

What Does It Take to Be Successful in College?

Envision yourself 5 years after you graduate from college. How do you see yourself? What type of lifestyle are you living?

When someone asks you what you do for a living, how do you respond? How can you describe your job?

Whatever you envision for yourself down the road, education is the key. Learning is paramount to you succeeding. The outcome of your education and experiences may not be what you intended, but learning will allow you to design the path best suited for you.

You are here today because you see some form of education and learning as necessary to get where you want to be. Whether you choose to earn an associate degree, a bachelor's, a master's, or a doctorate's, your future job will require some type of training.

That is why you need some type of vision and plan.

You do not have to choose a specific major, but you have to know what excites you, motivates you, and interests you. You have to know your skills and talents, your strengths. You also have to recognize your limitations.

The first step to being successful at the college level is to know that high school is over. You have completed high school and are now beginning new. You can never go back again. That is good. Look forward to what life can bring. High school should have given you ample learning skills and positive memories. Use those to your advantage. Based on my high school teaching experiences, students generally just take their classes to get to graduation. So now you need to change that attitude.

Do you really want to learn? Why? You have to learn something, even if you go to work in a fast food restaurant or on the loading docks. Training and learning are inevitable. Wanting to learn and understand makes it better and easier.

You have to accept that you are good at some activities, average in some activities, and bad in some activities. This makes you human.

You may have to work harder in a math class but you are better in English or history. While teachers in school can have some influence on your skills, much of your abilities come from your persona, who you are. I love football. I played in school. I was good; however, I could never have been a professional or even a division 1 or 2 athlete. I could have played at Muskingum, but I would have been less than average. This is not in my skill set. I am okay with that. I can accept it. I have found another path, and my desire to learn has helped me become better at my

strengths. I was able to learn to teach, and I think I was a decent teacher. This also allowed me to coach football. Coaching was another avenue for teaching.

The following are considerations to be successful at the college level:

- 1.) **Understand college expectations.** High school is over – move on with your life. College is the next level of experience. College instructors and professors expect you to have knowledge when you enter their classes. They expect you to know how to read, study, and learn at the college level. Classes are 15 weeks. You need to be ready to perform at this next level.
 - a.) using various reading methods
 - *reading headings and emphasized parts of assignments,
 - *skimming and reviewing reading assignments quickly
 - *perhaps taking notes or writing pertinent information when reading assignments.
 - b.) taking notes so that you understand them when you review them at a later time
 - c.) Studying adequately whether alone or in groups. tailoring the way you study for a specific course or field (science classes, math classes)
 - d.) using computer and researching methods effectively
- 2.) **Know your academic strengths and weaknesses.** Choose classes and programs that interest you and allow you to succeed. Avoid majors that are contrary to your abilities. Know what your abilities are and choose these types of classes.
- 3.) **Understand the processes and resources available to you.**
 - a.) activating your school's account and accessing your email and other technological systems (i. e. Blackboard)
 - b.) checking on financial aid issues and concepts (i. e. Satisfactory Academic Progress, SAP)
 - c.) meeting with advisor to set up classes
 - d.) registering for classes – be sure to enroll in relevant classes
- 4.) **Get involved.** The more active you are on your campus, the more opportunities and resources you will understand and know.

- 5.) **Attend class.** Absences from classes affects grades negatively more than any other issue. Missing classes at the college level is easier than missing high school because you are on your own. Some instructors do not even take attendance. This is where you show a new maturity. No principals or teachers will be searching for you. You are responsible for yourself. As an aside to this concern, **be on time to class as well.**
- 6.) **Listen, focus, concentration, and understand.** When I taught in high school, I recognized when students were just sitting in class and going through motions and pretending to listen. I did this myself so I was aware of the clues and mannerisms. College is different because most instructors could care less if you are paying attention and listening. What they have to say will be on the exam. You have to understand that the information that they are giving is relevant to their field. Many programs, like nursing and social work and education, require some type of a test, internship, or capstone to either get into the program or fulfill a requirement to get into the field. The classes that you are taking will help prepare you for that moment. Focus is an important aspect to taking college courses.
- a.) Take notes that you will remember when you need them. Writing them makes them more efficient; however, many instructors keep the notes on their Blackboard and would prefer that you simply listen in class.
 - b.) Pay attention to the details on the syllabus, like point values attached to assignments and due dates.
 - c.) Be sure to understand the process that each instructor uses for assignments, i. e. Blackboard, emails, hard copies.
 - d.) Ask questions of the instructor or other classmates. Make sure that the instructor is aware of all issues and concerns that you have. Communicate with instructors and listen to their directives.
 - e.) Attend class; however, if you have to miss, be sure that you contact the instructor and make up all work accordingly.
- 7.) **Take responsibility for your own decisions and actions.** The time has come to mature. What do you want out of life? How can education take you there? Is attending college what you want to do? Are you just in school because **everyone** says that you should be? Many students put college below working on the priority level. Some have to do that. Do you have to work? Are you majoring in the field that you want? Does it fit into your future vision of yourself?

8.) **Find support.** You must rely on various facets of support throughout your college experience. You need faculty, and advisors, and staff. You need friends and classmates. You need family.

However,

Faculty and staff will help direct you. They give advice, which you must decide is right or wrong for you.

Friends and classmates can listen and offer you compassion and shared experiences. You should not take everything they tell you as accurate for your situation and world.

Family will support you in many ways, hopefully in a loving and caring manner that strokes your emotional distress and needs. You still must make decisions for yourselves. You must live your own life and not make decisions on what they always think is best for you.

Finally,

Parents you have raised your children and safely brought them to this point in their lives. Trust in what you have taught them and let them learn to live. They need your support and love even if their decisions are contrary to what you think they should do.

When I was your age beginning college, I had no idea that 40 some years into my future I would be standing in front of a group of young people telling them how to be successful in college. I am sure that many of my teachers would be in shock that I have come to this point in my career and life. You need to prepare for the inevitable side roads that could alter your destination.

So, envision your life at the end of your career. Have you been successful? Have you lived a life that you can appreciate? You are now beginning that path.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, concerns, or you just want to discuss your options.

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