about their studies, but who may be different from your regular social crowd.

TIP 37

MEET WITH A CAREER COUNSELOR

“I don’t know what I’d be doing right now if I hadn’t met with a career counselor my freshman year.” JOHN, JUNIOR PRE-PT MAJOR

What happens on your visit to career services depends on your needs.

You can stop by to gather some career information, or have an in-depth discussion about your major and your career options. On a typical visit, you will most likely do one or more of the following:

- ▶ Discuss past courses, activities, and jobs.
- ▶ Complete a career interest inventory.
- ▶ Address any issues that may influence your decision-making.
- ▶ Learn about the online career portal for internships, workshops, jobs, and career fairs.

Schedule an appointment or visit during walk-in hours. Explore the career services website or attend a workshop. But whatever you do, take full advantage of one of your college's most valuable services!

TIP 38

DON'T CRAM FOR TESTS

*“It is not that I’m so smart. But I stay
with the questions much longer.”*

ALBERT EINSTEIN

The "all-nighter" is a time honored college tradition. The only problem is... it doesn't work very well.

Research by cognitive scientists reveals that spacing your study time over several days is far more effective than cramming everything into a last-minute study binge. It's just how the brain works.

Try to study during the time of day or evening when you're most alert. Study for 30–45 minutes and then take a 5–10-minute break. Then repeat.

Have all of your required reading done ahead of time. When it's time to study for the test, you can then just skim and review.

TIP 39

BE TRUE TO YOURSELF

What one does, one becomes.

SPANISH PROVERB

You know all about peer pressure. The desire to fit in and feel like you're part of a group is completely normal.

But if you ever feel pressured to do something that causes you discomfort, say “I’ll pass” and move on. If the person applying the pressure is a friend, they will understand. If not, maybe that person isn’t worthy of your friendship. And yes, we’re talking about sex, alcohol, drugs, hazing, and any other potentially harmful behavior.

The same applies to “just saying no” to invitations when you need to study—or just get some sleep.

TIP 40

REVIEW ACADEMIC POLICIES

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

Carefully review your college's academic policies.

Here is a partial list of things to check out:

- ▶ **Academic requirements**

What are the college's general education requirements? Graduation requirements? Major and minor requirements?

- ▶ **Academic courseload**

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

- ▶ **Repeating courses**

Whether or not you can repeat a course may depend on the grade you received the first time.

- ▶ **Articulation agreements**

Which courses will transfer from other colleges?

Not understanding your college's policies can cost you time and money—and cause you a lot of aggravation.

TIP 41

GET EXTRA HELP

“The best decision I ever made was finding a tutor for organic chemistry a week before the class started.” EBONY, JUNIOR BIOLOGY MAJOR

Some of your courses will be tough. Luckily, there is plenty of help available.

Seek help at the very first sign you may need assistance. Don't wait until your grade in a course is beyond improvement.

Check with your professor and academic department about tutors, extra-help sessions, and campus learning centers. Find a study partner or join a study group.

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

TIP 42

STICK TO A BUDGET

“You don’t need a lot of money in college to have a great time. You just need to budget your money and be smart.” MARIA, JUNIOR ART MAJOR

If you are like most college students, you're pretty much broke.

But that's okay. The college years require a frugal mindset and lifestyle.

These tips will help you stick to a budget and keep your spending to a minimum.

- ▶ Take advantage of free and inexpensive campus events.
- ▶ Rent textbooks or buy them online.
- ▶ Use print and online coupons.
- ▶ Ask every retailer, "Do you offer a student discount?"
- ▶ Take full advantage of your school's meal plan, and avoid overspending on extra meals and snacks.

Be sure to have a discussion with your parents to clarify who pays for what.

TIP 43

USE WASTED TIME

“I do my laundry on weekdays. The laundry room is typically empty then, so I can get a lot of studying done.” MATT, JUNIOR FINANCE MAJOR

Time is a precious commodity in college. There's just so much to do.

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 walking (rather than riding) across campus.
- ▶ Review class notes while waiting for a friend or riding on the bus.
- ▶ Practice a presentation while cleaning your room.

Fifteen 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 44

HANG IN THERE WHEN YOU FEEL OVERWHELMED

“You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.”

CHRISTOPHER ROBIN

It can often seem like there is too much work and not enough time. Every college student feels overwhelmed at some point.

Here are some things to do whenever you are feeling overwhelmed.

- ▶ **Breathe.** Deep breathing calms your body's biological responses to stress. Try counting to four while you inhale. Then exhale slowly.
- ▶ **Make big tasks small.** Writing a long paper or studying for a big exam can be intimidating. Break your big tasks down into smaller, more manageable parts.
- ▶ **Hit refresh.** Walk away. Listen to music or have lunch with a friend. Then return ready to tackle your work.

Stress is inevitable. But you can choose how to react to it.

TIP 45

MANAGE TEST ANXIETY

"Why worry? If you've done the very best you can, worrying won't make it any better."

WALT DISNEY

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 (such as muscle tension and rapid heart-beat) with deep breathing, meditation, and exercise.
- ▶ Get a good night's sleep, have a healthy breakfast, and arrive to class a few minutes early.

Campus health and wellness centers and counseling centers can offer additional tips for combating test anxiety.

TIP 46

KNOW YOUR COLLEGE COSTS

“Thinking about my tuition makes me not want to skip class. It feels like I’m just throwing money away.”

ARI, SENIOR ENGINEERING MAJOR

Every student's financial situation is different. You need to understand exactly how much your college education costs and how your education is financed.

You, your parents, and/or other family members may be paying for your education. You may be taking out federal or private education loans, or perhaps you're drawing money from scholarships, grants, or a 529 College Savings Plan. Most likely, you are paying for your education with a combination of the above.

Whatever your circumstances, you need to understand your college costs, payment methods, and any debt you will be required to repay upon graduation.

Be informed. Review the numbers with your parents and a financial aid counselor.

TIP 47

USE COLLEGE SUCCESS APPS AND WEBSITES

*“It can be hard to manage it all sometimes.
But there is a lot of cool stuff out there to
help you.”* HANNAH, SOPHOMORE MATH MAJOR

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

A quick search will reveal dozens of excellent programs to help you manage your studies, time, finances, and more.

Here are a few options:

- ▶ Flashcards: Studies, Flashcards+
- ▶ Study assistance: Chegg Study
- ▶ Grammar check: Grammarly
- ▶ Language translation: iTranslate
- ▶ Literature search: Google Scholar
- ▶ Tutorial sites: Khan Academy, Lynda
- ▶ Textbook rentals: Amazon, Chegg Books
- ▶ Apps to record lectures: Voice Recorder

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

TIP 48

SCOUT OUT FUTURE CAMPUS JOBS

“It’s ideal if you can get a part-time job that relates to your major and eventual career path.” DR. ALAN FARBER

First-year students typically don't work on campus. But it's never too early to investigate possible future jobs.

Student jobs are available at the college bookstore, food services, computer help desk, library, and campus recreation center. Also check out job opportunities in admissions, financial aid, alumni services, and the academic department of your major.

Talk to current student workers about their positions. Find out about responsibilities, hours, and application deadlines. Also, visit the Financial Aid office to determine your eligibility for work-study positions.

The pay may be higher in off-campus jobs, but getting to and from work can be a hassle, and the hours are often not as flexible.

TIP 49

EXPLORE SUMMER OPTIONS

“It’s typically not the best candidate who gets the summer job. It’s the first candidate.” JACOB OHMER, RECRUITER

Whether it's taking classes, working at a job, or volunteering, spend your summers doing something worthwhile.

Summer is a good time to take a difficult class or pick up some extra credits. Many colleges offer online classes in the summer, making it possible to take classes from home. If you want to take a class at another college, talk to your advisor to make sure the credits will articulate, or transfer.

If you plan to work over the summer, start scoping out summer jobs early. Around Thanksgiving, create a list of places that might hire summer help, such as retail stores, restaurants, summer camps, and park districts.

There are also lots of summer volunteer opportunities in your hometown—food banks, Habitat for Humanity, nursing homes, and more. Pick your passion and get involved.

TIP 50

THANK YOUR PARENTS

“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

You're adjusting to a whole new life. So are your parents.

Let's face it. Raising you wasn't always sunshine and lollipops. Your parents made sacrifices and stood by you during difficult times.

Show your gratitude by keeping in touch with your parents. Talk to them about the good times—and the frustrations—that you're experiencing in college.

Call your parents on birthdays and anniversaries. Send texts just to say hello and let them know that you're doing okay.

Don't forget to extend thanks to all the other family members who helped get you where you are today.

TIP 51

EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS

“Turn on the light within, expand your horizons and reach your full potential.”

AMIT RAY

Once you get used to the routine of college (sleep, eat, class, study, friends, repeat), it can be easy to start going through the motions.

Don't let yourself fall into a rut. Remember, college is an ideal time to stretch your limits, expand your horizons, and take measured risks.

- ▶ Take an elective course on a topic of particular interest.
- ▶ Create a website or blog.
- ▶ Assume a leadership role in a campus organization.
- ▶ Do something you've never considered doing—tai chi, auditioning for a play, joining a political organization, or line dancing.

Fulfill your potential and grow as a person by taking advantage of all college life has to offer.

51 TIP REVIEW

- TIP 1 Connect with Others
- TIP 2 Get to Know Your Surroundings
- TIP 3 Participate in First-year Programs
- TIP 4 Go to Every Class
- TIP 5 Set Ground Rules with Roommates
- TIP 6 Understand Your School's LMS
- TIP 7 Be Smart and Stay Safe
- TIP 8 Meet with Your Academic Advisor
- TIP 9 Study in a Quiet Place
- TIP 10 Learn to Relax and Manage Stress
- TIP 11 Create To-Do Lists
- TIP 12 Anticipate Academic Struggles
- TIP 13 Use Student Services
- TIP 14 Understand that Homesickness Is Normal
- TIP 15 Schedule Classes Wisely
- TIP 16 Get Enough Sleep

- TIP 17 Leave Your Car at Home
- TIP 18 Don't Get Discouraged
- TIP 19 Get to Know Your RA
- TIP 20 Prepare for Each Class
- TIP 21 Limit Your Time Online
- TIP 22 Stay on Campus on the Weekends
- TIP 23 Complete Everything Early
- TIP 24 Be Careful What You Post
- TIP 25 Understand Registration Procedures
- TIP 26 Get to Know Your Professors
- TIP 27 Use an Academic Planner
- TIP 28 Socialize in Moderation
- TIP 29 Investigate All Available Majors
- TIP 30 Be a Mindful Learner
- TIP 31 Understand Drop and Add Policies
- TIP 32 Back Up All Computer Files
- TIP 33 Find Ways to Stay Motivated
- TIP 34 Improve Your Study Skills

- TIP 35 Take Care of Your Body
- TIP 36 Hang Out with Students Who Care
- TIP 37 Meet with a Career Counselor
- TIP 38 Don't Cram for Tests
- TIP 39 Be True to Yourself
- TIP 40 Review Academic Policies
- TIP 41 Get Extra Help
- TIP 42 Stick to a Budget
- TIP 43 Use Wasted Times
- TIP 44 Hang in There When You Feel Overwhelmed
- TIP 45 Manage Test Anxiety
- TIP 46 Know Your College Costs
- TIP 47 Use College Success Apps and Websites
- TIP 48 Scout out Future Campus Jobs
- TIP 49 Explore Summer Options
- TIP 50 Thank Your Parents
- TIP 51 Expand Your Horizons

*“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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51 Tips

For

First-Year Students

Success in college requires more than being intelligent and showing up for classes. It requires learning the ropes, setting goals, taking responsibility, and making full use of your college's resources.

This book provides 51 time-tested tips on how to be successful in your classes—and get the most out of your first year in college. It's a must read for every new college student.

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