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Be Organized

Successful college students typically have one thing in common - they are organized. In college, no one will wake you in time to get to class or call you when you miss a class. And no one will remind you when assignments are due. Perhaps for the first time in your life, you are totally responsible for managing your own time and affairs.

Use an academic day planner

To help you stay organized, buy an academic day planner and use it regularly. Your cell phone or online calendar are also fine as long as you use them. *Don't rely on your memory. Write everything down.*

Here are some items you need to record and keep updated.

- ▶ Class times, professors' office hours, study/extra help sessions
- ▶ Assignment due dates and test schedules
- ▶ Course withdrawal deadlines
- ▶ Course registration dates and deadlines
- ▶ Deadlines for payments (tuition, housing, meal plans)
- ▶ Deadlines for applications - scholarships, grants, loans, work study, summer internships, study abroad programs, student employment

Tip: Write your name and phone number in your planner and offer a \$10 reward for its return if it's lost.

Make "to do" lists and prioritize tasks

Make a daily list of the things you need to do and rank them in order of importance.

Focus on one task at a time. When it's done, cross it off your list. At the end of the day, take the tasks that didn't get done and put them on the next day's list.



"Trust me - you can't just wing it in college. You need to create lists and plan out your days. I'd be lost without my planner and to-do lists."

Shivani, senior finance major



Study Smart

It's time to hit the books. College courses require a lot of reading and research, and they involve challenging assignments. If your school offers classes or workshops on study skills or test taking, enroll in them.

As a general rule, 2 to 3 hours of studying and assignment completion will be required for every hour of enrolled coursework. So if you're taking 15 hours, prepare to work 30 to 45 hours per week outside the classroom.

Study in your own "quiet place"

Locate a quiet, well-lit space where all you can do is study. Avoid friends, cell phones, music, beds, e-mail, etc. By eliminating all distractions, you force yourself to do one thing only - study. Locate a quiet section of the library, a residence hall study lounge, or an unoccupied classroom. Consider off-campus locations such as public libraries, bookstores, or coffee shops. The worst place to study is in your dorm room.

Complete all assignments early

When you complete your assignments several days prior to the due date, you have time for editing and improvements. And if you're uncertain whether you did a project correctly, you have time to discuss it with your professor and make revisions.

Study according to your body clock

Are you a morning person or night person? You want to study during your body's most alert state.

Study the "worst first"

Students naturally avoid that which they find unpleasant, so they often study their least favorite topic last (if at all). This is a mistake. The end of a study session is when you are the most fatigued. If you wait until the last minute, you also may be rushed or run out of study time. So study your least favorite topic when you are most alert and unrushed - at the beginning of your study session.

Study between classes

Time is your most precious commodity. Make use of the time you have between classes to study, review material, meet with instructors, or do research. This will free up evening and weekend time.

Space your studying

A good rule is 30-45 minutes of study followed by a 5-10 minute break. This keeps you alert.



Review old tests

Check on the availability of old tests at the library or from students who previously took the course. Although you can't assume the items will be identical, you will gain insight into the manner in which questions are asked and the subject matter of interest to the professor.

Turn off your cell phone and Instant Messenger

Disable Instant Messenger while working on your computer so that you won't be tempted to IM friends and family when a message pops up. Enter an "Away Message" and check your messages later. The same applies for your cell phone. Turn it off.

Learn to use Microsoft Word

MS Word is the standard in word processing. Familiarity with Word's many "bells and whistles," short cuts, and special features will save you countless hours over the course of your college career. Review the free online MS Word tutorial, or view YouTube tutorials.

Back-up computer files and save often

Avoid every student's nightmare of lost or corrupted assignments, papers, and projects. Create a backup system, either by emailing yourself important documents, using an external hard drive, or paying a few dollars a month for an online backup system like Mozy or Carbonite.

You'll lose flash drives and memory sticks, so don't use them for important assignments. Backup important documents online.

"One of the smartest things I did was to start hanging out with people who actually cared about their grades. We don't just play together - we study and play together." Christie, sophomore marketing major

PART II

The College Experience

Every student has a different college experience. You may be attending a university far from home, or living at home and commuting. Situations vary, but all college students have a great deal in common. In this part, you will learn what you can do to make the most of *your* college experience.



College Living

Most first-year college students live in a residence hall on campus, or they live at home and commute.

Living in a Residence Hall

Colleges and universities call your on-campus home a residence hall. But for the sake of simplicity, let's stick with the term most students use and call it a *dorm*. Living in a dorm is very much a “rite of passage” for new college students. Your adjustment to dorm living will have a major impact on your overall adjustment to college life.

Roommates

The first and most challenging transition from living at home is sharing a dorm room with a friend from home, or more typically, a total stranger. Roommates should make every reasonable effort to get along. That means making compromises and setting ground rules from the very start. Everything - bed times, chores, noise levels, visiting hours - should be addressed in order to prevent conflict between you and your roommate.

It's great if you're tight with your roommate, but make a point of meeting as many students as possible on your floor or complex. Years after you've graduated from college, many of your most enduring memories will be of dorm life and the friendships you developed there.

Resident Assistants (RAs)

RAs are upper level students who live among dorm residents. Their job is to enforce rules, provide assistance, and generally ensure that everything operates smoothly on their floor. They are full-time students themselves, usually working as RAs to help finance their education.

RAs are veteran students who know the ropes on campus. They possess useful information about courses and professors, and they can make referrals to appropriate offices and campus services. RAs can also provide support and guidance when the going gets tough.

Dorm rules

Be sure to read and abide by the dorm rules. If your RA doesn't provide a written copy of the rules, ask to see one. It will spell out exactly what you can have in your room, what you can do, and when you can do it. If you break a rule, claiming you weren't aware of it won't cut it during a disciplinary hearing.

Dorm life

Most college dorms offer a wide range of activities and services. These include dining and cooking facilities, laundry, TV rooms, study lounges, work-out facilities, weekend entertainment, and more. Take full advantage of all your dorm has to offer.



Tip: For many students, a big part of adjusting to dorm life is overcoming homesickness and unfamiliar surroundings. Decorate your dorm room to make it seem more like a room at home.

Living at Home

If you live at home and commute, you will still have to make lifestyle adjustments. For example, your schedule will probably be more varied than it has been in the past, which means that you will be coming and going at odd hours.

It's important for students who commute to make friends and get involved in campus activities so they feel like they're a part of the college. You'll get much more out of your college experience if you study on campus, participate in activities, and go out of your way to make new friends.



Student Activities and Organizations

One of the most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of college is the opportunity to get involved in student activities and organizations. There's no better way to meet new people who share your interests and to have some fun. Check your college's website for a list of student organizations.

Here are some examples of the activities and organizations typically found on college campuses.

Community Service - Through these organizations, students contribute their time and energy to serve the needs of the neighboring community.

Honor Societies - Superior scholarship and/or leadership are recognized and encouraged through these associations.

International - Comprised of students of all nationalities, these clubs are available for students who have an interest in other cultures.

Political - These groups are generally associated with a political party or a cause (e.g., environmental action, election campaigning, world hunger).

Professional - These organizations are directly related to your major or career. Examples include Pre-Law, Pre-Dentistry, and Accounting Society.

Social - Fraternities, sororities, and other organizations sponsor and organize concerts, speaker series, mixers, and other social activities.

Special Interest - These cover a wide range of topics: Campus Spirit Club, Mac Users Group, Entrepreneurship Club, to name a few.

Sports / Recreation - Almost any sport may be offered: soccer, Tae Kwon Do, lacrosse, softball, Ultimate Frisbee, paintball, etc.

Student Government - Here you have the chance to work with faculty and administrators to impact the quality of education and campus life.

“The leadership skills I developed by being active in college organizations are invaluable. Now that I’ve graduated, I feel like I can manage people, organize events, and solve problems in pretty much any work situation.”

Carissa, recent sociology graduate



Greek Life

If your college has social fraternities and sororities, you will need to decide whether or not to “go Greek.” There are approximately 60 national fraternities and 37 national sororities. There are also numerous national and local Greek organizations for various ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. You will find a list on your school’s website.

The primary reason students go Greek is for a sense of belonging. Students should, therefore, select a sorority or fraternity the same way they would choose their friends. It needs to be a good fit. Some fraternities and sororities have residential houses on or near campus. Members often live in the houses; however, many members live in dorms or off-campus.

About 10% of the undergraduate students in the U.S. join sororities or fraternities. Some colleges have no Greek organizations, whereas others have a large and active Greek presence on campus. Schools typically have a formal recruitment process called “rush.” Any student can rush, but not every student can “pledge,” since membership is by invitation only.

All Greek organizations have GPA requirements, and many require that members perform community service. Since your primary concern should be academic success, ask about the average GPA for each fraternity or sorority you are considering. Those who have higher GPAs undoubtedly take their studies quite seriously and place considerable emphasis on academics.

As with all significant life decisions, you should gain as much information as possible prior to committing to a fraternity or sorority. Learn about Greek life on your campus by talking to fellow students, participating in the rush process, meeting as many fraternity and sorority members as possible, and asking yourself the following questions:

- ▶ Are these the kind of people I typically like being around?
- ▶ Are the activities they participate in the kind I will enjoy?
- ▶ If there’s a house, is it an environment I will be comfortable in?
- ▶ Do I have the time and money to be a member?
- ▶ Most importantly, will membership help or hinder my social, academic, and career pursuits?

PART III

Stay Healthy and Safe

Eat well, exercise regularly, get enough sleep, and avoid dangerous and self-injurious behaviors. You undoubtedly know all this; it's just a matter of doing it. College success requires taking care of mind, body, and spirit.



Health Tips

Eat sensibly and keep fit

Eat a balanced diet that includes lots of fruits and vegetables. Avoid caffeine and nicotine, and develop an exercise regimen that you enjoy and that will help keep you fit.

Get enough sleep

For many students, fatigue (and the inevitable illness that accompanies it) is directly responsible for failure or poor performance in college. You simply will not be able to concentrate in class, complete assignments, memorize facts, and perform at your best if you are severely sleep deprived.

Other tips

- ▶ Keep a list of any medications or prescription drugs you are taking. Have information on your health insurance readily available.
- ▶ Go to the Health Center if you have questions about immunizations. Ask about getting vaccinated for hepatitis B and meningitis.
- ▶ The benefits of sexual abstinence are obvious. Pregnancy and STDs are life changing. If you have concerns, visit the Health Center.
- ▶ Alcohol and drugs? If you're in college, you already know the dangers. Plenty of college students abstain. Ask yourself if alcohol or drugs are contributing to your well-being.