

Tips for Thriving Academically in College

1. ***Know Your Strengths and Weaknesses.*** One of the most important elements of success in college is truly understanding your strengths and weaknesses. Take some time to review your strengths -- things like creativity, communications skills, computer skills, work ethic -- as well as your weaknesses -- things like time management, procrastination, perfectionism. It will probably be really easy to develop a list of your strengths, but much harder to really examine your weaknesses. The key with this tip is to find a way to maximize your strengths while overcoming or minimizing your weaknesses.
2. ***Establish Academic Goals.*** You should start each semester of college with certain academic goals you want to achieve -- perhaps a certain grade point average or achieving honor roll or dean's list. But your goals do not need to solely be about grades; you might set an academic goal of deciding on a major or minor -- or tackling that Spanish class you've been avoiding. The important thing is to have some goals -- goals that are a bit of a stretch for you so that you can strive toward achieving them and then celebrate accomplishing them once the semester is over. Without any type of goals, you'll find it easy to skip classes, miss assignments, and eventually find yourself in a place you don't want to be.
3. ***Develop a Time Management System.*** Of all the things high-achieving college students say, the one thing repeated over and over again is the importance of managing your time. Whether you use an electronic gadget or an old-fashioned planner or calendar, you need to not only have a system of keeping track of important dates and deadlines, but also a system for prioritizing your time. Having a strong sense of your time needs also gives you the ability to better see if you can handle additional responsibilities -- and the power to decline offers that are going to seriously hurt your academic performance.
4. ***Stay on Top of Your Assignments.*** Even students with great time management systems talk about the importance of keeping important dates in the top of your mind. Because you do not have teachers and parents on your back reminding you of assignments and tests, it's much easier to procrastinate in college, putting off what you could have accomplished today until tomorrow, or the day after, or the day after that. Professors have very little leniency or empathy for students who attempt to hand in late assignments -- especially ones that have been on the course calendar all semester.
5. ***Establish a Study Routine.*** One of the best ways to improve your academic performance is to establish a study routine -- a time everyday that you set aside to read your textbooks, review your notes, and work on homework assignments. Not only will you get more accomplished, you'll be better prepared for your classes, and actually have more free time to do other things. Most experts say that for every hour in class, you should devote at least two to three hours outside of class for studying. Besides just setting aside time each day, you should also find the best environment for you to study, which for some people is their dorm rooms while for others it's the library.
6. ***Get to Know Your Professors.*** Knowing your professors -- and being known by them -- is a true key to academic success. The vast majority of professors teach because they want to

empower students, and the more you get to know them on a personal level, the many more ways they can help you with your current academic success -- and future career success. You won't get to know all your professors, but at least try to get to know the ones in your majors and minors -- they can become mentors for you, helping you choose classes, obtain internships, and find graduate schools or future employers.

7. ***Find a Study Partner in Each Class.*** Your goal should be to have a "study buddy" in each of your classes. These partners can help you -- and you help them -- in many different ways, including sharing class notes (in case you have to miss a class or simply to make certain you captured all the key elements of class lectures), conducting review sessions together, studying for tests, and working as partners on homework or lab assignments. Just remember that your study partner does not necessarily have to be your best friend or fraternity brother (or sorority sister) -- especially if s/he is not the best student; pick a study buddy who is going to be a mutually beneficial partner.
8. ***Take Advantage of Campus Resources.*** Every college has a plethora of resources to help students succeed, and since you're paying for them with your tuition dollars, you should take advantage of whichever ones you need. There are academic resource centers, such as tutoring labs. Don't forget the library -- and especially the reference librarians who will help you hunt down the information or resources you need. Typically, there's also an academic support center that often offers workshops on study skill topics (such as note-taking, study skills, etc.). If you're feeling physically or mentally overwhelmed, use the resources of the college's health services or counseling center. Finally, for major and career advice, turn to the college's career services office.
9. ***Schedule Studying, Study Breaks.*** Another common theme among high-achieving college students is that the best studying comes not from massively long cramming sessions, but from many (daily) study sessions spread over a long period of time, with short breaks taken between assignments or subjects. Study for an hour, then take a 10-minute break. Study for another hour, and take another break. By following a system of studying and taking short breaks, you'll not only learn the material, but actually retain it much longer than cramming the day before a big test. One option that many top-performing students talk about for the study breaks is doing something physical; many believe in the connection between a healthy body and a healthy mind.
10. ***Work Hard, Play Hard.*** College is certainly not just about going to classes, completing the work, and getting good grades. College is also about new life experiences and making the transition from teenager to adult. High-achieving college students talk about this motto -- work hard to achieve the academic success you want to achieve and then reward yourself by playing just as hard. This motto is about seeking a balance -- if you work too hard without any kind of personal rewards, you risk burning yourself out; but if you play too hard without doing the work, you risk dropping out or being thrown out. So, find a balance that helps you grow and mature in multiple ways while still achieving the academic goals and success you seek.

11. **Identify Optimal Study Times.** You are probably your own best judge as to when you perform best. However, it's likely that you're still wrong. Most people do not proactively test what works for them. They study when they "feel like it", but that's not necessarily their most effective time. In order to know confidently what truly works best for you, it's important to try something consistently for an extended length of time, then try something else, and afterwards compare the results. Still, you should make an informed decision in choosing which times to test in the first place. Some considerations: different qualities of memory and alertness seem to be generally better at different times of day (e.g. visual memory in the morning, critical thinking around noon); whether innately or by conditioning, some people operate better in the early morning, whereas others work best in the evening. Most people suffer a "slump" in the early afternoon (between 1pm and 4pm); in addition to daily patterns, some hormonal cycles of longer durations have an impact on alertness.
12. **Study Environment.** A lot of people make the mistake of studying in a place that really isn't conducive to concentrating. A place with a lot of distractions makes for a poor study area. If you try and study in your dorm room, for instance, you may find the computer, TV, or a roommate more interesting than the reading material you're trying to digest. The library, a nook in a student lounge or study hall, or a quiet coffee house are good places to check out. Make sure to choose the quiet areas in these places, not the loud, central gathering areas. Investigate multiple places on-campus and off-campus, don't just pick the first one you find as "good enough" for your needs and habits. Finding an ideal study place is important, because it's one you can reliably count on for the next few years.
13. **Learn to Prioritize.** As a college student, you'll always have something that has to get done immediately. Managing your time and working on a limited time schedule is a large portion of what college is all about. When completing reading assignments, find the most important sections of the material and read those first. You know yourself better, so judging whether to start with the hard or easy material first is important in learning how to prioritize based on your homework and studying style.

*Retrieved from <http://www.mycollegesuccessstory.com/academic-success-tools/academically-thriving.html>

*Retrieved from <http://masterofmemory.com/the-best-time-to-study/>

*Retrieved from <http://psychcentral.com/lib/top-10-most-effective-study-habits/>

*Retrieved from <http://www.thecollegehelper.com/7-tips-for-surviving-college-homework-assignments/>