TiLT Learning Programs Presents
An Academic Skills Workshop

Study Skills: Steps to Getting Good Grades in College

Adapted from “How to Get Good Grades in College” (O’Brien, 2009)
Note:

- There’s no “magic formula” for getting good grades. Sorry! The things you read here may seem like common sense, but enacting them takes discipline and commitment.
- Make the decision to prioritize learning and your studies, and follow the tips outlined here.
- It takes work, but that’s what you’re here for!
Step 1: Attend Every Class

- Tempting to skip when you have a huge class—doesn’t seem like your instructor even knows you’re there
  - Common excuses:
    - I can get the notes from someone else
    - All the notes and important info are posted on RamCT anyway
    - I’m completely lost, anyway, so what’s the point?
    - It’s sooooo boring!
When you skip, you miss what the instructor teaches, but also:

- Quizzes
- Important instructions on assignments
- Getting back assignments you’ve completed
- If you need help from the prof later, need an extension, etc. they’ll be less likely to help you out if you don’t have a good attendance record
• TIP: Get to know at least one person in your class
  ◦ If you miss class, you can get notes, assignment deadlines, tips, etc. from them

• TIP: Connect what you’re learning in class to something you’re interested in, or something you already know.
Step 2: Be Organized

- Use a planner
- Break down assignments into manageable parts
  - Work on a part each week and check things off as you complete them
- Keep a folder or binder separate for each class
  - Hold on to returned assignments, quizzes, and tests – you may need the info on them later
Set the stage for study

- **Create a space or move to a location that is free of distractions**—*(Hint: turn cell phone, computer off)*
  - De-clutter your work area—clutter=anxiety
  - Have a space you can return to over and over again as your “study space”
  - Think about a space that will make you feel like a student
    - Your personal desk at home
    - The library
    - The Great Hall
    - Your favorite coffee shop
Step 3: Manage Your Time Well

- Identify your “best” time – are you a morning person, or a night owl? → Study accordingly
- Choose to do difficult tasks first, when your mind is “fresh”
- Schedule study time in no longer than 90-minute blocks
- Look ahead: start now on long-term projects
  - Set deadlines for yourself on different parts of large assignments
  - Schedule short blocks of time each week to devote to the project
  - Spend that time researching, typing, outlining, or editing
- Create a to-do list each day and follow it as best you can
• Bring portable tasks with you
  ◦ Reading, flashcards
• Just get it done!
  ◦ Easier to get started on a task when we tell ourselves it doesn’t have to be perfect
• Learn to say NO to invitations once your priorities are set
• But—be sure to schedule in things you enjoy
  ◦ Time to call friends, family
  ◦ Exercise, sports
  ◦ Parties, your favorite show
• Take study breaks! Don’t study for more than 90 minutes at a time
  ◦ Get up & stretch every 20-30 minutes
  ◦ It’s best not to focus your attention elsewhere, however--

• Each time you’re interrupted, or you switch focus, it takes you 5 minutes to get back in a “groove”
  ◦ When studying:
    • Turn off cell phone (so you’re not tempted to check your texts, see who’s calling, etc.)
    • Allow yourself a certain amount of time to check Facebook, etc. – don’t check it on short study breaks because it’s hard to get back on track
Step 4: Take Good Notes

- Take Charge of your notes!
  - Notetaking is active, not passive
    - Think of questions, points you agree or disagree with, highlight/underline info you may use later in a paper or on an assignment – write in margins

- Learn the common clues that an idea or concept is important
  - Professor writes it on the whiteboard
  - Repetition of an idea or phrase
  - Emphasis through non-verbals
• Take notes in your own words – you don’t need to have what the prof says down, word-for-word.

  ◦ This will also aid in your actual comprehension of the lecture because it involves an extra step in the processing of information.

  ◦ Things that DO need to be copied exactly include:
    • Definition of words
    • Facts: Dates, info about people, etc.
    • Mathematical formulas
• Use different colors or highlighters to make important ideas stand out—this will also make studying easier
• If you miss something you think is important, write down a key word or two, leave some space,
  ◦ Ask your prof or classmates if they got the point you missed after class
• REVIEW your notes after each class
Step 5: Do the Reading

- Profs expect that you come to class prepared and having done the day’s reading

- Textbook reading technique:
  - **Scan** the chapter: look for main ideas and overall organization
  - **Read** the chapter for detail
  - **Review** the chapter: go back over to check for comprehension
Step 6: Study Smarter!

- Just get started
  - Sometimes starting your study sessions is the hardest part

- Make a plan
  - Prioritize which subjects you need to attack first, second, third, etc.
  - Do difficult subjects first, while you’re fresh
  - Alternate types of work: reading, writing, math assignment, etc. so you don’t get worn out of one type of work
Distribute the time you spend with class material

- Retention goes up with the 24-7-3 plan
- Review info from class within 24 hours of lecture/reading
- Review it again within 3 days, then within 7 days
- Review weekly until test
• If you have something to memorize, work on that first
• ACRONYMS: Use the first letter of each word you want to remember
• Many common titles are acronyms
  ◦ NFL - National Football League
  ◦ AA – Alcoholics Anonymous
• Helps remember words in order
• Example: acronym to remember the Great Lakes = HOMES
  ◦ Huron
  ◦ Ontario
  ◦ Michigan
  ◦ Erie
  ◦ Superior
• ACROSTICS: Use the first letter of each word you are trying to remember, but create a sentence rather than a word
  ◦ Common example: “Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally” for the order of mathematical equations

• Make flashcards
  ◦ Shuffle them often

• Study with a group – most of us learn better when we talk through what we know

• If you’re having trouble, talk with your TA or professor during their office hours
Step 7: Use On-Campus Services

- Be proactive: the best students are the ones who seek out services available to them
  - Tutoring
  - Academic Skills Workshops
  - Advisors
  - Professor’s Office Hours
  - TA’s
  - Group study
  - Career Center
  - Morgan Library
  - Resources for Disabled Students
  - And many more!
CSU Websites that can help

- CASA:
  - http://www.casa.colostate.edu/Student_Achievement/Academic_Success/

- TILT:
  - http://tilt.colostate.edu/learning/

- Learning@CSU:
  - http://learning.colostate.edu/

- Library Tutorials:
  - http://lib.colostate.edu/tutorials/

- Learning Assistance Program:
  - http://www.counseling.colostate.edu/services/academic/learning-assistance-center/index.cfm

- Resources for Disabled Students:
  - http://rds.colostate.edu/

- Writing@CSU
  - http://writing.colostate.edu/learn.cfm

- The Writing Center
  - http://writing.colostate.edu/wcenter/

- Other websites you know of?
• Questions? Comments?
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