Successful Strategies for College & Beyond

College vs. High School (for first year students)

College requires independent learning, understanding this difference is vital to a student’s growth and development as a college student.

* Classes are paid for out of pocket.
* Students are on their own to seek out effective resources. ..i.e...Library, Instructor office hours, Tutoring center, study groups, online resources, asking for help…etc.
* College requires a student to think critically.
* College classes require students to study longer and more effectively.(Faster paced)
* Less chances for evaluations.(H.S. tests are usually over 1-2 chapters were as a college examination is over multiple chapters and concepts.)
* Students have greater freedom, greater responsibility and accountability.

Class Time & Note Taking

“Good notes can make a difference in .5 of a grade point average.”RB

* Show up to class early and prepared
  + Know when the Instructor arrives
  + Give yourself enough time to review any homework, previous/anticipated course work, and be ready with any questions you have for the instructor. (Reviewing upcoming class material will remove the “shock factor” for students. Upcoming topics for class discussions can be found on course syllabus.”
  + Sit up front (Statistics have shown that grade averages are higher from those who sit in the front of the class. You will have less trouble seeing the board and fewer distractions from other students.)
* Read course syllabus!
  + Know what the Instructor expects of you.
  + Distinguish the rules for the classroom.
  + Understand the Instructor’s evaluation methods. (It is good to be aware of any possible extra credit opportunities that will be presented throughout the course duration.)
* Staying actively involved during class (Participating in your future)
  + Take notes diligently throughout the entire lecture period. (Use abbreviations that you understand when writing and review immediately after class. If need be re-write all notes in a cleaner format.)
  + Ask questions (Never be afraid to ask a question. If you are confused about a piece of the course work there is always someone else that has the same concern. Speak up! Partake in your own learning!)
  + Staying actively writing and asking questions will help facilitate retention and work material into your long term memory.
* Attitude vs. Course Work
  + A poor attitude will reflect on examinations and evaluations. DO NOT let a poor attitude toward a course hinder your future.
  + Make a good experience out of each class. If you have to take a class that you are not interested in but are part of your requirements, create connections and/or relate material to personal experiences or subjects of interest. This will help maintain a positive attitude through course semester.
  + Maintaining a positive attitude will help reduce stress/anxiety and help create confidence within each student.
* Learning style vs. Lecture style
  + It is important for a student to know which type of learning style that works best for them so they may adjust themselves to the lecture style presented by the instructor.
  + Auditory Learners- Students that are auditory learners tend to learn best from listening to the lectures. Although they may do well with just listening to the lecture, these students tend to struggle with note taking. This type of student would benefit from recording class lectures, study groups and/or partners so the discussions assist with retention.
  + Visual Learners- The visual learning students benefit through examples, flash cards, good notes, and tend to be able to visualize text information during study time. This student can be assisted by being shown how to perform tasks…i.e..Mathematics
  + Tactile Learners- This student learns the best through doing. Lectures may be confusing and misunderstood. They perform well in labs, hands on class activities, and writing/typing things out.
* Note Taking
  + Good notes distinguish main points from details. Think about what the instructor or the instructor’s notes are saying before taking your own.
  + Good notes will correlate with lecture patterns. Your note taking should follow right along with how the class unfolds. Students will want to be able to go back and look at notes and be able to recreate the class lecture.

Deductive lecture style- Instructor begins with main ideas and moves into specifics.

Inductive lecture style- Instructor begins with specifics and moves into main ideas.

* Pay attention to the amount of time a instructor spends on a topic; this should cue you in that the instructor is covering a very important set of information.
* Good notes will stand the test of time. All students want to be able to look back at notes a week, two weeks, a month, or a year later even and be able to understand what has been wrote down. (This concept is key for studying)
* Remember to always label each new set of notes with the date, time, and topic. This will help you locate specific subject matter for studying.
* All notes should be taken as clean as possible. If notes are messy and unorganized it is best suggested to immediately re-write notes in a clean and legible format. This will help meet those “with-stand the test of time” conditions.
* MATH CORNER- Most math course definitions are mathematical expressions or are in set notation. It is key to understand that mathematics is the expression of a complete thought. Student’s notes should reflect each and every step in a fluid motion with standing the test of time. Most mathematical note taking will be through examples and students want to be able to go back and review these problems and understand how they came to each conclusion along the way. It is expected of college students to keep things organized and legible. Essay questions, paraphrasing, and analysis papers typically have an introduction, body, and a conclusion expressed through complete thoughts and neatly written, math should be also.
* Use abbreviations. This will increase speed and reduce the time it takes to note main points from lectures.
* Take notes in simple paragraph form leaving spaces between main ideas and underline key points. Create some type of notation that works best for you that will draw your attention immediately to important/specific details.

Studying & Test Taking

“Active learners are in a constant state of preparing to take an exam” -Holschuh

“When trying to change your study habits, be open-minded and try new approaches” Holschuh

* For every 1 hour of class time students will need 2 hours of study time. For a fulltime (12 credits) student this means a total of 36 hours a week. (School is a fulltime job!)
* Make a specific study plan. Craft this study plan to what would help your strengths and weaknesses.
  + What is hardest for me? What is easiest? (It is very common for a student to spend less time on subject areas that are easiest for them and when it comes time for a quiz/exam they have trouble in the easier areas more than the difficult topics due to what subject received reinforcement.)
  + Do I need help? Do I have questions?
* Prepare for your study time.
  + Make sure you have everything you need before sitting down to study. (Text books, notes, instructor notes, paper/note book, pens, pencils…ect)
  + Have a plan and know how you would like to steer your study time.
* Study techniques.
  + Review old tests. (Make sure that you correct any mistakes on examinations. This will help you see why and where you went wrong and help guide you to specific areas your instructor wants. Reviewing tests also make great references for upcoming examinations.

MATH CORNER- Mathematics courses are in a constant state of building on itself. Reviewing previous exams will help guide you through operations and processes that you will need to know in order to perform well in new subject areas.

* Review homework. This includes texts, definitions, study guides, review sections of texts, Q&A handouts from instructors, and practice problems assigned.
* Write down any questions you may have for the instructor. Make sure you ask the instructorthese questions BEFORE s/he moves on with the days lecture.
* DO NOT OVER DO IT- It is good to take 15-20 minute breaks in between study sessions. (To long of a study break though can result in fatigue and loss of motivation.)
* Reading math texts books.
  + Determine the purpose. Read the chapter title, headings, and sub-headings. This will help cue you into what information is about to be presented. The author tends to summarize chapter content prior to beginning the presentation. This information can help make connections to what you have already learned and how previous lessons are applicable to new subject areas. (since math continues to build upon itself)
  + Participate in your reading. When reading material follow through what is being said with the examples to make visual references to the text. Make connections to what the instructor presented in the classroom. Immediately after reading through a section stop and try the example problems on your own. Then try some of problems from the exercise sets. This again will help with the reinforcement that is needed for retention.
  + The author of this type of text will tend to use as few words as possible to keep main points outlined and clearly stated. This makes every word vitally important and will also help students re-affirm vocabulary.
* Stress & Anxiety
  + Be prepared.
  + Study, participate, & practice.
  + Keep stress under control by creating a plan to cope with stressful issues.
    - Put personal problems into perspective
    - Ask for help
    - Take the time to relax, breathe, and unwind. (This is as important as scheduling study time.)
* Time management. Make a list completely covering every hour of everyday of the week. This will help you visualize how much time is available or needs to be available and how you can organize it to provide you with an effective schedule.
* Test anxiety
  + Arrive early to class to review note cards or material.
  + Be prepared. Make sure you have notes ( if they are allowed), calculators, pens, pencils, erasers, scrap paper, anything that is available to you.
  + Focus only on yourself. Do not pay attention to other students and how long it is taking them to move through the exam. Pay attention only to what you have in front of you.
  + Have a plan. Before picking up the pencil open the exam and scan the pages. Be aware of what is being asked of you. Start with the questions that seem the simplest to you and use those to assist you (if possible) to answer other questions.
  + Essays. If you are asked to provide an essay as part of the exam, again be aware of what is being asked of you. How much time is allotted for writing? How are you going to structure your writing?
  + NEVER leave a blank answer. If you absolutely do not have an answer to the question presented give it your best and try to answer it anyway. If it is multiple choice, cross out the answers that do not seem to fit and give it your best guess and MOVE ON. Do not let yourself get hung up on a question.
  + Use all of available time. Statistics have shown that the students who use the entire allotted test taking time tend to receive higher scores.

Stay positive and enjoy your college experience. This time is about making memories and new beginnings. I wish the best for you on your journeys.

-Ryan Byers

Four Methods of Note Taking

Split-Page Notes- This method mirror’s most students’ current note taking techniques and can be used with the majority of class type lectures. In split-page notes you will draw a line vertically down the page creating a 2-3 inch margin. During note-taking, take all your notes on the larger portion of the page. After class, use the margin to pull out main ideas, this allows for self testing. You should be prepared with several sheets of paper that are numbered and dated prior to class.

Parallel Notes- Instructors use a variety of methods to assist in the delivery of a lecture….i.e.…web notes, power point presentations, graphs, or any type of visual aid. Students may often find it very difficult to takes notes due to their attention being divided between the instructors lecture and presentation. Sometimes there is too much information in the presentation to copy down, or students have trouble differentiating between main ideas. Parallel note taking can assist the student that has these troubles. First you will want to print of a copy of the instructor’s notes, power point …etc. Then set up your note taking page the same way you would for the split-page method. This will allow you to fill in any added information and/ or denote important points from the lecture. After the class lecture, annotate any key points in the 2-3 inch column; this will allow for self testing.

Discussion Columns- This method is suggested for discussion style classes. Rather than dividing the page with a 2-3 inch margin, we will split the page into three even columns. The first column will be labeled as “Question Posed.” In this section you will state the question, theory, or topic being posed for the group/class discussion. The second column is made for the “Instructors Comment.” Here you can note statements made by the professors and the third column is for the “Student Comments.” In these two sections you can note any important points or statements that relate to the posed topic. This method can also be modified by annotating notes on the reverse side to allow for self testing.

The T-Method- Courses that require you to summarize and string pieces of information together, this method may be quite effective. To use this method just apply good ethics of note taking discussed in the previous section, then at the bottom of the last page (or on the reverse side if more room is required) draw a large T creating two boxed off sections. Use the left section to summarize any main ideas from the given lecture and any information that must be drawn together. On the right side create predictive test questions that can be used for self testing during study sessions.