

Set Academic Goals

In the grid below, list the courses you are currently taking. Then in the “Grade” column, write down the highest grade you think you can earn in each course. Think of these grades as your academic goals for the term. *If you follow the ten steps in this book, you are sure to achieve your goals!*

	Course	Grade
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

The Ten Steps to Getting Good Grades in College



STEP ONE Attend Every Class

If you want to get good grades in college, you must attend every class—not almost every class.

The importance of regular class attendance cannot be overemphasized. When you miss classes, you miss lectures, notes, class discussions, homework explanations, and assignments. Without meaning to, you may also miss quizzes and tests.

It can be tempting to ditch a class now and then, particularly when you have an instructor who doesn't seem to care, or even notice, whether or not you're there. Don't kid yourself into thinking that missing a class won't make a difference, or that missing a class is okay as long as you get copies of the notes. Getting copies of someone's notes is not the same as being in class, and it's often more of a hassle. *You cannot make up what you miss, and you cannot get it from someone else.*



STEP TWO Be Organized

This section will give you several ideas on how to be organized. You, of course, must determine what works best for you.

Use an academic planner. Take your planner to every class, record each assignment under the date it's given, and write down the date each assignment is due. When an assignment is completed, check it off. Use your planner to also keep track of test dates, activities, appointments, and anything else you need to remember.

October 5
✓ Math p. 110 due 10-6
✓ Lab report due 10-7
✓ Study for History quiz
✓ Do Eng. paper outline
Meet Jen at Lib 7 PM

At the beginning of each term, many instructors give their students a course syllabus listing the course assignments and their due dates. Whenever you're given a syllabus, copy the assignments into your planner.

Break down assignments. Large assignments are more manageable if you break them down into smaller parts. For example, if a research paper is assigned on Jan. 11 and it's due Jan. 18, you could give yourself the following deadlines:

Jan. 11 – Research done	Jan. 15 – First draft done
Jan. 12 – Outline done	Jan. 16 – Rewrite done

Writing these smaller assignments in your planner will ensure that you do your big assignments over a period of time, not at the last minute.

Use three-ring notebooks for class notes. Three-ring notebooks work well because handouts can easily be inserted, and if you do miss a class, you can copy someone else's notes and insert them where they belong. If you keep a 3-hole punch in your notebook, you can hole punch your handouts in class and put them in your notebook as soon as you get them.

Always keep important course information (instructor's email address and office hours, course syllabus, etc.) in the front of your notebook.

Organize and save computer work. Make sure that you save your work often and that you have back-up copies of important files.

Keep returned papers, quizzes, and tests. Have a different colored pocket folder for each class, and keep all returned papers, quizzes, and tests in these folders. Returned tests can help you study for future tests, and they may come in handy if there's ever a question about your grade.

To eliminate surprises at the end of the term, keep a record of your homework, quiz, and test grades for each course. If you are ever unsure as to how you're doing in a class, talk to your instructor.

Have phone numbers for classmates. Make sure that you have a phone number for at least one person in each class. If you miss a class or have a question about an assignment, you'll then have someone to contact.



Get organized for the next day. Before you go to bed each night, get everything organized for the following day. If there's something you need to remember to do in the morning, write yourself a note.

STEP TWO REVIEW Be Organized

- ▶ Use an academic planner.
- ▶ Break down assignments.
- ▶ Use three-ring notebooks for class notes.
- ▶ Organize and save computer work.
- ▶ Keep returned papers, quizzes, and tests.
- ▶ Have phone numbers for classmates.
- ▶ Get organized for the next day.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." Aristotle



STEP THREE Manage Your Time Well

With good time management, you have more free time, less stress, and a feeling that you're in control and "on top of things."

Don't overextend yourself. If you never seem to have enough time, look at your life to make sure that you're not overextended. If you feel that you're doing more than you can handle, look for activities that you can eliminate or postpone, and try to find ways to simplify your life.

Be organized. Being organized is a tremendous time saver. When you're organized, you know what you have to do, and you have the information and materials you need. To help you stay organized, use a planner to keep track of your daily assignments, and a monthly wall calendar to record major events, project deadlines, vacations, etc.

Schedule 90-minute study sessions. Set a specific time to get started on your studying. Silence your phone, and take steps to make sure that you won't be interrupted. During your study sessions, don't do anything else. Focus completely on your work. If you can stay focused for 90 minutes, you'll be able to get a great deal accomplished.

Make efficient use of your time. Consciously make choices about how to use your time. For example, you could decide to limit yourself to one hour of TV on weeknights.



Come up with ways to streamline and combine tasks. Study while you're doing your laundry, get your exercise by jogging to the library, or go over your class notes while waiting for a friend.

Look for "chunks of time" that are wasted and figure out how to use this time more effectively. If you have time between classes, talk to an instructor, run an errand, study, or just relax. The important thing is that you think about how you can best use the time you have available.

Learn to say no. In college, there's so much to do and so much going on that it's easy to get sidetracked. It's also easy to tell yourself that you'll have time to study later. Know what you need to do, and don't let anything get in the way of your coursework.

Make To Do lists and prioritize tasks. Make a daily list of the things you need to do. Rate each item as an A (must do today), B (should do today), or C (would like to do today, but it can wait). Then take all of the As and rank them in order of importance (1, 2, 3...). Do the same with the Bs and Cs. Now, rewrite your list with the As at the top (in the order of importance), followed by the Bs and the Cs.

Focus on one task at a time. When a task is completed, cross it off your list. At the end of each day, add the tasks that didn't get done to the next day's To Do list.

Having a To Do list allows you to concentrate on what you need to do, instead of wasting time worrying about how you're going to get everything done.

Listing and prioritizing your tasks only takes a few minutes, and it's a great way to organize your time.

Wed	
A	1 Study for hist test 2 Turn in lab report 3 Finish Eng. assignment
B	1 Do psych outline 2 Call Olivia
C	1 Do laundry 2 Go to computer lab 3 Get haircut

One of the biggest mistakes college students make is thinking that they have lots of time to get things done. In college, you can't wait until the last minute to do your assignments or to study for tests. It just doesn't work.

Remember, you alone are responsible for managing your time and for keeping up with your assignments.

STEP THREE REVIEW Manage Your Time Well

- ▶ Don't overextend yourself.
- ▶ Be organized.
- ▶ Schedule 90-minute study sessions.
- ▶ Make efficient use of your time.
- ▶ Learn to say no.
- ▶ Make To Do lists and prioritize tasks.

*To do well in your classes, you must be healthy and alert.
Eat the right foods, get plenty of sleep, and take time to exercise.
Also make room in your schedule for fun and relaxation.*



STEP FOUR

Be Successful in Class

You will enjoy college more and you'll get higher grades if you follow these tips.

Do every class assignment. Don't think of homework as something you *should* do. Think of homework as something you *must* do.

Complete every assignment, regardless of how much it counts towards your final grade. When you've done your homework, you get more out of your classes, lectures are easier to follow, and you can participate in class discussions. *Your instructor expects you to know the assigned material, and you can expect to be tested on it.*

Do your homework on a regular basis so that you don't get behind. Once you get behind in a class, it can be very difficult to get caught up.

Learn how to adapt to different instructors. Part of your education is to learn how to adapt to different personalities and teaching styles. At the beginning of each term, learn what each instructor expects with regards to attendance, homework, and class participation.

Sit in the front of the class. Arrive early on the first day of class and sit in one of the first three rows. If there's assigned seating, tell your instructor that you can't see or hear from the back.

When you sit in the front, you're able to see what is written or displayed, hear what is spoken, and you send a positive message to your instructor. Students in the front seldom talk to one another, send text messages, or walk in late, so there are also fewer distractions.

Be a good group member. Whether you're working on a class project, involved in an extracurricular activity, or working at a job, you need to be able to work and get along with the other members of the group.

When you're involved in a group project 1) do your share of the work and do it well; 2) have a positive attitude; 3) support the other members of the group; 4) be open to new ideas.

Be on time to each class. Whenever possible, arrive early for class. You'll be more relaxed, and you'll have a few minutes to look over your notes, talk to classmates, or speak with your instructor.

Students who are late to class miss announcements and introductory remarks. Their tardiness also tells their instructor that being on time to class is not a priority for them.

During the last 5-10 minutes of class, instructors often summarize the lecture or discuss assignments. It is, therefore, important not to leave class early. If you're in a small class and you must leave early, let your instructor know before class begins.

Participate in class. When there's a class discussion, be an active participant. The class will be more interesting and you'll learn more. You will also demonstrate to your instructors that you know the material.

Communicate with your instructors. Most instructors will give you their office hours, phone number, and email address at the beginning of the term. Don't hesitate to contact an instructor whenever you have a question, concern, or problem. While most instructors are happy to help you, you must initiate the contact.

Be sure to respect your instructors' privacy and personal time. Talk to your instructors after class, see them during office hours, or use email.

STEP FOUR REVIEW

Be Successful in Class

- ▶ **Do every class assignment.**
- ▶ **Learn how to adapt to different instructors.**
- ▶ **Sit in the front of the class.**
- ▶ **Be a good group member.**
- ▶ **Be on time to each class.**
- ▶ **Participate in class.**
- ▶ **Communicate with your instructors.**