

# How To Get Good Grades in College

## Leader's Guide

*This Leader's Guide is designed to help you lead a group of students through **How to Get Good Grades in College**. The suggestions will provide you with ideas for discussion, related activities, etc. You will, of course, need to tailor your discussions and activities to the students in your group.*

### Pre-Activities

Before beginning, tell students that they will be reading a book that discusses ten things college students need to do to get good grades. As a group, make a list of the specific things they think students must do to be successful in college. Compare their list with the list in the Table of Contents.

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### Table of Contents

Go through the **Table of Contents**. Discuss how it takes more than being smart or studying hard to succeed in college.

### Know What to Expect in College – Page 2

#### A wide range of class sizes

Discuss the range of class sizes students can expect to find at your college. Ask students how class size affects learning (less personal attention, more competition, etc.).

#### The need for critical thinking skills

Discuss the importance of critical thinking skills in college and beyond.

#### More emphasis on tests and less busywork

What are students likely to find at your college with regards to homework, tests, and grades? How much will this vary with each instructor?

#### The need for personal responsibility

Discuss how different students handle the increased freedom they have in college.

#### Consequences for low grades

Go over the academic requirements at your college. What are the consequences for low grades?

#### Less time in class and more independent study

Discuss how new college students often underestimate the time they need to spend on their studies.

### Set Academic Goals – Page 3

Discuss the importance of setting goals.

Encourage students to make a list of their goals at the beginning of each term. *Studies show that people are more likely to achieve goals that have been written down.*

### Attend Every Class – Page 3

Discuss the reasons that students miss class. How many of these are valid? Emphasize the importance of going to every class.

### Be Organized – Pages 4-5

*Remind students that it doesn't matter what they do to be organized, as long as they have a system that works for them.*

**Use a student planner.** Before reading this section, ask students to describe the methods they use to keep track of their assignments. How well do these methods work?

Get a planner from your college bookstore and discuss how to best use it. Encourage students to take their planner to every class.

**Break down assignments.** Ask for examples of large assignments. As a group, figure out how to break large assignments down into several smaller assignments. Remind students to put these smaller assignments in their planner also.

**Organize and save computer work.** Ask students how they organize their papers (homework, review sheets, returned tests, etc.). Do they use folders, binders, files at home?

**Keep returned papers, quizzes, and tests.** Discuss how to use pocket folders or a filing system to keep assignments, papers, and tests organized.

Discuss ways that students can keep track of the grades they receive in each class (record them on the inside front covers of class folders, keep a record on their computer, etc.).

**Have phone numbers for classmates.** Remind students to have someone they can contact in each of their classes.

**Get organized for the next day.** Discuss the importance of getting things ready for the next day each night—and about how having morning and nighttime routines makes your day run smoother.

Ask students to evaluate their organizational skills on a scale of 1-5. Have students come up with two specific things they can do to be better organized.

**Quote.** Discuss the meaning of Aristotle's quote.

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### Manage Your Time Well – Pages 6-7

**Don't overextend yourself.** Discuss the maximum amount of time a full-time student should work at a job. (Experts recommend no more than 15-20 hours a week.)

**Be organized.** Get a large wall calendar and show students how using it can help them see "the big picture" and plan ahead.

**Schedule 90-minute study sessions.** Ask students to share how they study best. Encourage students to try a few 90-minute study sessions.

**Make effective use of your time.** Have students identify times in their day that could be put to better use.

**Learn to say no.** Talk about how making good choices and decisions can affect a student's academic success.

**Make To Do lists and prioritize tasks.** Ask students to name eight or nine things they might have to do in a day (other than going to class, eating, etc.).

Show how one might prioritize these items using the method described here.

Discuss how most of their time in high school was managed for them—and how in college, they have much more freedom.

### Be Successful in Class – Pages 8-9

**Do every class assignment.** Discuss the importance of doing all assigned homework. Also discuss the importance of keeping up with assignments.

**Learn how to adapt to different instructors.** Some instructors prefer lecturing, while others encourage classroom discussion. Which style do your students prefer?

What kinds of differences do your students see with regards to their instructors?

**Sit in the front of the class.** Ask students to try sitting in different seats in their classes.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of seating locations.

**Be a good group member.** Discuss the importance of being able to work as part of a team. *The #1 reason people get fired is because they can't get along with supervisors and/or co-workers.*

**Be on time to each class.** Ask students if they ever get irritated when friends or family show up late. Compare this to an instructor dealing with students who come late to class.

**Participate in class.** Challenge your students to be engaged in each of their classes.

**Communicate with your instructors.** Encourage students to get to know their instructors, and to ask for help whenever they need it.

*Have students share additional things they can do to be successful in class.*

### Take Good Notes – Pages 10-12

**Be an active listener.** Discuss the difference between hearing and active listening. Have students give examples of times when they've been active listeners (e.g., listening to a friend talk about what happened over the weekend).

**Take notes to help you pay attention.** We can think twice as fast as most people talk—taking notes helps students stay focused.

**Take notes that are easy to read.** Have students share the abbreviations, symbols, and practices they use when taking notes.

Discuss and demonstrate the idea of writing keywords in the left hand margin of the page. Show how this technique can be used to study for tests.

**Recognize important information.** Demonstrate how teachers use cues to signal important information. Ask students to listen for verbal cues in their classes for a day, and to then share the cues they heard.

**Go over your notes as soon as possible.** Do any students take the time to edit and review their notes after class? Encourage students to try doing this for a few days.

**Get lecture notes if you miss a class.** Ask students if they've ever tried to read and understand someone else's notes on a lecture they haven't heard.

Again, emphasize the importance of being in class and taking your own notes.

**Quote.** Do students have any personal examples showing the truth of this quote?

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### **Read for Comprehension** – Pages 13-15

Before reading this section, ask students to share techniques they use to help them remember what they read.

Use a textbook to show how text features and layout can help students understand and remember the information that's presented.

**Survey.** Use "The Beatles" article on page 14 to demonstrate surveying. Survey this page together as a group.

Discuss the information students learn about The Beatles just from surveying the text.

**Read.** Take a textbook and show how to turn the section headings into questions. Show students how easily this can be done by using "How" and "Why."

**Review.** Take a textbook that one or more of your students are currently using and go through a couple of pages, demonstrating the **survey, read,** and **review** process.

### **Study Smart** – Pages 16-22

**Find a good place to study.** Before reading this step, ask students where they study best. Do they need it to be quiet? Do they study differently depending on the kind of studying they are doing?

**Get started.** Is getting started on homework/studying a difficult thing for your students to do? Do they have any tips or suggestions on how best to do this (e.g., set a definite time, study with a friend, go to the library)?

**Know your learning style.** Ask students to identify how they learn best. Do they adjust their studying in any way to accommodate their learning style?

Discuss whether certain types of classes lend themselves to a particular learning style.

Have students share examples of how the quote by Glasser applies to their classroom experience.

**Organize your study time.** After reading this list, ask students if they can come up with any additional ideas.

Ask students to choose two or three of these ideas to incorporate into their studying for a few days. Ask students to report on how these ideas worked.

**Know how to study for tests.** Ask students if they can come up with any additional ideas to help them study for tests and/or memorize information.

Encourage students to choose two or three of these ideas to help them study for their next test. Ask students to report on how they worked.

### **Know how to memorize and remember information.**

Give students a list of words relating to a subject they might be studying. Have them make up a silly sentence using the first letter of each word.

Take an example of information your students might need to know, and as a group, look for ways to use these memorization techniques.

**Learn computer applications.** Go over the location of the computer lab(s) on your campus. Ask if any students have gone to a computer lab for help.

**Develop your public speaking skills.** Why is it important for students to be able to get up in front of a group to express an idea or to explain a concept?

Do students have any additional tips for making presentations or speeches?

**Know how to write a good paper.** To demonstrate how the writing process works, pick an issue or topic that's being discussed on your campus. As a group, make a thesis statement, brainstorm ideas, and make an outline.

Discuss the problem of plagiarism and how the internet has complicated this issue. What are the consequences for plagiarism at your college?

Remind students that all errors cannot be corrected by using spelling and/or grammar checking programs.

Ask students for additional study tips they have used.

### **Be a Good Test Taker** – Pages 22-24

Before reading this step, ask students to identify three test-taking strategies.

Read through these tips. Have students note which tips they already use.

### **Reduce Test Anxiety** – Page 25

Ask students if any of them have ever frozen while taking a test. What did they do (or what could they have done) to reduce their anxiety?

As a group, try one or more of these relaxation techniques.

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## Use Available Services – Pages 26-27

The day before discussing this step, ask students to go to your college's website. Ask them to write down three things they learned about your school.

**Academic Advisor** - Ask your students if they know who their academic advisor is and where his/her office is located. Have students found their advisors to be helpful?

**Career Services** - Encourage all students to visit the career center.

**Clubs / Activities** - Get a list of some of the popular activities available at your college. Ask students who are involved in activities to share their experiences.

**Computer Labs** - Ask students to share any experiences they've had visiting a computer lab.

**Cooperative Education / Internships** - Give examples of cooperative education and/or internship programs at your college (business, education, engineering, etc.).

**Learning Centers** - Ask students to share any experiences they've had with a college tutor.

*To help students learn about the services on your campus, break your class into groups and ask them to go to the offices, centers, or buildings that house the services listed in this section. Ask students to bring back information and brochures, and to report on what they learned.*

*Remind your students that, since they are paying for all of these services, it is a good idea to know what's available, and to use these services whenever possible.*

## College Terms – Page 28

Go through these terms and discuss how they apply to your college. Do students have questions regarding any of these terms? Are there other terms they have questions about?

## Comments and Advice from Students – Page 30

Ask students which of these quotes is most meaningful to them.

## Post Activities

After going through *How to Get Good Grades in College*, ask students to identify one study skill area they would like to improve (take better notes, be better organized, etc.). Have students make a list of the specific things they can do to improve their study skills in that area.

Ask students to identify situations or problems that may make it difficult for someone to succeed in college (e.g., being homesick, having coursework that's too difficult, working too many hours at a job, a lack of self discipline). Discuss various ways that students can overcome each of these obstacles.