

10 SKILLS NEEDED FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE

1. **Plan a budget.** A college education is one of the most durable and worthwhile investments you can make. It is a safe investment and will also last a lifetime. When you invest in yourself, you cannot lose. Education pays off in salaries, job promotions, and career satisfaction. It is also worth investing in again and again as circumstances change and you need to update your skills.

Most people find it difficult to finance a college education, but a well-structured, well-disciplined budget will help. Budgeting is really a type of planning. Like other forms of planning, it creates freedom. Budgeting allows you to make choices about money that are consistent with how you want to live. Control your money--do not let it control you!

There are several ways to increase your income while you go to school. You may apply for scholarships and grants, you may borrow money, you may inherit money, or you may receive money as a gift. You can sell property, collect income from investments, or use your savings. You can also increase your income by working full-time or part-time while you attend school.

After you have decided where you will obtain the money needed for your education, it is important to look for ways to control your expenses. It is necessary to set up long-term and monthly cycles of money management.

2. **Learn to manage your time.** Build daily, weekly, and monthly schedules that include study and class time as well as time for work, recreation, eating, sleeping, exercising, cleaning, family activities, outside commitments, breaks, and rewards. Be realistic rather than idealistic; a schedule should be structured, yet flexible.

Learn how to avoid wasting time. Plan your day in advance so you know what you must do, what you would like to do, and what you could do if you had the time. Do the most important things first and do not go on to others until the first is completed. Do not let interruptions destroy the "big plan."

3. **Be aware.** It is important that you make yourself aware of class descriptions (as well as any prerequisites) in the college catalog, the layout of the college, the offices at the college and what type(s) of assistance they can offer, the class schedule and course calendar, the registration guidelines and deadlines, and other resources available.

When in class, be aware of the instructor and his/her office hours, necessary textbook(s), course objectives, point values, and grading scales.

4. **Develop a fine-tuned method of memorizing.** Psychologists tell us that the secret of remembering information is over-learning. Over-learning is continuing to study after you have learned the material well enough to just barely recall it. Studying an additional period (about one-fourth as long as the original time) will usually secure the information in your long-term memory.

Without review, the average student can forget 80 percent of what he/she has read in just two weeks. Frequent cumulative reviews throughout the course can be very beneficial. These reviews can be done quickly during idle time: attach a chart to the steering wheel of your car; hang a set of definitions on your kitchen cabinet; place a sheet of formulas in your wallet so you can read them while waiting in lines or for appointments; have family members quiz you while on a road trip. Be creative!

5. **Learn to read a textbook effectively.** Increase speed and comprehension skills. Use the textbook as a guide and as a tool. Do not be afraid to highlight important material or to write thoughts in the margins. A formula for successful reading is SQ3R: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review.

Survey	Glance over the material to get a feel for what you will be reading. Look at the headings, summaries, formulas, etc.
Question	As you survey the material, ask yourself questions about what you will be reading.
Read	Read everything in a chapter, including visual aids such as graphs, charts, etc. Note items that are italicized, underlined, or in bold print.
Recite	Once you have read a section, close your book and, in your own words, recite what you just read. Answer the questions you had before you began reading and jot down important points. If you cannot recite the material, read it again.
Review	Re-read the chapter headings and be sure you understand all the highlighted material in the chapter.

This formula may seem time-consuming, but if you follow it, you will save time in the long run because your studying will be more effective.

6. **Learn to take organized, helpful notes.** Guidance counselors report a definite connection between orderliness of a student's notebook and the grades he/she makes. Learn to take organized notes efficiently in class and as you read your textbook and study your assignments. Use a few well-chosen key words rather than long explanations. Use margins to highlight important points.
7. **Establish good listening skills and learn to ask meaningful questions.** Listening is not passive; it is more than just hearing, and requires some effort on your part. Sit close to the front. Work hard at finding something about

the topic to which you can relate. Concentrate on what is being said and set aside your own concerns. Do not hesitate to ask the instructor to repeat or clarify difficult points.

When asking a question, be clear, concise, and specific. ("When you were referring to...you said..., but now you are saying.... Why is this different?") Do not be thinking of what you are going to ask while you are trying to listen. Instead, quickly jot down your question, finish listening, and ask your question when the lecturer reaches a stopping point.

8. **Get acquainted with the tools and resources you will need. Walk around the campus** to discover the resources available to you (learning centers, writing labs, computer labs, libraries, tutoring centers, etc.). Find out what these places offer and note their hours of operation. If you need a study guide for your class, learn how to use it effectively. If a calculator or computer will be used, take a workshop on how to use it. Ask for the phone numbers of some of your classmates--you may want to call them to verify an assignment or to go over a problem.
9. **Practice test-taking techniques to avoid test anxiety. Before a test, read over your notes and note cards.** Brush up on any topic that you feel needs attention. Make up a practice test and take it. Ask yourself, "If I were the the instructor, what would I think is important in this unit?" If you have to cram for an exam, you have not been doing your job for the past 2-3 weeks. Review time is a time to refresh your memory, not a time to teach yourself the material.

The key to taking an exam effectively is being able to focus. Note the directions and key words for each item on the test and focus on each independently. Clear your mind of everything else and concentrate solely on the test question at hand.

If you are experiencing severe difficulties taking tests, speak to your instructors and ask them for suggestions.

10. **Increase self-confidence and self-discipline.** The most successful students demonstrate well-disciplined study techniques. They develop strict study schedules, routines, and networks. These students prepare, perform, and ask questions when necessary. They have found a comfortable place to study with sufficient light and few interruptions. They know when to say "no." With each success, these students build self-confidence.

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